

Understanding Christmas

Introduction: Christmas gets pretty mixed up

I.

What was God's plan for us? Genesis 1:26-27,
2:7, 15-25

Genesis 1:26-27 (NLT)

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." ²⁷So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 2:7 (NLT)

⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

If you still believe that you are a random act of a mindless universe. . .IF you still believe that you have no soul and are only the product of physical, biochemical, and electrical processes. . .then you have more faith than I do.

We are the products of an intelligence so far beyond ours that we cannot even fathom it.

The Bible teaches that there is a personal God, who is infinite in his power and perfect in his character. What you see in this universe and all it contains is the product of his creative power and wisdom.

This God created you in his image. That means there is a fundamental difference between you and the animal kingdom around you. You have an everlasting soul, a part of you that will live forever. You have a choice. You have a spirit by which you can connect with this eternal, infinite, perfect God!

God created you to live in connection with him. He made this so fundamental to your being that, Jesus, His Son, defined life as knowing God.

John 17:3 (NASB95)

³“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

God created you to live in intimate connection with others.

Genesis 2:18 (NLT)

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good

for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”

Genesis 2:25 (NASB95)

²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

II.

What happened? Genesis 3:1-4:8

The reality of this universe is that there is an enemy of your soul. He wants to do everything he can to keep you in rebellion against God.

Jesus spoke about Satan:

John 10:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.

At the beginning of creation, Satan came to encourage our first parents to join him in his rebellion against God.

Genesis 3:1-8 (NLT)

¹ The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made.

One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”² “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied.³ “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’ ”⁴ “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman.⁵ “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.

Satan’s temptation was simple: If you rebel against God, if you disobey God you will become like god. In

a way that was true – that moment that Adam and Eve entered into rebellion against God, they, in effect, became gods of their own lives.

What they didn't count on was the result.

Their first emotion that they felt was shame as they looked at each other. Their first action was to cover themselves up.

Their second emotion that they felt was fear in relationship with God, so they hid themselves from God.

What happens in the very next chapter is in the relationship of two brothers , Cain and Abel; we see jealousy, anger, and murder.

And that has been the story of people ever since.

What you see in the world today, is not the world that God intended – it is the world as it is when people are running their own lives: families split apart, people cheat each other, leaders destroy their own people, religions fight against each other, we continue to damage and hurt the environment, and nature works against us –droughts, hurricanes, earthquakes.

Human society has been devastated by human sin.

But it is much more personal than that. Sin has devastated you and me.

III.

How has sin affected us? Ephesians 4:17-19

Ephesians 4:17-19 has a graphic picture of what happened to us individually when our relationship with God was cut off.

A. Our thinking – 4:17

Ephesians 4:17-18 (NASB95)

¹⁷So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

Paul says that we walk in the futility of our minds, darkened in our understanding.

The word futility speaks of emptiness. We keep looking for meaning, but not finding it.

He says we are darkened in our understanding. We keep trying to understand life, but it's like trying to see what's in a darkened room.

People go into debt purchasing things they think will make them happy, but it doesn't work.

People rush into marriage, because they think they will be happier as a married person than they were as a single person, but it doesn't work.

Couples who are miserable have kids, because they think kids will make them happy, but it doesn't work!

People drink, use drugs, gamble, play video games – all to fill the emptiness of their lives, but it doesn't work.

We are looking for something, but like a person in a pitch black room, we keep running into things and we don't even know what we're stumbling over.

B. Our heart

Paul goes on to say our hearts are hard.

What happens to a couple who seem so in love when they get married and a few years later they can't stand each other, or they've learned to live separate lives even though still married?

What happens is our hearts are hardened. We are ultimately ashamed of ourselves (go back to gen 3) and so we hide from each other.

C. Our passions

Ephesians 4:19 (NASB95)

¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

What's happened? Rather than people who are governed by our Creator, we become people who are governed by our senses.

Do you realize how sexualized our nation has become? Victoria's Secret now runs a fashion show on TV!

We are seeking sexual stimulation, the stimulation of video games, the stimulation of ever more exciting movies, the stimulation of sporting events – we are looking for the next big hit to stir our senses.

We are a nation governed by **I want!**

Where do we go from here?

John in 1 John 3:8 says that “The Son of God has appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.”

When we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate God sending his son Jesus Christ to undo the effects of sin

and return us to the people he created us to be all along.

That starts when I come back to a relationship with God where he is my Savior, my Father, my Lord, and my God.

As my Savior, God through his son Jesus offers me forgiveness of sins. If you don't know God today, the most amazing news in all the universe is that God wants to forgive you of all of your sins. He wants to remove the burden of guilt from your life and set you free – not free to keep living in sin, but free to begin to live as he created you to live.

As my Father, God sends his Spirit into my life and makes me a part of his family. Being a part of God's forever family is like coming home.

As my Lord, God's Son Jesus Christ because the Lord and guide of my life. I no longer live for myself, I live for him. Having Jesus as my Lord, living for him gives me a purpose that is so much bigger than myself.

As my God, God becomes the source of strength, wisdom, and love. He is the one on whom I depend every moment of the day. He is the one who fills me, and he is the one who gives me the capability to live, loving him with all my heart soul and mind, and loving others as I love myself.

He becomes the focus of my love, my adoration, my worship, and my thanks.

Embracing my ultimate need for God

- Think about what would be true of your life if there was no God and you were an accident of random processes. What difference does it make that you have been created by a personal God in His image?
- How has sin devastated our world?
- How has sin devastated your life?
- How do you need God right now to overcome the effects of sin and live as He intended you to live?

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