

The Birth Of Many Sons

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[0 : 00] Well, we have been in the book of Exodus for some time now, and we're going to take a little break today and look at a passage related to Christmas.

So if you will, open your Bibles to Galatians chapter 4, and today we'll be looking at verses 4 through 7. Galatians 4, 4 through 7.

Galatians 4, 5 through 7.

Crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir through God. Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you for the sending of Christ, even as we've seen the sending of your Spirit, and how gracious you are.

[1 : 20] We pray as this text is open, Lord, that you would help us to see your purposes even in the incarnation, that you would be glorified.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So first, as we think of the birth of Jesus, let's think of the second coming of Jesus.

When Jesus will return, we know that when Jesus returns, that Christians will be changed in that moment. Matthew 13, 43 tells us, Then the righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He who has ears, let him hear. So when Christ comes again, the righteous will shine like the sun. His appearance will do something to change who we are.

Likewise, in 1 John 3, 2, it says, When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. So when he appears, we will become like him, because we will see him as he is.

[2 : 27] So we see with Jesus' second coming, something changes in us. And what I want to consider today is, with the birth of Jesus, with his first coming, that we too are changed by that coming.

Now that's not the usual focus of Christmas or Advent or the incarnation. I will probably touch some on the idea of salvation, that Jesus came to redeem us.

Of course he did. Often we think of what we are saved from when we think of Christmas. What I want us to do today is consider what we are saved to.

How we are changed, how Jesus is coming has changed the world, changed those who know him.

So what does the incarnation mean for who you are today?

What does the incarnation mean for who you are today? How does Jesus' coming change our identity? So our message today, three points.

[3 : 33] If you have your bulletin, it's there in the outline. Or for the children, there's a paper back on the welcome table to help you follow along. But we're going to look at three things. First, why Jesus came, and then who you are, and then how do we respond.

Our response to that. So again, why Jesus came, who you are, and our response. First, why Jesus came. You'll note that in our text we see that it says, He sent forth his Son when the fullness of time had come.

He sent forth his Son when the fullness of time had come. That means that there was a set time for Christ to come.

Set by the Father, God had determined, God the Father determined when Christ would come to earth. And Jesus was born at exactly the right moment.

There's no mistake. This is all according to God's plan. He didn't come a day early. He didn't come a day late. He came exactly how God had planned for this to happen. And we see as well in Galatians 4, our text, that he was born under the law.

[4 : 46] What does it mean that he was born under the law? Well, to be born under the law, he was born fully man and yet still fully God. He was born to obey the law.

He was born to fulfill the law. Those of you who have been with us as we've been looking through the Ten Commandments, consider as we've looked through those commandments, how impossible they are for us to follow.

How we fall short in so many ways of that. Jesus came under those commandments and perfectly lived them out and fulfilled them. All the righteous requirements of the law.

For him to be born under the law means he came to live that perfect life, that perfect life of righteousness that we could never live. Listen to Hebrews 2, 14.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil.

[5 : 51] So because we were in flesh, he came in flesh. So as we think about why the incarnation, why would Jesus, why would God eternally, God, take on human flesh?

Well, Hebrews tells us, because the children share in flesh. It was necessary that he would come at the appointed time, born under the law, to fulfill the law. He himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil.

And so that gets to the theme that we would normally think of in Christmas. He came, he took on flesh, ultimately to defeat Satan, to redeem us, to atone for our sins.

that's what we see in Hebrews 2. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. So again, Jesus came in the flesh, under the law, for our sake, that we might have redemption, that death might be defeated, the devil might be defeated, and as we see here, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God.

[7 : 14] What does it look like for God to be a faithful high priest? Well, it says to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For him to pay the price, to make atonement for our sins.

As we said earlier, none of us could obey the law. He came under the law, he lived a perfectly righteous life, and then he died as one who was unrighteous, in our place, in atonement for his people.

And so Jesus removes the curse that we deserve, and gives us the blessing that he deserves.

That's really what we see in our text that we looked at earlier. To redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

So Jesus came to redeem us who were under the law. 2 Corinthians 5.21 puts it in terms of an exchange, as it were.

It says, For our sake he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. And so we see this exchange.

