

Call to Obedience #275
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Revisiting the basics!

WHY JESUS CAME

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There are times when we need to renew the basics, aren't there? Whenever something goes wrong, wise men look to see if they have violated the basics. Unwise men assume that the basics have been kept, and they immediately start looking for the problem in the most unlikely places.

When my car doesn't want to go anywhere, does it not make sense to look to see if there is gas in the tank or if there is electricity going to the motor or if there is oil in the crankcase or if the air-intake is clogged? Those are the basics!

In the spiritual realm, all backsliding is a result of Christians having neglected one of the four basics. As an automobile needs gas, electricity, oil, and air to run, so the Christian—in order to live victoriously—must keep four basic essentials: daily Bible reading, daily prayer, witnessing for Jesus, and obedience to every leading of the Holy Spirit. Without any of these four elements, the Christian engine will not run. It is impossible to backslide if you keep these four basics. Any time something goes wrong anywhere, check to see if there has been a neglect in one of these areas.

So, talking about basics—why did Jesus come? What was the great idea about it? What are the basics here? Why did he come down here on earth to be beat up, to be humiliated and murdered on a cruel cross? What is this really all about?

If we don't understand why Jesus came, if we don't get the basics of the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension, then we religious people are of all men the most miserable. We must have a clear and precise understanding of why Jesus came to earth so that we can align our lives to this cardinal, divine purpose.

Of course, the primary purpose of Jesus' coming has been declared to us by the angel Gabriel when he spoke to Joseph, "...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Saved from Our Sins!

That is it. This explanation was not given to humankind later in the life of Jesus but shortly after his conception. So, the ultimate purpose of Jesus' coming is not to give you a better home—although Jesus can do that; it is not to find you a spouse—although Jesus can do that; it is not to heal you from sickness—although Jesus can do that; it is not to make you prosper—although Jesus can do that; it is not to help you with algebra or calculus—although Jesus is the smartest man in the universe, and he can do that, too.

How is it that, although the angel told us the primary reason why Jesus came, we so often get bogged down, thinking he came for all kinds of other reasons than to save us from the sin problem? Is it not true that Jesus' real mission is lost in many believers' lives in the rough and tumble of a busy schedule. We expect Jesus to be there for us for all these other things: for our wants and our problems. And we measure Jesus' performance toward us on how he does on these "others."

The angel said, as the process of the Incarnation was at work, "...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

So the whole revelation of why Jesus came is immediately wrapped up in the Incarnation. And this incarnation is one of the most powerful events that separates Christianity from all other religions! God came down from heaven, taking on human form, living among us as man and God, dying and rising from the dead, and ascending back to his Father, from where he sends the Holy Spirit into believers' hearts. Oh, I like this—I like this story! There is nothing bigger and better out there anywhere in the world. And here is the icing on the cake: Jesus did all that to save us from the sin problem, the sin problem that has plagued mankind for thousands of years. Oh, what a wonder that he came down for that.

And what a contrast Jesus was to the Greek gods. Remember, when Jesus "came down," it was during the Roman empire that followed the Greek empire. At that time, the Romans provided the muscles and the Greeks the brains. So it was that Greek was spoken throughout the empire and not the Latin of the Romans. And to the Greeks, the gods were so remote, so "perfect" that they didn't even fuss with creation. They believed that creation, including man, was so contaminated that their gods had nothing to do with it whatsoever, so that these gods delegated the creation to intermediate spirits that were between man and themselves.

Considering the world of the Greeks' "god-remoteness" and the world of the Hebrews who did not dare to pronounce the name of "God," how do these words strike you: Jesus said, put me into human flesh so I can know them and give them power over sin that they no longer shall be victims to it or plagued by it. As Dennis Kinlaw said, "He (Jesus, the second member of the Trinity) came down. He became one of us so that he could be one of us? Today, in the inner circle of the Trinity, there is a human person—Jesus Christ. God has welded himself eternally to his own creation."

