

God Sent His Son

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

Galatians 4:4-5

The coming of Christ into the world has often been called a “miracle,” and rightly so, since it marks a profound turning point in human history. In a sermon titled “The Grand Miracle,” C. S. Lewis describes the Christmas event as follows:

In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. .. He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get Himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, He must almost disappear under the load before He incredibly straightens His back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on His shoulders.

From our text (Galatians 4) we will answer three questions about this miracle we celebrate at Christmas: 1. What it is, 2. Why we need it, and 3. How it changes us.

I. What this miracle is

A. **It is a sending** - “God sent his Son God sent the Spirit of his Son.” - Galatians 4:4, 6

The word translated “sent” is not the normal word for sending, as it is strengthened by a prefix meaning *out*. (Thus the King James Version renders it, “sent forth.”) That God sends us both the Son and Spirit reminds us that God’s Triune nature makes love possible. Love is fundamentally a giving of oneself, which is what God did when he sent his own Son.

B. **It is a becoming** - “born of woman” - Galatians 4:4

“Born of woman” tells us that God the Son became a human being. The theological word for this act is “incarnation,” which combines “in” and “carne” (flesh). The Apostle John puts it clearly: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

C. **It is a limiting** - “born under the law” - Galatians 4:5

When God took on human form, he also willingly subjected himself to human rules, particularly the Jewish law. This extends in principle to all kinds of laws and limitations. In becoming human, He embraced the constraints of humanity. He, who could not thirst, felt thirst. He, who should not grieve, wept. The Almighty, immune to injury, endured the piercing pain of a nail. In the extraordinary act of becoming human, God willingly embraced limitations. The limitless took on the form of a baby. God, who transcends birth and death, was born and died.

II. **Why we need this miracle** - “You were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.” - Galatians 4:3, 8

Our need for this miracle is evident throughout this passage. As humans, we are always worshiping *something*, but we also tend to worship things that enslave rather than free us. Paul’s Jewish readers were enslaved by their deficient view of God and his law. It is the same with us: we make an idol of

things that “are not gods,” and find these things dehumanizing us. Seeking ultimate meaning in race, nation, relationships, self, or a flawed view of God shapes our pride, loyalty, friendships, and confidence. But it can also breed prejudice, fear, deceit, anger, and, ultimately, enslavement.

III. How this miracle changes us

A. The effect of this miracle

This miracle changes us by solving two aspects of our predicament: our slavery problem (4:5, 7) and our worship problem (4:6). It solves our slavery problem by **redeeming** us (purchasing us from slavery) and making us God’s children (**adoption**). It solves our worship problem by giving us the freedom and right to worship God, not as a tyrant that must be appeased, but as our Father.

B. The receiving of this miracle

How can this miracle become ours? It cannot be achieved, only received. That is, we must entrust ourselves to this God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ. This is why Paul emphasizes the necessity of faith: “But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:22).

When we do receive it by faith, it frees us to love God and others. Before, whatever we worshiped as “God” was burdensome, unsatisfying, enslaving. Now, we may see God as he really is, and call him “Abba, Father” (4:6). It also frees us to love others. Paul goes on to explain “you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (5:13).

Application Questions

1. How do you think the cultural perception of Christmas, often associated with glitter and materialism, contrast with the deeper meaning of the birth of Jesus?
2. In what ways can viewing God as a Father sending His Son, shape our understanding of God's loving initiative? Where do we see God’s Trinitarian nature in this passage, and what role does it have in the Christmas story?
3. According to the passage (Galatians 4:4-7 particularly) what role does the Spirit have in your approach to God? How does this challenge, comfort, or motivate you?
4. Reflecting on Galatians 4:3 and 8, in what ways might the things we seek ultimate meaning in, such as race, nation, relationships, or self, lead to either freedom or enslavement?
5. How does the Incarnation relate to the idea of true freedom as not the absence of restrictions but the power to love?
6. In what ways can freedom, as described in Galatians 5:1, 13-14, be practically lived out in our relationships and interactions with others?