

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Paradox of Christmas

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1233

We come now to our time for the study of the word of God this morning on this Christmas Sunday. Our attention, of course, is drawn to Christmas. As I was thinking about what I might share with you, I was struck again with the dichotomy between Christmas for the Christian and Christmas for the world. I was sitting in my office looking at two Christmas cards. One of them had a fat man with a white beard on it and a couple of little elves and it said, "Ho, ho, ho." The other had a manger with a star and a baby and it said, "Thou shalt call His name Emmanuel." I began to think about the paradox of Christmas. What is Christmas? For some it is peace toward men of good will. For the world it is mass confusion, furious rushing around, and a rising suicide rate.

That lovely night 2,000 years ago one star lit the Heaven and marked the spot where the Christ was born where God was made flesh. Today a million neon signs mark the spot where the sale begins, or where you can throw away your money buying what isn't needed and doesn't fit anyway.

The first Christmas was a poor one, with a manger and a stable. Our Christmas is a dazzling display of wealth beyond belief as millions spend millions of dollars to ignore the true meaning of Christmas. Once wise men came to worship Jesus, and today fools have parties of wickedness, ignoring all that Jesus came to accomplish. The babe of Bethlehem was born a Savior to give to men all that they need. He has been replaced by a huckster named Santa Claus who takes what is valuable and gives tinsel in return.

That's the paradox of Christmas. Who does it belong to? As I thought further about the paradox of Christmas, I thought about the great paradox of Christmas. Who is Jesus Christ? I begin to look at some of the prophecies and I begin to say, now I wonder what prophecies might be exciting for us to study and look at the birth of Christ? I came across the idea of the paradoxical prophecies. Did you know that the Old Testament is loaded with apparently contradictory prophecies about Christ? Did you know that? Did you know that there is no way that Old Testament prophets could ever have understood the fullness of the coming Messiah, just on the virtue of the apparent contradiction in their own prophecies. For example, a prophet would sit down and the Holy Spirit would inspire him and he would write that there was coming a conqueror who would rule the world, who would be the Savior and deliverer of men.

The same prophet would sit down later and write about a man of sorrow who was lonely and rejected. The prophet would write about a king of glory and a king of Heaven, an eternal Savior, the desire of

all nations, and then a prophet would sit down and write that there was no beauty that men would desire Him, and that He was a servant bloody, suffering, crucified and dead.

How do you resolve these things? The prophet would write that He would come in flaming fire to take vengeance on His enemies. The other prophet would write that He would come preaching peace. So the prophets couldn't even understand what they themselves wrote about Christmas.

It was a paradox to them. The last of all the Old Testament prophets was trapped in the paradox. His name was John the Baptist. In fact, John was so confused that when he was a prisoner he sent some of his disciples to Jesus. The record of that encounter is in the 11 Chapter of the gospel of Matthew. You see, everything that John had said about the Messiah, he received from God. Luke 3:2 regarding John says, "The word of God came to John." So when John proclaimed the Messiah, it wasn't his opinion. It was revelation. John was declaring the Messiah and he was saying certain things about the Messiah. You say, "Well, what was he saying about the Messiah?" Well, he was saying that the Messiah was going to be a judge, that when the Messiah came terrible things would happen. So John says, for example in Luke 3:7, "Oh generation of snakes.

Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come. Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance." This was his message. John said there was coming a Messiah and He would be a terrifying judge.

In Matthew 3:7 he said the same thing and in Verse 10 he said, "The ax is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree which brings forth evil fruit or doesn't bring forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Verse 12 "His fan is in His hand. He'll thoroughly purge the floor, gather the wheat in the granary and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire." That was John's Message about the coming Messiah.

Forbidding. Judgmental. Damning. That's the Messiah that John anticipated.

Then Jesus came. You know what He did? Mostly deeds of mercy. He healed the sick. He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and voices to the dumb and life to the dead. John didn't understand it, because John didn't understand that that was also part of the prophecy, or he had forgotten. So he sends his disciples from his prison to inquire of Jesus. He was taken prisoner, you remember, by King Herod Antipas. He was locked in the gloomy fortress of Machirus which is about five miles east of the Dead Sea and fifteen miles south of the northernmost tip.

