

What Does the Word Say?  
Session 26: A Christmas Message – Christ’s Astounding Love to Us  
WhatDoesTheWordSay.org

**Marc Roby:** We are taking a one-week break from our examination of the characteristics of the Bible to present a special Christmas message. Dr. Spencer, I’m sure there are lots of different Christmas sermons and messages out there at this time, what do you want to say to our listeners?

Dr. Spencer: I want to stick to what this podcast is all about – what the Word of God says. I saw a story on our local TV news show the other night about people giving to a local charity and helping serve meals to the homeless and so on and they ended the story by saying something about this illustrating the real meaning of Christmas. But, that couldn’t be further from the truth.

**Marc Roby:** Before you go on I want to be sure you don’t leave yourself open to being misunderstood, you’re not saying that there is anything wrong with donating to good charities or helping to feed the homeless.

Dr. Spencer: No, of course I don’t mean that. Those are good things to do and, in fact, Christians have often led the way historically in taking care of various social needs like helping orphans and feeding the poor. We read in Luke 3:11 that John the Baptist told the people, “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.”<sup>1</sup> And in Proverbs 19:17 we read that “He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.”

But, social activism, or even more generally, statements like the golden rule – to do to others as you would have them do to you – or to love your neighbor as yourself, while biblical and good, are not what Christmas is all about.

**Marc Roby:** Alright, obviously Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ. But, Christ himself told us to love our neighbor as ourselves. So, isn’t keeping his commands at least part of what Christmas is about?

Dr. Spencer: Not really. The fundamental problem with all such notions is that they are man centered, or anthropocentric. Which we have noted before is a characteristic of much of what goes on in the name of Christianity these days. But, the Bible is unashamedly theocentric, or God centered, from beginning to end.

**Marc Roby:** I agree, but Christ came to save sinners, and that certainly seems man centered.

Dr. Spencer: In one sense it is, because it is people who are being saved, but the ultimate purpose of all creation, including the salvation of God’s people, is the manifestation of God’s glory. So, the ultimate purpose of salvation is to glorify God. Through creation and all of history, God is working to make manifest his manifold glory. The glory of his being, of his power, of his holiness, of his justice, of his goodness, of his truth, and of his love.

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And the incarnation of Jesus Christ, which we celebrate at Christmas, represents the greatest expression of God's love. As we are told in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." That is an unfathomable display of God's love for his people. And we should take some time to meditate on all that it implies.

**Marc Roby: What does it imply?**

Dr. Spencer: First, it implies that we need to be saved. So, we should ask, "From what do we need to be saved?" And the answer is, that we need to be saved from the just wrath of God, which is what our sins deserve.

**Marc Roby: Alright, you said that's the first thing it implies, what else does it imply?**

Dr. Spencer: It implies that the price that had to be paid to save us was nothing less than the sacrifice of God's own eternal Son. If there had been any other way to save us, I think it is safe to conclude that God would not have sacrificed his own Son. But, the sacrifice for sins had to be infinite because we have sinned against an infinite, holy God, which means that our debt is infinite and no mere man could possibly pay it. Therefore, the sacrifice had to *be* God. Also, because it was man who sinned, it had to be a man who paid the penalty. That fact, combined with the fact that God cannot die, meant that the sacrifice had to be man.

**Marc Roby: And hence, the need for Jesus Christ, the unique God-man.**

Dr. Spencer: Precisely. The atonement of Christ is what the great theologian John Murray called a "consequent absolute necessity".<sup>2</sup> In other words, as a consequence of God's choosing to save some people, it was absolutely necessary that Jesus become incarnate, live a holy life in perfect obedience to the law, and then willingly give himself as a sacrifice of atonement.

**Marc Roby: That's a thought that stretches the mind beyond the breaking point – that God would love us enough to send his own Son to redeem us, and that Jesus Christ would agree to become incarnate and offer himself as a sacrifice on our behalf.**

Dr. Spencer: It is impossible to fully grasp that. And the main thing I want to do in this session is to have a short meditation on that amazing fact. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul wrote that "you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." The great 19<sup>th</sup>-century English preacher Charles Spurgeon preached a marvelous sermon on this verse,<sup>3</sup> and I would like to take a couple of minutes to meditate on some of what he said.

**Marc Roby: Alright. Paul wrote that Christ *was* rich, which obviously refers to his situation prior to the incarnation, what does Spurgeon say about that?**

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<sup>2</sup> John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955, pg. 11

<sup>3</sup> *Spurgeon's Sermons*, Baker Books, 1996, Vol. 4, pp 364-380

Dr. Spencer: Spurgeon discusses the riches of Christ in three categories: his possessions, honor, and love. With regard to possessions, the wealth of Jesus Christ prior to the incarnation is unimaginable. To put this in perspective, let's take a minute to talk about Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon.

**Marc Roby: Who, I understand, recently overtook Bill Gates as the world's richest man.**

Dr. Spencer: That's right. He is now worth somewhere near 100 billion dollars. That is 100-thousand million dollars.

**Marc Roby: I can't really grasp a number that large.**

Dr. Spencer: Neither can I, especially not when we're talking about money. The town we live in, Davis, California, currently has a population slightly less than 70,000 people. Jeff Bezos could, in principle, give every single person in Davis one million dollars and still have about 30 billion dollars left over.

