



CHRISTMAS

in REVERSE

Nov 24 - Dec 29





CHRISTMAS

I N R E E R S E

From the Cradle to the Crown

Nov 24 - December 29

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CHRISTMAS IN REVERSE

Jesus' life is the most important thing we can ever thing upon. If we allow it, His life will radically transform our thoughts and actions. As we prepare to reflect upon the Birth of Jesus, let us spend time looking at the purposes of Jesus. Jesus, in Luke's Gospel, summarized it with this statement, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

That short four letter word, "save," holds a world of meaning. Jesus came to resurrect himself from the dead so that we can be saved from a life of separation from God. Jesus came to die on a cursed cross that we might be saved from the wages of sin. Jesus came to preach the gospel of repentance, that we might be saved from a life of selfish indulgence. Jesus came to experience the same struggles we experience and to overcome temptation that we might be saved from a life of badgering from the Devil.

What we find in the birth of Jesus is that the totality of His life can not be summarized in one sentence, one action, one event, one moment. For all eternity we will sit at His feet in order to know more of Him.

The invitation to the cradle, to the cross, to the crowning moment of resurrection, is an invitation to behold the Son in all His beauty. May this Christmas be filled with the wonders of Christ. I invite you to come and see Jesus the baby, come and see Jesus the bloodied beaten Son of man hung on the cross, come and see Jesus bursting forth from the grave declaring victory for His followers.

In Him,

TJ



CHRISTMAS IN RE⌂ERSE

The Resurrection

Week 1

November 24, 2019





Prepare your Heart

Each year at this time my home has a fierce debate on when it is appropriate to start playing Christmas Music. Certainly, it can't be before Reformation Day. But can it be before Thanksgiving? My wife seems to think so. My personal opinion is that Christmas music is appropriate to play when Starbucks starts selling Toffee Nut Latte. So, in the Johnson home Christmas season has officially begun.

Maybe you wait till December to begin decorating for Christmas. Maybe you start as soon as October. Maybe you've not taken down your decorations from last year. Regardless of your personal preferences, one thing I hope we all agree on is that the celebration of Jesus coming to earth is appropriate any time of year.

This Sunday we began a new series leading up to the Birth of Jesus. This year we will be looking backwards through the life of Jesus in order to get a proper understanding of what Jesus accomplished through His incarnation. This Sunday we will be invited to come to the empty tomb. We will hear the angel say to us, "come and see."

What we will find is life changing...Jesus is not there; He has risen!



Scripture

Read Matthew 28 and write down your thoughts on what you observed.

New Creation

- Read Matthew 28:1 and Exodus 12:2
- In what ways does the Resurrection parallel with the Exodus Passover?
- In what ways did the Resurrection transform life in the early church?
- In what ways has the Resurrection transformed your life?
- Read 1 Cor. 15:45-48; 2 Cor. 5:17. Discuss the new creation that comes about through the resurrection.
- The Resurrection calls you to radically reorient your life around this miraculous event. In what ways has your life been reoriented around the Resurrection?

Power

- Read Matthew 27:51-53, 28:2, 18
- What people, institution, events, or beings does the resurrection prove Jesus' power over?
- In what areas of your life do you need this resurrection power?
- Read Philippians 3:7-11. What does this passage teach us about Jesus' resurrection power?



Hope

- Read Matthew 28:2,5-6, 8, 10
- Multiple times Jesus' followers were told not to fear. What are some things that cause you worry or fear?
- How does the resurrection overcome fear?
- What are the many ways that the eyewitnesses were given little signs of hope that Jesus was alive? What are some little signs you have received over the years?
- Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. Discuss the ultimate hope of the resurrection.
- What are some ways you can "come and see" daily in order to renew hope?

Worship

- Read Matthew 28:9, 17
- Why did Jesus' followers worship Him after the Resurrection?
- The Resurrection is meant to move us to worship. Take some time to reflect on the Resurrection and allow that to turn into a time of worship.
- Read Matthew 27:51, Hebrews 10:11-23. How does Jesus' death and resurrection open up a new way of worship?
- Read again, Matthew 28:17. Even some of Jesus' closest followers doubted, even after seeing His resurrected body. What are some ways we can encourage faith in one another (See also Hebrew 10:24-25).



