

**Bible Lessons  
for Everyday Life**

**FOR**

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**JR**

**Waller**

**LIGHT**

**FOR**

**THE**

**WORLD**



**LIGHT FOR  
THE WORLD**



# LIGHT FOR THE WORLD

Bible Lessons for  
Everyday Life

J.R. Waller, MBA

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# 1

## 5 Blessings of Christmas

### *Key Points*

- The Christmas story is the most famous account in the Bible and is filled with an abundance of blessings for mankind.
- At Christmas, Jesus was born a divine, and sinless heavenly King. He was also a boy who became a man, and was and still is “God with us.” All of this happened in light of His eternal plan and providential care.
- Most importantly, Jesus came to be our Savior. He was born, died and rose again. He overcame death to save us from our sins and bring us back to Him. Only He could do this.
- Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. When an individual believes in Him as his

or her Savior, he or she takes hold of the greatest gift of all time.

- Jesus gives us eternal life with Him, He forgives our sins and restores our relationship with Him.

### *Main Lesson*

Introduction - Beautifully familiar

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

The Christmas story (taken for today's lesson from Matthew 1:1 -25) is the most familiar account in all of the Bible. Nevertheless, we must not let its familiarity distract us from its meaning.

In fact, the Bible tells us to "continue" in the things which we have learned, to "hold fast" the profession of our faith, to "study" to show ourselves approved and to "diligently" teach our children about God and His word. (2 Tim. 3:14, Heb. 10:23, 2 Tim. 2:15, Deut. 6:7)

It is important, and no less refreshing and satisfying to our souls, to frequently reflect on, remember and read the Christmas story.

While it truly is the “greatest story ever told,” and while Jesus is the real “reason for the season,” the Christmas story is about so much more.

When we take the time to slowly read it, what was once overly familiar becomes beautifully familiar. The Christmas story is filled with an abundance of riches and blessings for mankind. To follow are five specific blessings that lie at the heart of the Christmas story.

### 1 - The blessing of God's eternal plan

We exist on a spectrum that is time-bound. God created time, but He is eternal and exists outside of time. (Gen. 1:5, Jn. 1:1)

In fact, He sees all of time all at once as He exists in eternity past, present and future. Because of this, nothing happens in scripture apart from God's eternal plan. The world's history is part of His story.

Specifically, Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise back in Genesis that He would send a Savior to overcome sin and death. (Gen. 3:15) This was a result of God the Father and God the Son's plan in eternity past to redeem mankind. (1 Pet. 1:20)

Christmas is eternally significant, it is part of God's eternal plan of redemption. Nearly 4,000 years after man's sin ruined creation, God fulfilled the promise of

His redemption plan through Jesus' birth, that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. 2:14)

Christ is indeed the Author and Finisher of our faith, and His story to save us is an eternal one. (Heb. 12:2) God is in control, that is a blessing we can truly rest in.

## 2 - The Blessing of God's providential care

Matthew begins his Christmas discourse with a 42 generation long genealogy. (Matt. 1:17) He wrote to a Jewish audience, and was well versed in the Law and books of Moses. As a result his genealogy goes all the way back to Genesis.

A prime example of Matthew's Old Testament knowledge can be seen in the structural comparison between Matthew 1:1 and Genesis 5:1. Ultimately, Matthew's genealogy is the end of the genealogy that began back in Genesis.

If you pay careful attention to the genealogy, you will notice such scriptural luminaries as Abraham, David, Ruth, Solomon and others, underscoring that Mary and Joseph were clearly descents of David.

Matthew did all of this to emphasize that Jesus was the final Messianic King the Israelites had been waiting for. All of this demonstrates that God's eternal plan and

providence were fulfilled in Jesus' birth.

Much of the Old Testament can be described as "God comes through." He came through for Israel and His people every time.

Over time, the more someone keeps their word, the more they are trusted because they are consistent. While humans are merely consistently inconsistent at best, God, on the other hand, is perfectly consistent. God is so consistent that He never gives us any reason not to trust Him. His word is true from the very beginning and it endures forever. (Ps. 119:160)

Christmas is the final result God's preservation of Jesus' lineage over thousands of years despite Satan's constant attempts throughout scripture to end Jesus' family tree.