**Marc Roby: That's incomprehensible to me. But it does give me a good idea too, maybe we should send him a suggestion!**

Dr. Spencer: Maybe we should. But the point is that he has an amazing amount of money. And yet, his riches are nothing at all in comparison to the riches of the pre-incarnate Christ. Jesus owned absolutely everything.

**Marc Roby: I'm reminded of Psalm 50:9-12, where God declares, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it."**

Dr. Spencer: And that is speaking of Jesus Christ, because he is the second person of the Holy Trinity. But he is not only rich because he owns everything, he is also rich because he created everything. So, if he wanted more, he could have it instantly. All he would have to do is create whatever he wanted.

Modern physicists like to imagine an infinite number of universes, but Jesus could actually create however many universes he wanted! And if he wanted a billion more angels singing his praises all he would have to do is say a word and they would come into being. So, in possessions, Jesus was rich beyond measure.

**Marc Roby: That is something to ponder. You said that Spurgeon also spoke of Christ being rich in honor.**

Dr. Spencer: Right. As the Creator and Lord of everything he had all honor and glory. In Isaiah 6 we are told about Isaiah's incredible vision of the throne-room of God. He writes, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of

his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.”

**Marc Roby: And, of course, that vision caused Isaiah to cry out, “Woe to me, I am ruined!”**

Dr. Spencer: I think that is the only reaction possible for a sinful human being. We also read about the throne of God in Chapter 4 of Revelation if our listeners want to take a look at that. But, the point is clear, Jesus was rich beyond measure in honor as well.

**Marc Roby: Alright, you also mentioned love.**

Dr. Spencer: Yes. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Paul says that “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.” And Spurgeon therefore notes that having all possessions and honor would mean nothing if Christ didn’t have love.

**Marc Roby: But, of course, as we already pointed out, Christ loved us enough to die for us.**

Dr. Spencer: That’s true. And, while his sacrificial death is the ultimate culmination of his work, it is by no means all that he did. We must remember that his becoming a man was an amazing act of love in and of itself. Just think about it for a moment, the Lord of glory becoming a lowly man!

**Marc Roby: John Murray, whom you mentioned earlier, wrote an amazing passage about the incarnation that I’d like to take a moment to read. But, before I read it, let me define an unusual word that he uses. He mentions Christ being *supratemporal*, which means above, over, or outside the limits of time. So, with that definition in mind, let me read what Murray wrote about the incarnation: “The infinite became the finite, the eternal and supratemporal entered time and became subject to its conditions, the immutable became the mutable, the invisible became the visible, the Creator became the created, the sustainer of all became dependent, the Almighty infirm. All is summed up in the proposition, God became man.”<sup>4</sup>**

Dr. Spencer: That’s a wonderful summary statement that should cause us all to praise God in complete wonder and awe at his boundless love for his people. And it’s a perfect summary of Spurgeon’s second point in his sermon, as 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor”.

We are told in Philippians 2:6-8 that Jesus Christ, “being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!” Let me tell you, that is poverty.

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<sup>4</sup> John Murray, *Collected Works*, Vol. II, Banner of Truth Trust, 1977, Vol. 2, pg. 132

Had Jesus come into this world as the son of a great king, had he been placed in a crib of gold and attended to by dozens of servants, had he been praised and given honor by all men, it still would have been great humiliation compared to his true nature. But, he came as the son of dirt-poor parents in a backwater part of the Roman empire. Isaiah prophesied, and history confirms, that he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow and familiar with suffering.

**Marc Roby: The humiliation of Christ is an incomprehensible display of God's love. And, of course, 2 Corinthians 8:9 also tells us the purpose for his becoming poor. It says, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."**

Dr. Spencer: That's right. Although the ultimate purpose is the glory of God, the proximate purpose of the incarnation was the salvation of sinners.

So, now we see the real meaning of Christmas. God, in eternity past, knew that man would sin, and he looked upon that future mass of sinful human beings and he chose to save some. Having made that choice, the Son agreed to become incarnate – he became poor, so that through his sacrificial death we might become rich. Which is, of course, referring to our eternal glory in heaven, which is the destiny of all true believers. That is the greatest present any human being can ever receive. And it is my hope and prayer this Christmas, that everyone who hears this message, will humble themselves, and cry out to God, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner, on the basis of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ."

**Marc Roby: I join in your prayer. And that concludes our Christmas message for this year. But, I want to tell our listeners about a couple of great gifts they purchase for themselves, or someone else. Our Pastor's book called *Rediscovering the True Meaning of Christmas*<sup>5</sup> and his excellent daily devotional called *Daily Delight*<sup>6</sup> are now both available for purchase on our website, or from Amazon. I'm confident that you will be edified by either or both of them. I also want to remind our listeners to email their questions and comments to [whatdoesthewordsay.org](http://whatdoesthewordsay.org). And I, along with Dr. Spencer, wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a glorious New Year!**

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<sup>5</sup> P.G. Mathew, *Rediscovering the True Meaning of Christmas – A Collection of Incarnation Sermons*, Grace and Glory Ministries, 2017

<sup>6</sup> P.G. Mathew, *Daily Delight – Meditations from the Scriptures*, Grace and Glory Ministries, 2015