[8 : 22] Why did Jesus come? Why was he born? Well, he came. He knew no sin, but he came that he might become sin in our place.

And we, who knew no righteousness, God's word says, even our righteous deeds are like filthy rags before him. We who knew no righteousness become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

And so we see this transition, this change. I said we're going to consider how the incarnation changes us. We see a little bit of that change here, don't we?

Jesus came. He was without sin. He came to become sin. He lived a perfectly righteous life so that we could become perfectly righteous in him, having the righteousness of God.

But our passage also talks not only of the incarnation, the coming of Jesus Christ, but also of the sending of the Spirit. God gives us the Spirit of God.

[9 : 30] This Spirit is a proof that we are children of God. and heirs through Christ. The Spirit works to cause us to experience the reality that we are children of God.

Listen to Galatians 4, 6. It says, And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

So the Spirit comes into our hearts and it teaches us to cry out, Abba, just a word for Daddy. But to call God our Father, that ought to be foreign to any idea that we could ever have, to call God our Father, to have that kind of intimate relationship with us.

But what I want you to see from our passage is when we think about the incarnation and that Jesus came to change who we are, I want you to see that Jesus was born to redeem us.

We know that. We're familiar with that. But also, He came to make His children of God. To change not only our position from being condemned to being redeemed, but also to change our relationship with God.

[10:44] To change our identity. Who we are is now defined by what Christ has done. And so as we looked at the incarnation, God took on our human nature to share with us His divine nature.

Now I know that sounds crazy. I'm not arguing that we become gods or demigods or something like that. But God's Word tells us this very truth. 2 Peter 1.4 says, By which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

So He took on our human nature that we might partake of His divine nature. Now again, what does that mean? Well, we've seen earlier this year but we are united to Jesus Christ.

We become united to Him and so our identity becomes wrapped up in who Christ is. That's what defines who we are. Likewise, we saw just a second ago the sending of His Spirit.

And so we partake of the divine nature because God dwells in us as Christians. So let's consider who you are in light of this reality.

[12:00] Especially, we're speaking of as Christians, who you are. A premise I had this year as I was teaching in Sunday school was this. Who we are is not determined by what we do.

Maybe I should say not foremost by what we do or what is done to us. Who we are is not determined foremost by what we do or what is done to us. I would argue that who we are is determined by our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Who we are is determined by our relationship to Jesus Christ. Earlier we read 2 Corinthians 5.21. A few verses earlier in verse 17 we read, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. So new creation. Think of the idea of the creation at the beginning of the world. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

What you were before, you are no longer. You are something new. And you may remember back when you looked at verse 21 earlier. What are we then if we are a new creation?

[13:06] We become the righteousness of God. He became sin. We became the righteousness of God. So if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Our text in Galatians 4.7 communicates this.

It says, that we were formerly slaves and that in Christ we become children of God. So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir through God.

So we see that changing our identity. Formerly we were slaves. Even as I preach this, I realize there may be some of you in this room who do not know Jesus Christ. You've never trusted in Jesus.

God's word and God's right. God's word says that apart from Christ, the way we're born in our sinful nature, it says that we are slaves.

We are enslaved to sin and even as we saw earlier to death and Satan, so we're born enslaved. But in Christ, we are a new creation and we become a son, a child of God and with that, an heir.

[14:12] And we'll talk a little bit more about what it means to be an heir. A similar passage is Romans 8, 14 through 16. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Remember we saw in Galatians, he sends his Spirit that we cry out, Abba, Father. So all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And so, a very similar passage to what we have in Galatians 4. God sends his Spirit.

Why? That we might cry out, Abba, Father. That we may know him as our Father. The Spirit affirms to us that we are children of God. And it says, Galatians 4.7 that we read earlier, and if we are children then we are heirs.

What does it mean for us to be an heir? This is a quote from Tim Keller. It may be, hopefully it's large enough for you to read it. Tim Keller says, In the Greco-Roman world, a childless, wealthy man could take one of his servants and adopt him.

[15:33] At the moment of adoption, he ceased to be a slave and received all the financial and legal privileges within the estate and outside in the world as a son and heir.