In fact, at one point only Joash was left in Jesus' line. (2 Kings 11) And yet, God still preserved Jesus' lineage.

Jesus' birth is another example of where God has come through for us, just as He always has and always will do. God always acts in light of His providence, which is His control of circumstances so that His will prevails and His purposes are fulfilled. He has always cared for His only begotten Son, and in that He has always cared for us. God's providential care is a blessing that is signified in Jesus' birth.

### 3 - The blessing of our Heavenly King

Matthew was intentional and careful in verses 18-25, to show that Jesus was divine. Notice, Joseph is listed as the husband of Mary, and not the father of Jesus. (Matt. 1:16)

We also see that Jesus' mother Mary was "espoused to Joseph, before they came together," and "she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. 1:18) Joseph and Mary did not conceive this child, it was the Holy Ghost that did. Jesus was, and is, divine.

Matthew reinforces Jesus' divinity further by giving us an account of the angel of the Lord's appearing, who told Joseph that the child was of God alone. (Matt. 1:20)

Thus Jesus was born our heavenly King. This however, was contrary to what many had expected. The Jews awaited the Messiah for hundreds of years between the testaments. When Jesus was born, they expected Him to be an earthly king who would lead His people to set up His kingdom on earth right then and there. But this was not to be so. Jesus had much bigger plans in mind, and we are all the better for it.

Jesus needed to be divine so He could be our eternal king, and also so He could remain sinless while on earth. Only this perfect King could overcome death and be a perfect sacrifice for our sins. We are greatly blessed that Jesus is our Heavenly King.

4 - The blessing of "God with us."

Yet, Jesus was also a man. He was born of a woman. (Matt. 1:25) He was and is like us yet without sin. (Heb. 4:15) He was 100% God and 100% man. This is an incredible blessing, for just as Isaiah prophesied, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Is. 7:14)

Emmanuel means "God with us." God came to be *with us* and through salvation in Him we can be with Him here and forevermore. (Rom. 8:9, Jn. 17:24) We can have a relationship with Him that alone satisfies us more than anything else ever will or can.

He fully knows us and empathizes with us in ways no one else can, all the more so because He took on the sins of the world; your sins and mine. (1 Jn. 2:2)

When we say that Jesus died for us, He literally took our place on the cross for us. He "endured" the cross and "despised the shame" of it for us. (Heb. 12:2) He even felt our sins more acutely because He is pure and we are not.

In the end, we cannot even begin to comprehend how much God loves us. (1 Cor. 2:9) What we can comprehend though, is that God is near and that He is with us. What a blessing!



## 5 - The blessing of our Savior

“Jesus” is the Greek form of Joshua and means “The Lord saves.” This is why Matthew says “thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21)

Jesus’ fulfillment of His plan of salvation is the greatest blessing of the greatest story ever told. It is the hinge on which all of scripture turns. Upon it the door to the Old Testament closed, and the door to the New Testament opened. The world’s calendar even revolves around it.

On Christmas day a child was born. On the cross a divine, perfect and sinless man died for the sins of the world. (1 Jn. 2:2) Jesus was born to die for sinners. He even told Matthew that fact after Matthew believed in Him. (Matt. 9:13)

The point is that *He* came, died and rose again. (1 Cor. 15:3-4) We do not follow “cunningly devised fables,” rather we *know* Who we worship. (2 Pet. 1:16, Jn. 4:22) Jesus had to come to be our savior because we could not, and cannot, save ourselves. (Tit. 3:5) Salvation is all of grace, it is His gift to us. (Eph. 2:8-9)

This gift is eternal, for He is able to save us “to the uttermost.” (Heb. 7:25) That is He saves completely, forever and perfectly, all for us and His kingdom.

Have you accepted His gift of salvation through belief

and repentance in Him? Have you trusted Him to be your savior? There is truly no greater blessing or gift than salvation.

### Conclusion - Only the beginning

The Christmas story is the most famous story in the Bible. Yet today we learned why it is important to slow down, and not allow its familiarity to distract us from remembering its many precious truths.

We looked at five blessings that come from Jesus' birth. From this we saw that Christmas was part of God's eternal plan and an example of His providential care.

