

The Creeds of Christmas

The Father's Plan and Preparation for Christmas

Introduction: Today we begin our five-week Christmas series focused on the creeds of Christmas. What is a creed anyway? It is a summary of the Christian faith handed down over the centuries that became known as creeds. In the Latin, a **creed means "I believe, I trust."** These are teachings or doctrines that apply directly to our everyday walk with Christ that are found woven throughout this wonderful Christmas story.

What I really want to get to is how these creeds apply to our everyday life and how to live them out. We should take these principles from the Christmas story and live in confidence based on what God has given to us through these teachings.

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26 - 33

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Purpose: Every Christ follower must live out the teachings daily found in the Christmas story.

Transition: Our first creed we want to look at and apply today is that God the Father is;

The Promise Keeper – Prophecies fulfilled at Christmas

What is a prophecy?

- **Prophecy is a message from God. "Although foretelling is often associated with prophecy, revealing the future is not a necessary element of prophecy; however, since only God knows the future, any authoritative word about the future must of necessity be a prophecy, that is, a message from God." – Gotquestions.org**
- This is God's way of making a prediction of something that is going to happen in the future and then seeing it fulfilled in the instance of the Christmas story
- The amazing thing is that what God predicted through His prophets many years ago were fulfilled down to the detail!! God's Word can be trusted and God's means what He says when He predicts the future.
- The first prophecy we will talk about is that Jesus would be born of a woman

- Born of a woman – Genesis 3:15 / Galatians 4:4

Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

- This verse is commonly called the **protevangelium**. **This is a compound of two Greek words, protos meaning "first" and evangelion meaning "good news" or "gospel". Thus, the verse is commonly referred to as the first mention in the Bible of the "good news" of salvation.**
 - God said there would be a perpetual struggle between Satanic forces and mankind.
 - The hatred between the woman Eve, who gave birth to Cain. Eve also gave birth to all of mankind and eventually, a woman named Mary, a virgin, would give birth to Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus will crush Satan by rising from the dead while Satan will bruise the heel of Jesus by His crucifixion and death. **Some believe this teaches that Satan would cripple mankind, those made in the image of God. Satan’s offspring is spiritual and not physical. They are the fallen angels, the demons and anyone serving in His kingdom of darkness on behalf of their father the devil**

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies

- This is a verse pointing to Christ coming to earth as a sinless man and the Son of God to be the payment for the world’s sin by His death. In Galatians 4, Paul describes the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law

- Born of a virgin – Isaiah 7:14 / Matthew 1:18

Isaiah 7:14

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel

- The Hebrew word virgin in this verse could be translated as young maiden or virgin depending on the context. The context strongly supports that virgin is the correct translation into our English Bibles.
- This is confirmed by Matthew and an angel that spoke to Joseph in a dream as Joseph contemplated divorcing Mary quietly.

Matthew 1:18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:22 - 23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

- The angel quotes from Isaiah 7:14 confirming the translation we have in the Isaiah 7:14. Virgin in the Greek is **Parthenos** which means a maiden; by implication, an unmarried daughter: —virgin.
- You see how God is faithful to fulfill His promises in His time and how He works through history to bring about His plan.
- Born in **Bethlehem** – Micah 5:2 / Matthew 2:1; 4 – 8
 - Notice the prophecy that we have heard many times made by the prophet Micah.

Micah 5:2

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

- Fulfilled in Matthew 2.

Matthew 2:1; 4 – 8

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem

4 And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

Illustration: We see God is the ultimate PK. It reminds me of times in the 90's when Bill McCartney and a group of other men started PK events for men. They had 7 promises a man should be committed to in their relationships with God, spouse, fellow man and God's local church. Men from all over the country in big arenas made these commitments to live them out. God is the ultimate promise keeper. What He says has and will continue to happen. You can put your faith on the rock-solid promises of God's Word.

Joshua 21:45

Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

Hebrews 6:17 - 18

17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

- When you have to give a presentation the next day and you are nervous, take God at His word not to fear.
- When the future is uncertain, trust that God has your future in His hands and has your best in mind ultimately in His plans.
- Can you take God at His Word? This is a wonderful gift at this Christmas season that God keeps His Word.