It's in the most bleak and desolate place imaginable. It was originally constructed as a Herodian fortress. There was John and it didn't seem to be going the way he had anticipated because Messiah was to come and to judge and set up His kingdom. There wasn't any judgment and there wasn't any Kingdom. Here was He, the greatest who ever lived according to Matthew 11:11, in prison. Verse 1 of

Matthew 11 It came to pass when Jesus had ceased commanding His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. When John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" John says, "Are there two Messiahs?" When John heard the things that Jesus did, he couldn't justify those with what he had said Jesus would do.

John was trapped in the paradox of prophecy. He was confused. His faith was growing thin. He failed to see how the resolution of such a conflict existed. Notice the reply of Jesus to the messengers from John. Jesus answered them and said, "Go. Show John again those things which you do hear and see." The blind received their sight. The lame walked. The lepers were cleansed. The deaf heard. The dead were raised up. The poor had the gospel preached to them. Now why did he do that?

Why didn't He give John some more specific answer? Why didn't He say, "You go remind him of those?" Now watch. Because in the words that He used in Verse 5. They are really a paraphrase of Isaiah 35:5 and 35:6 and Isaiah 61:1. He is saying, "You go back and remind John of some other prophecies that I have to fulfill first."

The problem John had was the problem that all the Old Testament prophets had. They didn't see any distinction between the First Coming and the Second. So He says to the messengers, "You tell him to hang in there.

I've got some other things to do that are also recorded prophetically."

The very words that He gave were almost right out of Isaiah. Verse 6 is a gentle rebuke "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, or shall not stumble because of what I am doing." What is he saying?

Hey. Blessed is the man who trusts me. You haven't seen it all yet.

Trust me. So you see, John had that problem. There is no way that an Old Testament prophet could ever understand all of the resolution of these things. The New Testament commentary makes sense out of all the paradox. One of the greatest verifications of the Christian faith, I think, are the diverse and apparently contradictory prophecies. You see, they could never be reproduced. They could never be counterfeited.

They could never be falsified. Such amazing prophecies prevent wicked men or overzealous disciples from falsely fulfilling them. Look at First Peter 1:10. It says there, "Of which salvation," and of course, this is the salvation that Christ brought, "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what person or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ

and the glory that should follow. Now notice this. It says in Verse 10 the prophets inquired and the prophets searched diligently.

It says in Verse 11 the prophets searched. What were they searching?

They were searching the things they prophesied in Verse 10 and the things they testified of in Verse 11 from the Holy Spirit. They were searching their own writings to figure them out. The paradoxes were so obvious that even they couldn't resolve the sufferings of Christ with the glory that should follow. They couldn't figure out what person or what time these things could come together. What person could fulfill all this, and in what time could this be done? So they searched diligently for a clear understanding of the things which they themselves had written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. You see, there is no way to falsify such things. One of the great proofs that they didn't write their own minds, but that they wrote the mind of God was the contradictions which they wrote. Men wouldn't do that. God did it because He knew the resolution would come in Christ. They couldn't see that. Not even John understood it, and John thought there must be two Messiahs. In Matthew 13:17, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see and haven't seen them, and to hear the things which you hear and haven't heard them." Back in Verse 16 "Blessed are your eyes, for they see and your ears for they hear." Why, you have the benefit of knowing the things they desperately wanted to see resolved.

Let's look at some of the paradoxes. What are they? What are the paradoxes the prophets had a hard time with? The first one is the paradox of the god man. Point one, the paradox of the god man. I want to show you two passages in Isaiah to begin with. Isaiah 7:14 is the first. Here is the prophecy: "Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign." Now mark it, friends. The Lord is going to do something unusual. When it says the Lord is going to give you a sign. That's going to be something supernatural, right? It has to be. Otherwise, it wouldn't be a sign from God. If the Lord said, "I'm going to show you a sign.

It's going to rain tomorrow." Well, it may or may not be. You could say, "Well, maybe the Lord has a better view of the cloud structure."

But if the Lord says, "I'm going to give you a sign," it's going to be something supernatural. Now watch. "Behold, the virgin shall conceive."

Now friends, you don't have to know much to know that's supernatural.

A child born without a father. A virgin? You say, "Ah! Almah can mean young woman." Some of the liberal translations translate it that way.

Almah may mean young woman, yes. But in the Old Testament Almah is always used of virgin. The Septuagint uses it of virgin. The New Testament comment is quoting this and uses the word virgin. Could you imagine that it says this: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold! A woman will have a baby." (Laughter) That isn't a sign. That's going on all the time. The very language indicates the supernatural. The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.