Oh, yes, we talked about Jesus helping us in all areas of life from sickness to math, but this is the real reason why he came—to save us from sin, to keep us out of sin every day of our lives. And it is in this marvelous descent of our Lord Jesus Christ that we get to know God his Father as a loving God, as a compassionate God, as a caring God, as a personal God as he was never known to humankind before. Jesus, in his descent to and life on earth, reveals the true nature of the Father to us to the extent that he could say unabashedly to Philip, "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Yes, "...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus came to solve the sin problem. Do you have a sin problem? Jesus came to save you from it. Jesus came to get you to the end of the sin problem. Are you out of it yet, or are you still in it?

Indeed, one of the greatest heresies of our time is that too many do not believe that Jesus came to deliver us from the sin problem but only to forgive us and leave us short of deliverance from the problem and power of sin. Today's popular gospel is FORGIVENESS for our sin and not SALVATION from our sin, as the angel said it should be. But, yet, the problem is as old as the first century because there were some people in the church of Rome who believed that under the power of grace we can continue in sin with impunity. Therefore, Paul writes:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?...Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:1–2, 6–7).

Why did Jesus come? "...that henceforth we should not serve sin." Does that sound like the angel's proclamation from Matthew?

Servants of Sin or of Jesus?

We are stuck with forgiveness and never seem to get to being "freed from sin." As long as we allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies, we are the servants of sin and not the servants of Jesus. And his righteousness will not move into any heart that is a servant of sin.

We choose our masters, don't we, and once we have chosen our master, we obey that master. If you choose to work for McDonald's, you put yourself under the domain of McDonald's, and you will serve McDonald's, grilling and cleaning just they way they want you to do it. Paul says, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16).

We must make two vital choices to live with Jesus forever. First, we must be born again. But the second is just as important as the first: we must decide—reckon—our body dead to sin, never to touch sin again. We must put ourselves under the domain of Jesus! Once we determine by faith to be dead to sin, the power of God is activated to help us. And, thank God, this is what the Roman Christians did as a whole, because Paul continues in the next verse by saying, "But God be thanked, that ye WERE the servants of sin, but ye HAVE OBEYED from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (v. 17, emphasis added).

And it is this which put the Roman congregation into divine history. Rarely are any congregations remembered from history, because most are spotted and stained by division, strife—in other words, carnality—and by voting pastors in and out time and again. But the Roman church made divine history and world history because she said goodbye to sin. She had a faith that Jesus was able to deliver her from the domain of sin. Paul attests to her doing just this in his opening words to this congregation, saying, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). This was saving faith. These Romans, with rare exceptions, knew the meaning of Jesus' coming. "...he shall save his people from their sins."

They took the power Jesus showed on Calvary and at the empty tomb and made it their very own. Glory to God! Nowhere can I find a more beautiful expression of this than in the Amplified Bible in Romans 6:10: "For by the death He died, He died to sin [ending His relation to it] once for all; and the life that He lives, He is living to God [in unbroken fellowship with Him]."

At the cross, Jesus ended his relationship with sin. He had left the splendor, the remoteness of heaven, to come down to us, to be one of us. He had even tasted our sin as it was, but then at the cross, he walked away from sin to never touch it again—forever—in order to have unbroken fellowship with his Father.

But now get to the real dynamite verse: "Even so consider yourselves also dead to sin and your relation to it broken, but alive to God [living in unbroken fellowship with Him] in Christ Jesus" (v.11 AMPLIFIED).

Did you get this? Do you get the "Even so..."? Yes, perhaps, you are born again, but now break your relationship with sin once for all. Be done with it. Don't touch sin again, and begin to live in unbroken fellowship with God. That, my friend, is the real meaning of why Jesus came. And once you have that, it does not matter much in this life—and certainly not at all in the life to come—whether or not you get any or all of the other miracles you think you need.

So, the much quoted verse of Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," was not so much written for the unsaved—for they know that already. It was primarily written to the believers who think that they can continue in sin—to which Paul says, "God forbid...For the wages of sin is death" (vv. 2, 23). Yes, for the believers, too!

We looked at the basics, the basics of the salvation doctrine. If we are off in this area, we will be off in many other areas of our Christian faith. Therefore, as Christ has saved you and delivered you from sin—go and sin no more!