Though by birth he was a slave without a relationship with the Father, he now receives the legal status of son. It is a new life of privilege. It is a remarkable metaphor of what Jesus has given us. And so this is exactly what is being communicated to us here. God the Father, he's not one without a son. There's Christ. But he unites us to Jesus Christ.

He takes us from being slaves and makes us a child of God. And because of that, the shorter catechism communicates this in question 34, but because of that, it says that we have the right to all the privileges that belong to Christ.

Christ. That's what it means to be an heir. Think of the boldness of that. You have a right to all that belongs to Jesus Christ. It's yours by right. It's not wrong for you to say that's mine.

[16:46] That's what it means to be an heir. One more quote. This is Pastor Brian Chappell. He says, God loves us because we are in union with the Son that he loves.

United to Christ, we are also adopted by the Father and as such have all the rights, privileges, and affection that the Son of God himself receives from God.

So let that sink in for a moment. All the rights, privileges, and affection that the Son of God himself receives from God. So what I want you to consider as we think about the birth of Jesus Christ, why did Jesus come?

Maybe we've heard before and we're well familiar with the idea that Jesus came to redeem us, to make us no longer slaves. But he didn't come just to save us and then we're to live a righteous life to earn salvation.

Jesus came and saved us and made us united to him, a child of God with him, a co-sharer in his inheritance.

[17:55] We become an heir with Christ. And so all the privileges, I even think of the affection, the affection. All the love that God the Father has for God the Son is communicated to you if you're a Christian in Christ Jesus.

He loves you just as much as he loves his own son. And so think about identity. This passage speaks of us being slaves before. But I've talked about this past year how we are shaped in many ways by our circumstances, the things we do, the things that are done to us.

Not foremost, but they do shape who we are. Maybe we feel like we're not able to be loved or people hate us or we're a failure.

There are a lot of things that can be communicated to us through our experiences and what other people say. I think even the reality, some of us may think we're a success. We've done well.

Maybe we don't even see our need for Christ. But what I want you to see is that in Christ Jesus, those who have put their faith in him are loved by God the Father just as he loves Christ, his own son.

[19:19] So our inheritance would include new life. We're made alive. We are born as if we're dead. We have a heart of stone.

Like Lazarus, God resurrects us through Christ. We have faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, one day glorification.

Think of that Romans 8, 28-30. All those promises are ours because of our connection to Jesus Christ. There's also the family relationship.

This slave that was spoken of before, Tim Keller mentioned, who may be working in the household, has no family relationship with this wealthy family. But when he is adopted, when he becomes a son, there's a change in relationship to the Father.

He's now part of the family. I think of the communion. So we've been talking some about union with Christ, but there's also communion with God. The relationship that we enjoy.

[20:21] we have communion with God in prayer. We can speak to God the Father. There's no need for another mediator.

In Christ, we can speak to God. We can worship him in spirit and truth. We don't have to be at the temple. God's presence is with us here by his spirit. Scripture even speaks of us going to the throne with confidence and boldness.

That's a little scary, isn't it? To go before God knowing that we're sinners, the God who is holy, holy, holy, who cannot be in the presence of sin, and as sinners, we're going to walk in.

How is that possible? It's what we saw earlier. Christ became sin. We became the righteousness of God. And so in boldness, we enter in as sons and daughters of our Father.

A father welcomes their child to come talk to them. Even in the most inconvenient times, we're glad to talk to our children.

[21 : 28] God the Father has that kind of love for his children. In fact, we have assurance of God's love. Listen to John 17, 23. This is a high priestly prayer.

Jesus is praying, and he's praying, and he says, I in them, believers, in you, God the Father, in me, in Christ, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

So to what extent does Jesus communicate the love of the Father to us? How much does God love those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ?

If I put it again in terms of the incarnation, in terms of Christmas, Jesus came so that God the Father would love us how much? It says, even as you, God the Father, love me, Christ, even as, the same amount, no more, no less, but consider that for a moment.

How much does God the Father love God the Son? Some of you have been around, you've heard me say, I've really been impacted by something Michael Reeves pointed out, I think, in his book on the Trinity.

[22 : 53] Delighting in the Trinity. He argues that the Trinity, perfect, always existing, before there's ever creation, existed in perfect love with one another.

Perfect love. And that God created not out of a need, God lacks nothing, God wasn't lonely and sitting around thinking, you know, we could use some more friends around.