You say, "What's so important about that? I know somebody named Emmanuel."

I'll tell you what's important about that. That only became a name because of that verse. El, those two letters E-I, that's God. El Shaddai.

El Machadischim. El Elion. Bethel is the house of God. Those two letters mean God. Emmanuel means "God with us." Notice, you have a paradox. A son who is God. Now wait a minute. How can that be? A child born of a woman who is God?

Look at Isaiah 9, and you know Isaiah had problems with this. Isaiah 9:6 "For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given." I thought he could handle that. "The government shall be upon His shoulders.

His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the Father of eternity, the Prince of peace. How could a child be born who is the mighty God? There's the paradox. How could a child be born in time who is the Father of eternity? The paradox is clear. There is a child. He is human. He is God. A woman will bring forth a son who made the woman who brought forth the son. Could it be? If the .

Scripture is true, it better be. I draw you to Luke, Chapter 1, Verse 30 "And the angels said to her, 'Fear not, Mary. For thou hast found favor with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great. He shall be called the son of the highest. There is none higher. The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary had the same problem the prophets did. Mary said unto the angels, "How shall this be? Seeing I know not a man." I never had a relationship with a man. How could I have a baby?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee. The power of the highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God."

Now you see, the prophecy was that Mary would have a baby but it would not be just an ordinary baby. It will be a holy thing. Is any baby ever born into the world holy? No. This is unusual. "And the son of God." Son, not in the sense of offspring. Son in the sense of incarnate servitude. He is God. He is man. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. Listen. Jesus the man is the Jehovah God of

the Old Testament. I was reading a book this week that just clearly outlined that.

Just to compare a couple things that were most fascinating, do you remember the vision that Isaiah had in the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord high lifted up and His train filled the temple."

The word "Lord." all through here is "Jehovah". You can always tell the word "Lord" is "Jehovah." It is capitalized in Verse 3 "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts." Now here Isaiah is having a vision of Jehovah, God. Now I want you to notice John 12:39. Listen: "Here according from Isaiah is our Lord. Therefore, they could not believe because Isaiah said he blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts, they should not see with their eyes, understand with their hearts and be converted and I should heal them." These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory and spoke of Him. Of whom? Of Christ. Notice, the antecedent to "His" and the antecedent to "Him" in 41 is Christ. Now what does that say? The passage Isaiah 6, "I saw Jehovah," is referred to Christ in John 12.

Jesus is Jehovah. In Isaiah 40, you have amazing prediction regarding the work of John the Baptist. I want to show you just this illustration.

Verse 1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," saith your God. "Speak tender to Jerusalem. Cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished. Her iniquity is pardoned. She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that cries in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Capital letters again, "Jehovah."

Prepare ye the way of Jehovah.

Matthew, Chapter 3, here came John fulfilling the prophecy preaching.

Verse 3 in Matthew 3 "For this is He." He's preaching about Christ.

"This is He that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord.'"

Who is the Lord that is the Jehovah of Isaiah 40? It is the Jesus of the gospels. Jesus is Jehovah. Leviticus 19:3 "Keep my Sabbaths. I am the Jehovah, your God." Matthew 12:8 Jesus said, "For the son of man is Jehovah of the Sabbath.." He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Joel 2:32 "It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved on the name of Jehovah. Romans 10:13 Paul points to Jesus and says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He applies that passage to Jesus.

He is Jehovah. There's the paradox. He is God. He is man. Think about it. Think about what the prophets wrote. Genesis 3:15 "The Messiah would be the seed of the woman." Daniel 7:13 "He would be the son of man." Psalm 2:7 "He would be the son of God." Genesis 22:18 "The seed of Abraham." Psalm 132:11 "He would be the fruit of David's body.." How could one person be all of that? The seed of the woman, the son the son of David.

The amazing complex of paradoxical prophecies. How can God be man and man be God and yet be the son of man and the son of God? How can one be the son of man and yet have no human father and be borne in the seed of a woman when a woman has no seed and be the creator of that woman at the same time? No wonder the prophets wondered. (Laughter) God did it so there couldn't be a counterfeit. Jesus was all of these.

