

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



The Significance of the Birth of Jesus

KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:15-20 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: John 3:3

► SUMMARY

Not that long ago, manger scenes were a common sight during the Christmas season, but today they have become a political issue and a target of attack by those who hate Christianity.

Court cases and laws demanding the elimination of nativity scenes are really an attempt to remove Christ Himself. The only reason people are offended is because they've rejected the baby portrayed there, but their attempts can never erase the impact of Jesus' life on the world.

► SERMON POINTS

The humble setting of a stable and the ordinary people gathered around the baby in the manger don't readily convey the significance of the most important birth in human history. This child was the Son of God who came to earth as a baby to live among us. He grew up like an ordinary child and in adulthood worked as a carpenter until He began His ministry.

The Son of God came on Christmas to fulfill His Father's plan of redemption for mankind. For those of us who know Jesus as Savior and Lord, the nativity is a reminder of our salvation. We never have to fear death because our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. This blessed assurance has nothing to do with what we have done to merit salvation but only what Christ did to rescue us from sin and condemnation. All we did was respond with faith to the message of the gospel, which began pictorially in the simple setting of His birth.

This amazing baby is described in Colossians 1:15-20.

[15] "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

[16] For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

[17] He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

[18] He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

[19] For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

[20] and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

Mary's newborn was God, Creator, Pre-eminent One, Sustainer, and Firstborn from the dead through resurrection. Knowing His true identity should cause us to bow down in worship and gratitude. Because God the Son was born as a baby, lived as a man, died on the cross for our sins, was resurrected, and ascended back to the Father in heaven, we have the hope of eternal life.

The lowly setting of the nativity was the scene for the miraculous.

Jesus' birth wasn't impressive by human standards, but a person's value is not determined by his surroundings. God's ways are not like ours. We'd expect His Son to be

born in a palace, not in a borrowed stable to a poor couple. Even though it all seemed commonplace on the surface, this birth was a miracle. The holy Son of God became a human baby while at the same time maintaining His deity.

None of this can be explained with human reason, but it can be accepted by faith. And those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and Master receive the greatest of all Christmas gifts—the salvation of their souls and the hope of heaven.

But many people today can't conceive of God becoming a baby. To them the biblical Christmas story is impossible and ludicrous. One of the reasons they can't understand it is because they don't want to. Belief in this story would require them to turn from the sins they love. Since they're not willing to do this, they reject the significance of the manger scene. Yet what they look upon with disdain is their only hope of eternal life.

Everything changed because of Jesus' birth.

Christmas is not about presents, eating, or fun, but about the coming of the Savior. Without the baby in the manger, there would be no cross, no resurrection, and no hope for eternal life. But it all happened according to God's plan of salvation that He prepared before the foundation of the world. His greatest revelation to mankind came through His Son who entered the human race as an infant.

Everything changed the moment Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the body of a virgin named Mary. He came to save sinners and change the lives of everyone who believes in Him. All who receive Him as Savior by faith and repent of their sins are born again and given the gift of eternal life.

The way of salvation is so simple that even a small child can understand and respond in faith to Christ's offer of forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life, yet in many ways it's beyond our comprehension. We can't fathom an

infinite God becoming a tiny baby or grasp the miracles Christ performed or the scope of the price He paid on the cross to purchase us for God. But entrance into His kingdom is simple; all we have to do is heed the Holy Spirit when He convicts us of our sins, turn from them to God, and trust in Jesus and His death on our behalf for salvation.

The nativity reveals God's ways.

Manger scenes are not something to be discarded or considered as merely Christmas decorations. They are a representation of God's ways, which are higher than ours. His work is always perfect, holy, righteous, pure, and true. But those who aren't born again cannot understand His ways so they have no appreciation for the story of Jesus' birth.

God's ways in our individual lives are also higher than our ways. He makes no mistakes even though He allows circumstances and experiences we don't like. In the pain, difficulties, and suffering of life, He is watching over us, and His grace, goodness, love, and mercy toward us will never fail. We can't look to the world or our own reasoning to understand what the Lord is doing in our lives, but we can rest in the knowledge that the baby who was born on Christmas is our Savior, and our present circumstances and eternal future are secure in Him.

► RESPONSE

- What do you think about when you see nativity displays at Christmastime? What does the baby in the manger mean to you? Is He your Lord and Savior, or have you ignored Him in pursuit of your own desires?
- How have you seen God's higher ways revealed in the Christmas story? How are they seen in your own life?

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