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another. Pray that the Resurrection isn't just something we think about, but something that transforms us today!

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



CHRISTMAS IN RE⌂ERSE

The Crucifixion
Week 2
December 1, 2019





Prepare your Heart

One of the things we celebrate during Christmas is the fact that God became human. Certainly we are rejoicing over the fact that in Jesus, God is Immanuel...God WITH us. But there is more to the incarnation than his presence.

Glory wrapped in flesh that the eternal might taste death.

Last week we were reminded that Jesus was born that He might raise Himself from the dead and by so doing He has opened a way to worship. This week find that Jesus was born to die. What a strange thing to ponder. Humans go to great extremes to prolong life. And yet Jesus didn't come to prolong His life but to procure life for His people through His sacrificial act of the crucifixion.

For many, they see the cross as brutal, but to us who are being saved it is beautiful. Matthew Henry challenges us thusly,

Come, and see the victories of the cross. Christ's wounds are thy healings, His agonies thy repose, His conflicts thy conquests, His groans thy songs, His pains thine ease, His shame thy glory, His death thy life, His sufferings thy salvation.



Scripture

Read Matthew 27 and write down your thoughts on what you observed.

The Person of the Cross

- Read Matthew 27:46
- In your own words describe the one who was forsaken by His father.
- Did Jesus deserve the punishment of the cross? Explain.
- How does Jesus differ from everyone else in Matthew 27
- How does the Father describe Jesus in Matthew 3:17 & 17:5. What is the importance of these sayings?
- Was the Father angry or disappointed at the Son during the crucifixion?
- How does Jesus relate to the Old Testament images of sacrifice?

The Purpose of the Cross

- Read Matthew 27:46
- Why was there a need for the cross?
- Was there any other way humanity could have been brought back to God?
- How does the story of Barabbas give us a picture of the purpose of the cross?
- How does the torn veil give us a picture of the purpose of the cross?



The Passion of the Cross

- Read Matthew 27:46
- How does Matthew 27 describe the physical sufferings of Jesus?
- How does the Darkness symbolize the suffering Jesus experienced?
- Read 2 Cor. 5:21. What were the spiritual and emotional sufferings of Jesus?
- Forsaken is a strong word. What does it mean that God forsook Jesus?
- How does the cross teach us that great suffering can be redeemed by God? How does that encourage us today?
- What does the passion of the cross mean for us in our lives today?
- How does the cross demonstrate the love of God?

The Prophetic Cross

- Jesus' cry on the cross is actually a quotation from Psalm 22. Take some time to read that chapter now.
- What does this Psalm teach us about Jesus and His death?
- Why do you suppose Jesus chose this psalm to quote and not another?
- What other prophecies, symbols, or types of Jesus' death have you noticed in the Old Testament?
- What type of response is the cross calling you to today?



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another. Pray that the cross of Christ moves us to the proper response.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



CHRISTMAS

IN RE⌂ERSE

Preach the Gospel
Week 3
December 8, 2019





Prepare your Heart

We have spent the last two weeks at City Church looking at Jesus's death and resurrection, but this week we will rewind the clock and take a look at what happened in between Jesus's baptism and the cross.

I have found that many of us in the church have trouble grasping the significance of the ministry of Jesus in the years leading up to the cross. We remember Jesus's words in John 12 when He says that He came into the world for the hour of His death, but we often forget His words in Luke 4 when He says that He was sent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

This Sunday we will look at the ministry of Jesus as described in the four Gospels in order to understand what the good news of the kingdom of God really is.

Celebrating the good news with you,

Pastor Ben



Scripture

Read Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43. What does the preaching of Good news include?

What is the Kingdom?

- Read Daniel 7:13-14
- How would you describe the Kingdom of God?
- In what way is Jesus described as the King of the Kingdom in Daniel 7?
- What does the Lord's prayer teach us about the Kingdom?
- How is the Kingdom "good news?"