He was God and He was man. The word made flesh. He was the seed of the woman, virginborn without a human father. Galatians 4:4 says, "He was born of a woman." He was the son of man. He said himself in Luke 19:10 the son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. He is the son of God. Read Hebrew 1, Verse 2 and Verse 5. Matthew 1:1 said, "He is the seed of Abraham and the seed of David. He was everything, and all the paradox resolves in Him." Boy, when you start getting into the nature of Jesus Christ and His person, it becomes the amazing complex of fulfilled prophecy imaginable.

Listen to Matthew 22 Jesus absolutely nailed the pharisees to the wall in this particular passage. Matthew 22:41 The pharisees were always asking Him questions, so He thought He'd ask them one.

While the pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, "What .

think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?". People have come to me many times and said, "I don't understand how Christ can be God and the son of God. Don't worry about it. I don't understand it either. I just believe it. You know, what no one really understands is that Christ knew it was a difficult problem and He posed it here. "Whose son is He?"

They said, "The son of David.". He said unto them, "How then, doth David in the spirit call Him Lord?" Saying in Psalm 110, "The Lord said unto My Lord 'Sit thou on My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

"If He is the son of David, then why does David call Him his Lord in Psalm 110? If David called Him Lord, how is He his son?" Do you know what their reaction was? "And no man was able to answer Him a word.

Neither dared any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."

(Laughter) How can He be the son of David and the God of David? He is.

That proves that Jesus is saying He is both son of David, human, and God of David, divine. It is absolutely blasphemy to say that Jesus is .

anything less. Paul prayed in Colossians 2:2 and 2:3 that Christians would have all the riches of a full assurance and understanding of the mystery. What was the mystery of God, even the Father and Christ. How can God be both? Yet He is. I don't know how He's both. I don't care how He is. I just believe He is. He can solve that problem. I can't handle it.

But I know that Jesus said this: John 14:9 "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." That's a paradox, friends. That's the paradox of Christmas. The babe was God. Let me give you another one.

The paradox of the line of Judah. This is fascinating. Go back to Genesis 49:10. The paradox of the line of Judah. You know, as far back as Genesis the prophet Moses makes the statement that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah. That's a problem, as we will see.

Genesis 49:10. There's 50 chapters, so it's near the end: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah. The scepter was the symbol of a king, and the right to rule. The scepter will not depart from Judah," in other words, there will be no king outside the line of Judah, "nor a lawgiver from between his feet," That's a very vivid picture of progeny there.

"until Shiloh come." Shiloh means the one to whom it belongs, or the one whose right it is. "And unto him shall all the gathering of the people be." Now watch. "Whoever this king is, he is going to come from tribe of Judah. No other tribe is going to have a king. Now he took the twelve tribes of Israel and narrowed it down to one tribe and said he will come from Judah. Shiloh means the one whose right it is, the coming king. The ruler. So you say, "What's so paradoxical about that? I mean, Moses wrote that down." Well listen, Moses wrote a few other things too that must have confused it. Go back to Chapter 38 and I'll show you one of the most interesting incidents in Genesis. Judah, now remember Messiah is going to come from Judah's line, but Judah was an evil man. He found that he was going along there thinking probably evil thoughts and his son had died and left him a daughter-in-law. His daughter-in-law covered herself up, went out where Judah was going to come, and apparently he was in the market for a prostitute and she played the part. She seduced by harlotry, Judah into committing relationships with her, and apparently he never took her veil off to see who she was.

So Judah, through whom was to come the godly line, David and Christ, had committed adultery with his own daughter-in-law. Look what happens in Chapter 38, Verse 24. But he didn't know it. It came to pass after about three months (that's about how long it takes to tell whether anything's resulted from

the relationship) and it was told Judah, "Tamar, thy daughter-in-law, has played the harlot, and also behold, she is with child by harlotry.." These are bastard children. Illegitimate. Judah said, "Bring her forth and let her be burned." Oh, that self-righteous pride and double standard. According to Deuteronomy 22 you stoned people for that. Burning was mentioned in Leviticus 20:14 and 21:9, only in cases of excessive crime. He was really playing self-righteous. When she was brought forth she said to her father-in-law, "By the man whose these are am I with child. Discern, I pray, whose are these, the signet and bracelets and staff?" When she had seduced him she had taken those things from him in order that she might come back at him with them. "Uh, whose . are It dawned on him horribly. Judah acknowledged them and said, "She hath been more righteous than I because that I gave her not to Shela, my son." You see, when a Jewish son died if there was an eligible son left his wife was handed over to that eligible son.