God's love, inner Trinitarian love was so massive, so overflowing, that he creates, that he might pour out his love upon us.

And we see the ultimate expression of that in the coming of Jesus Christ. that Christ would come to save us, to redeem us from sin and slavery and to make us children of God.

That we might join the Trinity in this eternal love that they have. That is amazing. How do we respond to that?

[23 : 54] What is our response to this reality? Well, I want to be careful because even as I say this, we live in a world that tries to make everything about us, right?

It's all about me and how it relates to me. Even truth in our society has been argued to be relative. The only truth that matters is my truth. You have your truth, I have my truth. And so I want to be careful as I talk about this to point out and remind you that Jesus' birth is foremost about God's glory.

Jesus' birth is foremost about God's glory. glory. We read earlier from Luke chapter 2. We'll look there again. But verses 13 through 14 communicate the glory to God in the highest.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

So the angels, when they proclaim the birth of Jesus Christ, it is glory to God in the highest. The birth of Christ is ultimately about God being glorified. And if we miss that, then we've distorted the gospel.

[25 : 10] So I'm not trying to communicate Jesus came foremost for me personally. But, we do see included in that, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

How can there be peace between God and man when we've sinned against him? Christ came to redeem us to provide that peace. And that is glorifying to God.

And so God is glorified in our salvation, but also, the reality that we've seen today is, again, our becoming a child of God, our being united to Jesus Christ, is foremost glorifying to God.

But that doesn't diminish how great it is to us. You know, I think God could have designed the world any way he wanted to. God could have made our joy and his glory at odds with one another.

And he wouldn't have been wrong. But God has made the world in such a way that he is glorified by making us his children, by lavishing his love upon us.

[26 : 15] Our knowing that love, our seeing it in the coming of Jesus Christ, leads us to exalt God, or at least it ought to. Lead us to glorify and praise him. Secondly, in our response, I want you to understand that your righteousness is a gift of God.

Righteousness is a gift of God. What we see in this passage is that God treats us as though we have lived the life of Jesus Christ. As if each of us was truly his only son.

As if we had lived that perfectly righteous life. he became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. What do we do in that equation?

We receive as a gift Christ's righteousness. We don't work for it. As believers, we ought to live lives that are glorifying to God. We should seek to put to death sin and live righteous lives.

But understand that this is a gift from God ultimately. That God the Father looks on us and his standard for which anyone will ever enter into his presence in heaven.

[27 : 26] That we one day will dwell with him when Christ returns is this. Be perfect. Be holy as I am holy. There's not one of us that would ever measure up to that standard.

But in Christ we are the righteousness of God. And so we can rejoice in righteousness not because of how good we are but because we are united to Jesus Christ who is perfectly righteous.

thirdly I know I've encouraged this some throughout the years we've looked at union with Christ but I want to encourage you our response to this is to find your identity in Jesus Christ.

Find your identity in Jesus Christ. Listen to Galatians 3. These are the verses that immediately precede our text in Galatians 4. For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free.

[28 : 33] There is no male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ then you are Abraham's offspring heirs according to the promise.

Finding our identity in Jesus Christ. Here in this passage it says there is neither Jew nor Greek slave nor free male or female. Now I know where our world takes these kind of things.

God isn't saying that male and female doesn't exist anymore or national distinctions or anything of that nature. What is he saying? He is saying that if you are a Christian what defines you the highest the foremost definition of who you are is not even your gender.

It is not even your nationality. It is not even your status of being a slave or free. We would look at it and say that matters a lot.

But God says what defines you ultimately is this. if you are in Jesus Christ. If you have been united to him. And if you are it says for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God.

[29 : 46] And I would argue our Galatians 4 passage is really meant to explain that even further. So in Galatians 3 the end he says you are all sons of God. What are you talking about? That is why Jesus came.

He came to make you sons and to free you from slavery. To make you an heir. And we see that same heir status being repeated here. Abraham's offspring and heirs according to the promise. What are we an heir of? All the promises to Abraham. Romans 8 15-16 I think we looked at earlier but just one more time.

You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba Father. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

So if you have trust in Jesus Christ the spirit is in you and it's bearing witness to this that you're a child of God. Who are you? What ultimately defines you? Again is it your job?