Next, we learned that Jesus came to us as a divine, and sinless heavenly King, who was also born a boy who became a man. He was and still is "God with us."

Lastly, we learned about the greatest blessing of all. Jesus is our Savior. He was born, died and rose again. He overcame death to save us from our sins and bring us back to Him as only He could do.

Ultimately though, God's story does not end with Christmas. Christmas is only the beginning. If you have believed on Him, you will be with Him for all *eternity*, and that eternity begins in the here and now. (Jn. 11:26, 2 Cor. 5:8, 2 Cor. 5:17)

Oh what a joyous life we have in Jesus! May we all re-

member this Christmas that God “sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1 Jn. 4:9) Merry Christmas!

## 2

# Adventures in Acts: Confronted With the Gospel

### *Key Points*

- God's Word often makes those who hear it feel uncomfortable. However, this is actually a good thing.
- As Peter concluded his stirring sermon at Pentecost, the hearers were "pricked in their heart." They had a decision to make, and they asked Peter what they should do, to which he replied "repent, and be baptized."
- In the end, about 3,000 that day "gladly received" God's saving grace through repentance. Confrontation led to a glad response. They were glad to have escaped death, and they gladly answered God's call.
- The gospel begins by confronting us, but it

ends its work by eliciting a glad response  
unto life eternal.

*Main Lesson*

Introduction

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?  
(Acts 2:37)

I remember my very first course in college. It was a psychology class and our professor was very anti-Bible. Unfortunately, she had a lot of sin in her life. She was entrapped within a goth lifestyle. As such, her life was pretty carnal, so much so that she would often brag about it in class as a way to justify her lifestyle.

To be clear, she was not any more of a sinner than I've ever been, but it was hard for me as a Christian to see her so ensnared. However, there was something else she would talk about equally as much as the wilds of her lifestyle.

She would spend a lot of class time talking about God and the Bible. In fact, not a class would go by without her mentioning something about or against scripture.

What struck me was that it was all personal. She would talk about her mom and church and how they would always try to “save her.” She even said once, “What do I even need to be saved from?!”

The gospel bothered her. It got under her skin. Maybe you can relate? Have you ever felt like her? Does God’s Word make you feel uncomfortable? Have you ever heard the gospel and felt downright *confronted* by it? Or perhaps the Bible’s message just rubs you the wrong way? Now, what if I told you that was a good thing?

In today’s lesson we will be back in the book of Acts, where we will learn what it means to be confronted by the gospel, including why it is actually a good thing to be confronted by it.

Tough, not abusive, love

Before we jump into the lesson I want to make one point clear. When I mention being confronted by the gospel, I do not mean being abused by it. People must always preach and teach God’s Word out of love. (Eph. 4:15) In addition, we are commanded to speak with grace when we present God’s truths to others. (Col. 4:6)

To be sure, you can present a message with fire and brimstone and do it out of love. But when the gospel is presented purely out of anger, or when people are co-

erced into converting through manipulation or violence, the gospel is not being presented in a Biblical manner.

Those who witness God's Word to others are like skilled surgeons and the Bible they hold in their hands is like a fine scalpel. They must use it with tender care and precision, not carelessness.

Surely, the cancers of sin we see in those who are not Christians cause us grief and upset us. Nevertheless, we must help God cure them because we love them and want to see them healed.

Therefore, when I speak in this lesson about the Bible confronting you, know that it is a tough love, not an abusive one, to which I am referring. The reason for this disclaimer is that many have been unnecessarily hurt because they were not given the gospel in love. If that is you, I encourage you to read on.

“Pricked in their heart”

Acts chapter 2 verse 37 marks the end of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. He had preached some very strong, but no less pertinent and relevant, truths to those in attendance. In fact, the gospel message was given so clearly that the hearers were “pricked in their heart.” (Acts 2:37)

The English word “pricked” comes from the Greek word *κατανύσσω* (*katanussō*) which means to be pierced

or stabbed and left with feelings of bewilderment and shock.

If those descriptors sound harsh it is because they are. You see, the message of the gospel is no simple or lite thing. The truth is, there is gravity to the gospel, and as such it confronts those who hear it.