But he didn't do that. He knew her again no more. He ceased from the sin. It came to pass in the time of her travail twins were in her womb. It came to pass that when she travailed that the one put out his hand. This is interesting. The midwife took and bound on his hand a scarlet thread saying, "This came out first." He started to come out and she wrapped that thing around. But he pulled his hand back and his brother came out. There must have been a little hassle in there.

(Laughter) "What are you doing here? The breach is upon you." His name was called Perez, and afterward came out his brother who had the scarlet thread upon his hand. His name was called Zera. So out of Judah's sin were born twins Perez and Zera. You say, "What's so significant about this? Moses wrote that. Moses wrote that Judah, by harlotry, had illegitimate children. Moses also wrote that the Messiah's line would not cease from the tribe of Judah. But, Moses also wrote this in Deuteronomy 23:2 "A bastard shall not enter the congregation of the Lord. He shall not enter the congregation of the Lord." Twice' in one verse. If the offspring of Judah is an illegitimate curse line, how could David ever reign? And if David never reigned then Messiah could never be the son of the king and could never inherit David's throne. Well Moses must have scratched his head and said, "How can it be in Judah, when Judah is an illegitimate offspring, and how can Messiah come from such illegitimacy? Ah. But Moses also wrote this in Deuteronomy 23:2 "A bastard shall not enter the congregation of the Lord even even to the tenth generation." Up to the tenth generation.

At the tenth generation the curse was removed.

I draw your attention to Matthew, Chapter 1, and I want to show you something. It's fantastic. Verse 3. You say, "Are there anything in these genealogies of interest?" Oh! Fabulous. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob and Jacob begot Judah and his brother.

"And Judah illegitimately begot Perez and Zera of Tamar." Now notice this. Perez begot Hezren (that's two), and Hezren begot Ram (3) and Ram begot Abenedab (4), Abenedab begot Nashon (5),

Nashon begot Solomon (6), Solomon begot Boaz (7) Boaz begot Obid (8), Obid begot Jessie (9), and Jessie begot David. How many? Ten. The curse was removed with David. You see, God does things exactly and precisely according to His word, so that when David was born as the tenth generation from the sin, the curse was eliminated. David had every right to enter the congregation of the Lord and the Messianic line was purified. That's how accurate God's word is. The prophet would never have known that. David wasn't born. Ten generations later, clean and pure.

I want you to know this: that God is a forgiving God. Did you know that there are only four women mentioned in this genealogy up to Mary?

Four women. Three prostitutes and an idolatress. Don't tell me God isn't a God of grace when He includes three prostitutes and an idol worshiper in His Messianic line. People say, "There is no grace in the Old Testament." Don't you believe it. Rahab the harlot became actually the wife of Solomon and begot Boaz. Boaz married the idolatress, Ruth, and she was the grandmother of David. Ten generations after that seductress Tamar, the purification of the line took place. God is a God of grace. The paradox is resolved in Christ.

Let me give you another one. Thirdly, the paradox of Messiah's home. You know, Michael 5:2 (don't look it up) says, "Though thou be little among the sons of Judah, Bethlehem, Ephreda, out of these shall He come forth who is to be ruler over my people." Where was Jesus to come from, said Michael? Bethlehem. Hosea came along and said in Hosea 11:1 "Out of Egypt have I called my son." The prophet must have scratched his head and said, "Micah says Bethlehem. Isaiah says Egypt." Just to make it worse, Isaiah said something, only his was a veiled statement. Chapter 11, Verse 1 "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a nazar shall grow out of his roots.

Nazar means sprout. That's interesting. There was a town in the New Testament known as Nazareth. Sprout town. (Laughter) That's what it means. There will be a shoot out of sprout town. (Laughter) It's sort of like a hick from Hicksville. (Laughter)

So, the prophet says, "Bethlehem." The prophet again says, "Egypt."

