

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus." Matthew 1:18-25, NAS95.

When we read this passage we must affirm the fact that the birth of Jesus means many different things to people. For some it records a true historical event, although it contains some mythology like a virgin birth that chronicles the birth of a very good man, whose example is worth following. For some, merely because it is recorded in the bible, it is nothing but a fantasy. For others Jesus is the son of God who came and died to make it possible for people to go to heaven if they live the right kind of life and obey certain church practices. Some believe he was a false Jewish prophet because he claimed to be the son of God. But what are we to understand about what the Scriptures really say about the birth of Jesus?

Our text very precisely tells us why he was born, that is - he came to save His people.

Of course in that single statement there is a whole bible's worth of teaching for the entire purpose of Scripture is not to present us with a detailed account of human history but rather an account of God's historical redemptive purpose through the history of mankind and revealing to us the priority of Jesus Christ through out the entire historical narrative from Genesis to Revelation. Redemptive history has its beginning and end with the One whose name is Jesus and Immanuel.

We know this is true if we truly believe the Scriptures as being the God breathed truth of God. The writer of Hebrews expresses it this way:

1:1* ¶ God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,^{2*} in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.^{3*} And He is the

radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power....”

Peter in essence says the same thing as we have studied:

10* ¶ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries,^{11*} seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.^{12*} It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.

The pre-eminent purpose of Scripture is to reveal God's redemption through Jesus Christ. From the first promise of a deliverer for fallen man in Gen 3:15 to the glorious pictures of the triumphant Lamb and King on His eternal throne in the Revelation, the Scripture is revealing to us the one whose name is Jesus, Immanuel-God with us.

Not only does Scripture declare that he came to save His people but it undeniably says that,

ACTS4:22 "Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you.

23 'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'²⁴ "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days.²⁵ "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' Peter also says,

Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

So the record is clear as to The purpose of Jesus' birth. Everything the Scripture points to concerning His person, place, position, authority, kingship – all of it based upon His coming as the Living Word in the flesh to fulfill God's redemptive purpose.

This incredible event was longed for by some in Israel through out the ages.

Many looked for the military, conquering hero but few were longing for the Savior. The angels announced this glorious advent and we echo the words in the hymns we sing, "Gloria in excelsis deo".

One old covenant believer who saw the coming of the Savior was Simeon. Simeon rejoiced at the wonder of it all when he saw His savior on the steps of the temple.

25* ¶ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.26* And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.27* And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,28* then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29* "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;30* For my eyes have seen Your salvation,31* Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,32* A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."

Simeon's words answers for us who the people are that Jesus came to save.

They are Jews and Gentiles who are the world that John writes of:

Jn.316 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

It is true that one day Jesus will be the judge of every soul that ever existed and eternal judgment will be passed on each and every one. But John is making clear that the redemptive purpose of Jesus is why He came. John's context is to show that men are in darkness and that living in spiritual darkness is the natural condition of man. As Jesus is the light, believers are enlightened to the eternal truth that Christ came to save sinners and sinners that repent and believe will be spared condemnation.

Jesus came to save His people and to deliver them from the kingdom of darkness and to transform them into His glorious kingdom of light. This is only possible because He is Immanuel-God with us. It is through Christ that sinful men are reconciled with God.

He is The Prince of Peace and those who are reconciled with God have experienced peace with God through the blood of the cross. Never forget, the birth was only the entrance of Immanuel into the world of men. The purpose was the cross and the eventual resurrection unto glory which secures the place of every believer in Christ for all of eternity. When Christ ascended He sent His spirit who is the down payment and guarantee that all who believe are sealed and kept by God until the final day of redemption when Jesus comes to consummate His glorious kingdom.

But the salvation of those who are His cost Him.

Our Savior Jesus gladly and without hesitation endured the cross for us. He became the substitute for those who would be His people and suffered the wrath of God for them. We are guilty of sin and the suffering man knows in this world, in all of its hideous extremes, exists only because of sin.

Man in his natural condition is a hater of God. All mankind is born in trespasses and sins and are dead spiritually. All men are rebels against God and are the children of the devil in that they have their hearts set against God and want self rule and self supremacy. Man in his natural condition wants to exalt himself as a god or wants to make gods in his own image. This makes a god more understandable and approachable on our terms. This way we can manipulate how our god is supposed to act. We make up his attributes to reflect ours. This way we can have separate gods that are nice or angry, gods that are compassionate or spiteful. And the gods of men can easily be nothing more than Satanic delusions where he is truly man's lord and master. How is it that men can gladly sacrifice their own children in burning fire or engage in all kinds of hedonistic behavior and really believe that they are pleasing a god? All of these wretched practices come from the heart of man. Jesus said,

Mt 15:19* "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

As man has rejected the light of God, God has turned man over to his own wickedness and therefore to suffer the consequences.