Declare the Kingdom

- What does Matthew 5-7 declare about God's Kingdom?
- How do the parables explain the Kingdom of God?
- How are we called to declare the Kingdom?
- What are the things that keep us from declaring the Kingdom?
- Why is it important to daily declare the Kingdom to ourselves?



Demonstrate the Kingdom

- What do Jesus' miracles demonstrate about the Kingdom?
- What acts of kindness did Jesus do in order to demonstrate the Kingdom?
- Are the demonstrations of the Kingdom for us today?
- Read John 14:12-14. What do these verses teach us about how we are to demonstrate the Kingdom today?



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another. Pray for one another as we focus on Jesus and learn from Him how to declare and demonstrate the Kingdom.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



CHRISTMAS IN RE⌂ERSE

Temptation
Week 4
December 15, 2019





Prepare your Heart

We are getting very close to the birth of Jesus, moving further and further back in time, expanding our understanding of WHY Jesus came. He came to resurrect Himself; to vindicate Himself and secure for His people their own resurrection and eternal life with Him. He came to die in my place that He might adore for Himself a pure bride, without spot or blemish. He came to declare and demonstrate the Kingdom, to set us in a new Kingdom, under a new rule.

After Jesus' baptism we see another purpose for His coming, to be tempted by Satan and prove to all that He really is the true Son of God. Jesus' temptation is a model for us; we can learn a lot about spiritual warfare through His time in the wilderness. But it is so much MORE than just that! This is one of the most pivotal events in all of human history. This is Jesus' garden of Eden moment. This is Israel's wilderness experience. Where Adam sinned, Jesus succeeded. Where Adam plunged us into despair, Jesus plucks us out of death and into life. Where Israel proved to be ungrateful, unfaithful sons...Jesus proves to be the ONLY BEGOTTEN Son.

Each quote of Scripture from Jesus is taken from the book of Deuteronomy. That book itself tells us why the people were tested in the wilderness:

Deut. 8:2 - And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know WHAT WAS IN YOUR HEART...

Here in Matthew 4 we discover what is in Jesus' heart. We are also confronted with what is in our own hearts. It is the gospel's attempt to cause us to run to Jesus, the true good and perfect Son come down to us, not just for Christmas, but for every second of every day.



Scripture

Read Matthew 3:13-4:11. How does the temptation of Jesus compare to Adam and Eve's temptation in Eden and Israel's temptation in the desert?

ADAM AND EVE

JESUS

ISRAEL

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God's Provision

Matthew 4:1-4

- In what ways did God provide for Adam and Eve? In what ways did they fail to trust in God's good provision?
- In what ways did God provide for Israel in the desert? In what ways did they fail to trust in God's good provision?
- In what ways does God provide for you? In what ways are you tempted to not be content with His good provision?
- Read Psalm 84:11 and James 1:17. What does this teach us about provision and contentment? How can we use this to fight our own temptations?

God's Promise

Matthew 4:5-7

- In what ways does Adam and Eve doubt God's promise?
- In what ways does Israel in the desert doubt God's promise?
- In what ways do we doubt God's promise?



Promise Continued

- What promise/truth has God just given about Jesus and how does Satan try to get Jesus to test that promise?
- What does it mean to test God and why is that sin? What are some ways we might unknowingly test God?
- How does Satan misuse scripture (God's promises) here? See the context of Psalm 91
- How can we avoid misusing scripture?

God

Matthew 4:8-11

- What "god" does Adam and Eve bow to and why?
- What "god" does Israel bow to and why?
- What "god" are you tempted to bow to and why?
- Why was this considered a temptation for Jesus?
- Jesus' response shows us that for Jesus God is not a means to an end, but the glory end. All things are to Him and for Him. What are some ways people can use God as a means to an end?

Conclusions:

Matthew 4:8-11

- What does this encounter teach us about Jesus?
- Jesus is a model for us in how to overcome temptation, but He is much more than this. How does Jesus' overcoming of temptation apply to us today?
- How does the Holy Spirit link to the Baptism of Jesus and the Temptation of Jesus. Why is this important?
- Read verse 11. How does this demonstrate the true fulfillment of Psalm 91?



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another. Pray that Jesus' power over temptation both covers us in our failures and motivates us in our fight against sin.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