A third says, "Sprout town." Nazareth. How can they resolve these things? Again I say to you, men didn't write the Bible or they wouldn't have written that. Look at Matthew 2. Absolute fulfillment. Matthew 2:1 "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east." Why did they come? Verse 5 Because they said in Bethlehem of Judea, "For thus it is written by the prophet. Thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of these shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel." He was born in Bethlehem because that's what the prophet said. You say, "Well what about Egypt?" Oh. What about Egypt? Look at Verse 13 "And when they were departed behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Arise. Take the young child and his

mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young child and destroy him." He arose and took the young child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt. They were there until the death of Herod that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." There is Hosea 11:1 fulfilled. Isn't it amazing that God even orders the political situation of the Herods to force the issues to fulfill prophecy. He makes the wrath of men to praise Him. You say, "Well, what about Nazareth?" That's in Verse 23. He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene or a sprout."

Why didn't He settle in Judah? Why did He settle in Nazareth? I'll tell you why. In a fit of anger Herod, who was always changing His will (he had a problem with his world, he was always changing it) shortly before his death and put Archelaus, the worst of all of his living sons, in charge of Judea and moved Anaplis to rule in Galilee and Perea(?). When he did that, he imposed upon Judea the worst possible ruler. In fact, Archelaus has slaughtered 3,000 Jews at one time in a particular execution.

Do you know why Joseph didn't go there? Verse 21 says he arose and took the young child and his mother and came to the land of Israel, but when he heard Archelaus did reign in Judea in the place of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go there. If Archelaus doesn't take over Judea, Joseph goes there and Jesus is not from Nazareth. Do you get it? God has ordered every event in history to fulfill His prophecies. There is now way that Isaiah knew what was going to go on hundreds of years later. By some whim, Herod changes his will and orders what he ordered and it fulfills absolutely the word of God.

All the paradoxes are beautifully resolved. Let me give you another one. Fourth. The paradox of the right to the throne. The Messiah was to be a king. It was clear in the prophecies. That's what the word "Messiah" means anointed one. He was to inherit David's throne.

He was to take the scepter that He really had the right to. In the New Testament genealogy if you are looking at Matthew 1, you are in the right spot. The legal right to the throne is passed through Solomon to Joseph. I want you to notice, if there was a king in Israel, and there wasn't a legitimate king, but if there was a legitimate ruling king in Israel it would have been Joseph, the father of Jesus, because he came in the kingly line. Now David had many descendants but which descendent received the kingly right? The firstborn. So it was through Solomon that the kingly right came. The other descendants of David had royal blood and there was a royal line, but the kingly right went to the firstborn. So from the firstborn came the kingly line. Now notice, here we go in Verse 6, Matthew 1. Jesse begot David the king, and David the king begot Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba). Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Ebijah, Ebijah begot Asa, Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Jorum, Jorum begot Eziah, Eziah begot Jothum, Jothum begot Ahaz, Ahaz begot Hezekiah, Hezekiah begot Mannaseh, Mannaseh begot Amon, Amon begot Jesiah, Jesiah Jechinai, Jechinai and his brother at about the time they were carried away to

Babylon. Note: Jechinai is the last king. There has never been a king in Israel since Jechinai. Never. Jechinai's son tried and failed. The Babylonian captivity ended the ruling of Israel's own kings. After they were brought to Babylon then Jechinai begot Chialtiel, Chialtiel begot Zebeval, Zebeval begot Abiad, Abiad begot Iliachim, and on and on it goes, but no kings. But still the kingly line. Nobody .

! ' , the gentiles. Right after the Babylonian captivities the gentiles took over the land and their ruling. But Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus who was called Christ. You see, the right to become king came from Joseph. Mary didn't descend from Jechinai's line. No. Mary didn't come through Solomon. Mary's line

came through Nathan, another son of David. She was royal and she was of David's line and she had to be a son of David to be the mother of the Messiah, right? She had to be the son of David. If He had been born the son of Mary only, He couldn't of inherited the kingly right because that had to come through Joseph. There was only one man in all Israel who had to be his father. A man named Joseph. The only man who could be. He was the firstborn of Jacob who had the right to rule. But he couldn't exercise the right. There weren't any kings in those times. You say, "Well why couldn't there be a king?" Go .

back to Jeremiah 22 and I'll show you a fascinating prophecy. Now just imagine, here's the prophet saying, ."Messiah will be king. Messiah will be the king. Messiah will be the seat of David. He will reign."

Now watch. Imagine saying that over and over again and then prophesying this: Jeremiah 22, Verse 30 "Thus saith the Lord, 'Write this man childless.'" What man? Verse 28 "Chin?i.? Now that's Jechinai.