Application: We can live in confidence by taking God at His word

Transition: Let's look at another doctrinal teaching to apply to our lives this Christmas season.

The Miracle Worker – Miracles occur at Christmas

- God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things - Luke 1:34

Luke 1:34

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

- A good question to ask about having a baby and not having known a man? Like how is this going to work?
- Mary was just an ordinary teenage girl who was faithfully following the Lord.
- The angel comes to her and interrupts her ordinary life to give her extraordinary news. God often uses the ordinary and puts the extra on it for His use and glory

Luke 1:35

35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

- Now we do not agree with the Popes who made the decrees for the Catholics church that she is equal to God or Jesus, that she was without sin, that she was a perpetual virgin because the Bible records that Jesus had brothers and sisters. Mary had kids with Joseph and James, a writer in the Bible, is one of their children and Jesus’ half-brother for example.
- Listen to Mary’s own testimony of humility and servanthood

Luke 1:38

38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her

- Notice the word Mary uses – servant - a female slave (involuntarily or voluntarily); a handmaid(-en).
- God makes the impossible possible – Luke 1:37 – 38

Luke 1:37

37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Genesis 18:14

“Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

John 14:14

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

- God specializes in the supernatural and that is why so many people attack the miracles found in the Bible. The miracles of the Bible can be explained away as we learn more about science.
- David Hume, who was a British philosopher, did not believe in miracles and he attacked those who believed in them.

Quote: “A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.” – David Hume

- In other words, miracles cannot happen by definition. Of course, this argument ignores the fact that no one (nor everyone put together) has witnessed every event that ever took place and so could not possibly know whether the laws of nature have never been violated.

- **Hume's second argument** is that miracles *have not, in fact, ever happened*. He argued that, because of the inherent weakness of human testimony, we could never justify believing witnesses who claim to have seen a miracle over believing in the laws of nature.
- Hume's first argument fails because it doesn't prove anything just to assert that there are no violations of the laws of nature and there are no miracles because they violate the laws of nature. The second argument fails because it simply dismisses the testimony of witnesses for no good reason.
- The fact that Jewish and Christian history fits with the history of this world and that there were eyewitness accounts recorded of miracles in the Bible shows evidence that they happened. Eric Metaxas says in his book on miracles;

Quote: "Part of the miracle of the resurrection is that it so empowered a ragtag band of fishermen and tax collectors that they were emboldened to stand against all earthly authority and power, and ultimately would upend the once inviolable order of the mighty Roman Empire. History tells us that this happened. So what better explanation can be offered for how it happened? Unless we have missed something, there exists none. And if there exists none, we are invited to submit to the logic of what we now know: that this most celebrated and most scorned miracle of miracles actually happened—and, perhaps most miraculously of all, can even be understood to have happened." — Eric Metaxas, Miracles: What They Are, Why They Happen, and How They Can Change Your Life

- **God takes on human flesh to save sinners – Matthew 1:21**
 - Make no mistake as to why Jesus came. He did not just come to do signs and wonders, to heal people, to do miracles. He came to serve and not to be served. It wasn't an accident that He was crucified, it was all a part of God's divine plan for redemption. He did not come to become a martyr. He came with one purpose in mind, to pay for the sins of the world so mankind would have a way to salvation, to fellowship with God through Christ, and have a place in heaven. The shadow of the cross was on the manger!!

Matthew 1:21

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

- Jesus' name means literally "Jehovah saves or Jehovah is salvation".
- Jesus purpose for coming was to save people from their sins.
 - To be rightly related to God in this life
 - To have the assurance of an abundant life on this earth
 - To have assurance and confidence of eternal life
 - To have the peace that passes understanding

- To know why God created each individual in His own image in their unique way to be a part of God's grand design for His kingdom.
- This Christmas season, don't miss the reason for the season. God's Son came down in the form of a baby. God sent Jesus to us, wrapped in humanity so that we could be saved. Jesus said the only way to Father and heaven is through Him

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

- God is a miracle working God and the greatest miracle He does continually and to bring people into His kingdom and transform them.

John 1:11 – 13 – The Message

He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten

.2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away (Aorist – past action); behold, the new has come (Perfect – completed action with the results continuing into the future)

- God wants to do extraordinary things in our life if we will just trust Him and ask. He may not do it the way we think or in His time, but if He chooses to do a miracle, God will do some amazing things.
- What can you point to as something miraculous in your life? Give praise to God for it and trust Him for more.