Romans 1:18* For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,^{19*} ¶ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.^{20*} For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.^{21*} For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.^{22*} Professing to be wise, they became fools,^{23*} and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.^{24*} Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.^{25*} For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.^{26*} For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural^{27*} and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one

another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.^{28*} And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,^{29*} being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips,^{30*} slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,^{31*} without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;^{32*} and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

But Jesus, Immanuel-God with us, came into the world to save His people from the consequences of their our own wickedness.

So we clearly see from the Scripture that Jesus came to save His people and we know who the people are. We can also understand what it was that Jesus did to make it possible for His people to be saved.

But what is the process in our lives that must be evidenced to know whether or not we are saved.

Jesus first public proclamation was repent and believe, for the kingdom of God is at hand. As Jesus was preparing for the purpose for which He came, He was making it known how one would prove to be one of His. Repentance from sin and belief in Jesus are necessary.

Men must repent, men must believe. Jesus cannot do this for us.

But how is this possible if we are god haters by nature and do not have a natural desire to come to God thru Christ. Scripture has made it clear that we will not willingly acknowledge the God of Scripture as He is and according to His terms yet the Scripture says we must willingly repent and believe? Does hearing the Gospel somehow awaken a dead consciousness that God might really be who He says He is. Do we all of a sudden begin to think about Christ in a different way by our my own abilities and reasoning of a so we can willingly repent and believe if we choose to?

The answer to that is no because the Scripture does not say that.

We have no ability yet we must willingly repent and believe.

How is this possible? It is possible because of the grace of God.

Jesus said unless a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

In John's gospel he explains what Jesus meant when he quotes an illustration given by Jesus"

Jn.3:8* "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9* Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

To be born of the Spirit is to be born from above, to be born again to a living hope as Peter writes in his first letter. Jesus illustration is saying that being born by the Spirit is an unanticipated supernatural act. You cannot plan on it occurring. You cannot know when or if it will occur. But other Scripture makes it clear as to how it occurs.

We already quoted from one of Peter's sermons so lets return to, Pentecost.

22* "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--23* this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.24* "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

25* "For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.26* 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;

27* BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.28* 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'29* "Brethren, I may

confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.30* "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,31* he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.32* "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.33* "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.34* "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET."

36* "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."37* ¶ Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"38* Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.39* "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

40* And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"41* So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

So part of how one is born of the Spirit requires the hearing of the Gospel.

Now we must look ,at some other Scripture to undertand the of the supernatural act of God in the heart of man that causes us to freely repent and believe.

Paul writes in Romans 2:4, or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Then he writes in Romans 10: 16,17

Romans However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

So one must hear the Gospel. Faith comes to us from hearing the Gospel. It does not exist without it. Repentance is a gift from God. Then we read in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians,

2:8* For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9* not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Now we know that faith is a gift from God. That cannot be missed in this verse.

Grace is already free and undeserved, it is inherent in its meaning. What is a gift in this verse is faith, so that man cannot ever boast that he had a faith in God by his own determination. This prevents any person from saying I overcame my inherited wickedness by my own strength of will power and reason.

So we must conclude that the supernatural act that Jesus illustrates by the wind blowing and no one knowing from where it comes from is made spiritual truth this way:

1. we must hear the gospel to be saved
2. when hearing the gospel God must grant us faith to believe the truth we hear about Christ
3. when hearing the truth we must recognize who we are and realize we now have a desire to repent of our sins when we never did before.
4. this is only possible because repentance and faith are both gifts of God
5. all who repent and believe are those who Jesus came to save

John writes this in his Gospel,

John1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,^{13*} who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.^{14*} And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Scripture makes it clear that being born of the Spirit is just that. No man can be one of those whom Jesus came to save unless they are born by the will of God.

Our text this morning said:

Mt. 1:21* "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."22* Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:23* "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

Jesus is the Word made flesh and He dwelt among us. His name is Immanuel-God with us.

If you do not know Christ today, your may be trying to figure out whether or not God came to save you. That is not your concern nor is it mine.

Your concern is do you believe the Gospel? Do you believe that Jesus came to save you from your sin. Do you have a desire within you to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you willing to admit that you deserve nothing but the wrath of God but know that Christ has convinced you that He is who He is and that all sinners who repent and believe will be His people based on the promise of the Gospel? Have you a sense of your sinfulness knowing that it separates you from God but that Christ has died in your place so that you can know God.

And if you know Christ today, are you savoring the beauty of your Immanuel?

Are you treasuring Him above all other things?

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,

Christ the Lord.