Same person. You can study the same passage. It's definitely the same man. "Thus saith the Lord, 'Write this man childless.'" Now that doesn't .

mean he will never have children. It means that a man shall not prosper in his days. No man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah." Now watch this. Here is a prophet saying, "Messiah will be king. He will come from Judah. He will come through the line of David." You go down the line of David and you come to Jechinai. The prophet says, "No offspring of Jechinai will ever rule. How in the world can you resolve the prophecies for a king through David and the prophecy that no son of Jechinai will ever rule? How can it be. Go back to Matthew 1. Look at Verse 16.

"And Jacob begot Joseph." Now watch. "The husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus." Did you know that it says, "And so and so begot and so and so begot...and Jacob begot Joseph and Joseph begot Jesus." Is that what it says? Oh, no Because if Joseph had begotten Jesus, Jesus would have

inherited the curse of Jechinai and never been able to reign though He had the right. He would have inherited the physical curse.

So watch. "Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary of whom..." Beloved, that is a Greek feminine construction. It's feminine and singular.

, You don't have children in the singular! Feminine singular, of whom was born Jesus. Jesus had to be born of David's line. He was born of Mary. He had to inherit the right to the throne without the curse, so Joseph had to be His legal father but couldn't be His earthly father.

Do you see it? Absolute fulfillment. Jesus has the right to reign through Joseph without the curse of Jechinai passed on. Listen, beloved, when God writes history, He writes it right.

So the paradox of God man, the paradox of the line of Judah, the paradox of the Messiah's home and the paradox of the right to rule.

Let me give you the last one. The paradox of the stone. When you think about Christmas you think about a baby. Drop that for just a minute, would you? Think about a rock. Nothing could be further to the opposite end of things, but think of it that way, because the Old Testament presents the coming Messiah as a stone. Interestingly enough in Isaiah, you have two views of the stone. Isaiah 8:14 "And he shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling, for a rock of a fence to bolt the houses of Israel for a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Now here is coming the Messiah. He's going to be a stumbling stone and the rock of a fence. That's not a very inviting picture. Later on Isaiah says this in 28:6 "Behold, I lay in Zion the foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. Isaiah must be scratching his head saying, "I don't understand God. He is a stumbling stone. He is the rock of offence.

All of a sudden he is precious. How could a stumbling stone and the rock of offence be a precious corner stone?" Psalm 118:22 says, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

There you have the idea of the corner stone. How could one person be stumbling stone, rock of offence, corner stone, precious stone, tested stone, sure foundation, and then Daniel throws in to make it difficult, a smiting stone. How could one be all of those. Jesus was. Listen to First Peter, Chapter 2, Verse 6. Here Peter quotes Isaiah 8, Isaiah 28, and Psalm 118, the three I just read. He quotes them all in one passage: "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone elect and precious. He that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe He is precious and unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them who stumble at the word being disobedient where under they were appointed."

Notice. Peter says, . "Yes: He is all of these stones. The difference is this: He is precious to you who believe. He is offensive to you who do not." Listen. Christmas is not a good place to play tokenism with God. The birth of Christ was either the most glorious event of the world or it is the damnation of a man's life and His destiny. You don't play around with the birth of Christ. You can celebrate it with joy only if you believe and that stone is precious. Because if you do not, Christ is a stumbling stone. He is a rock of offense. The word "offense" in the Greek is "scondilon".

It is the crooked stick that is used in a trap. The bait is placed. When the bait is grabbed the stick snaps the trap and kills the victim.

That's Jesus Christ. He is deadly or He is precious. But tokenism in the middle is a disaster. The rock offense, the word "petruf" pictures a huge rock bed against which men smash themselves. What is this Christ to you this Christmas? Is He precious? Is He the corner stone on which you build your life? Is He a sure foundation? Or is He a stumbling stone, a rock of offense set to ensnare and trap you? Don't let satan hustle you into believing that you can pay tokenist homage to Jesus and get by. He is either to you precious, or He is a smiting, crushing stone.

Let's pray. Father, we know that the resolution of Isaiah's paradox of the stone is simply faith, that we who believe in you as Lord and Savior. To us Thou art precious indeed. A precious corner stone on which to build our lives. For those who do not, Father we pray the convicting work of the Holy Spirit would draw them to Christ, even this day, that they might believe and commit their lives to that belief. We pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

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