Application: We can trust God by faith to do the extraordinary in our lives.

Transition: Our last creed to apply to our lives today is God the Father is;

The Revealer of Truth – Revealing the Son of God at Christmas

- The Son became flesh – John 1:1,14; 3:16

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 – The Message

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

- **The Incarnation.** This is the most prominent teaching that comes out of the Christmas story.
- **Incarnation, the word means what it says. “Incarnation” is a Latin word that means, literally, “enfleshment”—the act of being made flesh.** And because of its relevance to the Holiday, we might call this the “Doctrine of Christmas.”

Quote: “The miracle of the Incarnation means God not only created us in His image, tabernacled among us in the wilderness, and gave us His Scriptures, but He also sanctified earthly flesh by humbling Himself to become one of us. He redeemed our bodily experience and our spiritual life from the power of sin and the grave! The Baby of Bethlehem transforms everything.” – Rick Freeman – The Chosen People Ministry

- **Immanuel – God with us**
 - In the garden
 - In the wilderness
 - In the two temples
 - In Jesus Christ
 - In the Holy Spirit
 - In Jesus physical return at His second coming
- One of the things that makes Christianity unique is how our God is so personal and desires to be with His people, those who love and serve Him. God is a relational God. He wants our attention and our focus on Him. He wants us to be in continual discussion with Him about our life and what we need and what we are facing.

- **The Son was given to us – Isaiah 9:6**

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- The grace of God gave us His Son who is described here with four-character qualities.
 - Wonderful Counselor – Exceptional, distinguished counselor
 - Mighty God – all-powerful to save
 - Everlasting Father – eternal and equal to the Father; having the same essence as God
 - Prince of Peace – when He returns a second time, he will rule and reign on earth forever in righteousness.

- The Son was given gifts pointing to His royalty – Mathew 2:1; 11

Matthew 2:1, 11

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh

- These gifts were given to reveal who Jesus was and would be.
- The gold points to Jesus' royalty. Jesus would be called "The King of the Jews" at His crucifixion.
- The frankincense points to his divinity revealed on earth, and the myrrh to his humanity. Myrrh also represented his death because it was used as embalming fluid. Jesus would die to pay for the sins of the world.
- How do these teachings apply to our life?
 - He wants to live in us and with us throughout our lives
 - He is our example. He said deny yourself, take up the cross and follow me and be holy as I am holy
 - Balance of grace and truth
 - Serve others rather than be served
 - Loving, kind, compassionate, sees the needs of others and attempts to meet those needs.
 - He identified with us as a human being tempted in all points and yet did not sin. Hebrews 4:15
 - He reveals Himself so we can know Him and know about Him to walk in relationship with Him.

Application: As we seek the Lord and His truth, He will reveal His will in our lives as we walk in His Spirit

Transition: Can you say, you not only understand these truths but they are affecting how you think and act daily in your life?

Quote: C. S. Lewis said it well: "The Son of God became a man that men might become sons of God."

Key Thought: God sent His Son to earth as He promised, to reveal Himself and bring us the miracle of salvation at Christmas

Questions to Ponder This Week

- 1. Are you able to stand on God's Word and claim it faithfully for your life?**
- 2. What are you trusting God to do right now that would be extraordinary if He did it?**
- 3. Are you confidently seeking and walking in God's will?**

Illustration: Consider Again Christmas - When Pope Julius I authorized December 25 to be celebrated as the birthday of Jesus in A.D. 353, who would have ever thought that it would become what it is today. When Professor Charles Follen lit candles on the first Christmas tree in America in 1832, who would have ever thought that the decorations would become as elaborate as they are today.

It is a long time since 1832, longer still from 353, longer still from that dark night brightened by a special star in which Jesus the king was born. Yet, as we approach December 25 again, it gives us yet another opportunity to pause, and in the midst of all the excitement and elaborate decorations and expensive commercialization which surround Christmas today, to consider again the event of Christmas and the person whose birth we celebrate. - Brian L. Harbour, James W. Cox, The Minister's Manual: 1994, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993, p. 254.