[30 : 43] It isn't what happened to you when you were a child? How people treat you now? What ultimately defines who you are is your relationship to Jesus Christ. Are you a child of God or not?

Fourthly I want to encourage you to delight in the love of God displayed in the Advent. In the incarnation. Jesus is coming. Delight in the love of God that is displayed in Jesus' coming.

Again, I think this is one we mentioned earlier but 1 John 3.1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

And so again, we often define ourselves by how the world sees us. Jesus said the reason the world doesn't know you is because it didn't know me. But we see as well see what kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

What kind of love is that that would make us a child? think a passage that is really familiar to all of us John 3.16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

[32 : 03] And we blow through that pretty quickly often times because we know it well. But consider for a moment for God so loved the world the degree to which God loved the world God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.

That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. That's the extent we see of the Father's love that He would send His Son to take on flesh to be born under the law and ultimately to

suffer the punishment that we deserve under the law.

That He would die in our place that we might have eternal life that we might be eternally children of God loved by the Father. one of the arguments that I appreciate a lot from God's Word is in Romans 8 31-32 we see an argument really from the greater to the lesser.

Romans 8 31-32 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?

Now I think often times as we think of Christmas there's something that we sometimes give to one another at Christmas presents maybe kids we think about presents some at Christmas here we see an example maybe as it were of a present if God is for us who can be against us?

[33 : 40] Well there's implied well nobody can because God would whoop them God's bigger He's greater but notice also it says He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up to us all how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?

As we think of what it means to be a child of God and be an heir how could God give us these things? Are we prone to doubt it? Well here's God's argument I've given you the greater thing the greater thing is the Son I've given my Son who laid in His life for you how could He withhold anything lesser?

How could He not give us everything else? He's given us the greatest thing possible His own Son all the other blessings that flow through that union with Christ our inheritance those are minor in comparison so if we've seen these things if we've understood these things I want to encourage you today fifthly and finally cry out to the Father cry out to the Father I've said already that in Christ we have access to the Father we can speak to God we've seen in our sermon that God's love is not lacking if you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ He loves you just as much as He loves His own Son and so I want to encourage you to trust in Christ we've seen that Jesus came to redeem us from the curse of the law to take us from being slaves and make us a child of God is that true of you today?

if I said the greatest thing that determines who we are is our relationship with Jesus Christ who are you today? are you a slave or are you a child of God?

what is your identity? how have you related to Jesus Christ? are you united to Christ by faith? have you trusted in Him to be your Savior? have you thought about even that exchange that we saw earlier?

[35 : 45] what makes me righteous before God the Father? are you still trusting in your own goodness? or have you trusted by faith in the goodness and righteousness of our Savior Jesus Christ?

I want to encourage you today cry out to God put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ in His atoning death but not just in that in the reality that in Christ we become a child of God I think how would we not want that relationship?

imagine you're in the house and there's slaves in the house and the Father is going to pick one slave to make His son the adoption that we saw earlier that Tim Keller was speaking of who would not want to be that child?

who would not want the status change from slavery to be a child of God? and so I want to encourage you to become a child of God let me close with this last verse from John 1 verse 12 it says but to all who did receive Him who believed in His name He gave the right to become children of God maybe you're wondering how could I have that?

how could I be a child of God? all who did receive Him all who believed in His name that's it that's the standard God withholds adoption from no one who believes in Him who receives a son who puts their trust in His name all of those have the right to become a child of God let's pray dear Heavenly Father we thank You for Your Word we thank You for Your Son the Incarnation the truth that it communicates to us that in Christ we have become children Lord we pray that for those in this room for whom that is true oh Lord that we would sing Your praises vigorously glorifying You for what You've done for that change in relationship and Lord we pray if there are any here who still do not know You who are not yet a child of God that they would cry out to You by faith in Christ and that even as Your Word has proclaimed to us that all who do that You will give them the right to be a child of God that You would make them united to Jesus Christ that You would give them the righteousness of Jesus Christ

[38 : 14] Lord we thank You for the love that You have lavished upon us in the Incarnation that Christ would come that we might know Your love and that You might receive the glory we pray all this in the name of our great Savior Jesus Christ Amen Amen