Simply put, the gospel “shocks” us. And why wouldn’t it? We who are all born naturally rebellious to God and slaves to sin find the gospel at first listen to be entirely abrasive to everything we know and “stand” for. (Jas. 4:4, Jn. 8:34) It requires a 180 degree turn from our ways unto God. (2 Chron. 7:14) This is why Jesus said “go, and sin no more” to the lady caught in adultery. (Jn. 8:11)

The gospel message also confronts us because God’s Word itself is a “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) The Holy Spirit searches hearts, and uncovers everything about whoever is listening when the gospel is preached. He makes you see who you really are.

The truth that we are sinners in need of salvation and repentance in Jesus Christ alone cuts straight to our very hearts. (Rom. 3:23, Acts 4:12) “We don’t like to admit that God’s Word stings.” Jesus said, “I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matt. 10:34) The nature of Jesus’ message divides those who choose to follow Him, from those who do not.



Elsewhere God's Word is described as "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." (Heb. 4:12)

We don't like to admit that God's Word stings. In fact, many churches today present an intentionally watered-down message as not to offend. Many neglect the doctrine of hell for example while others choose to omit certain sins from the Bible. While their intentions might appear admirable, they unfortunately do more harm than good.

Sadly, the approaches of these churches have left many bereft of the message they so badly need to hear in its most clear, forthright, and honest way, from God's Word as revealed by Him alone.

"What shall we do?"

The gospel confronts us because it is a matter of eternal life or death. Salvation is many things, but it is principally a call from God and a promise. (Acts 2:39) This is why we are to proclaim God's Word. Think about it, if you call someone with soft words and whispers, they might not respond or even feel they need to.

Moreover, when we call someone, it is done clearly and intentionally. We want them to hear and come to us.

The same applies to God.

We cannot hide God's Word under a bushel or sugar-coat it to say what we want it to say. (Matt. 5:15, Deut. 4:2) It is God's word, not our word. We must proclaim God and let Him call sinners to Himself. We must remember that we plant, but God gives the increase. (1 Cor. 3:6)

The gospel must be clearly and directly presented. Those who hear it must be left knowing they have a decision to make. A decision is exactly what was left to those who heard Peter's sermon. Those present asked "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Peter then told them to repent and be baptized. (Acts 2:38) Then he continued to testify and exhort. He also told them to save themselves from the perverse generation that they were a part of. (Acts 2:40)

The gospel not only draws a line in the sand betwixt us and the world, asking us to step over or remain, but it also shows us the futility of the world, and of every sin we have come to enjoy. In that moment, we see the sinful company we've always kept, and our entire generation, for what they really are, wicked and perverse.

If that does not confront you, I don't know what will. I can still remember how tense I felt when I saw and understood the gulf between what I had grown up around (the world) and what I was being called into (the family

of God) when I was confronted with the gospel for the first time.

When that tension hits us, we are left like Peter's hearers asking "What shall we do?" This awareness is the first step to salvation. Then, after awareness comes acceptance. Each and every sinner must accept Christ, and step out of their own sinful generation to follow God.

It was scary for me to comprehend that reality. Yet I chose to accept Jesus as my savior and I've never looked back. And you know something? That's what happened to those who responded to God's call through Peter's message.

"Gladly received"

At first those present were merely enemies of God. But they heard the gospel, it confronted them, and they were pricked in their hearts as God called them. They became aware of their sin. They knew they had to make a decision with eternal ramifications. Then, the remarkable and the truly supernatural happened!

After they questioned what they had to do to be saved they "gladly received" Peter's message. (Acts 2:41) In fact, about 3,000 people placed their faith and trust in Jesus that day. (Acts 2:41)

What is more, the same people who had condemned

Jesus to death, were now praising God. (Acts 2:23, Acts 2:47)

Confrontation led to a glad response. They made the connection that the author of Hebrews so beautifully elucidates, that those who accept Christ “must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6)

And what a rewarder He is! Eternal life, justification, the Holy Spirit, restored fellowship with Him, adoption and so much more flow out of the riches of His abundant grace. (Eph. 2:7)

They were glad to have escaped death, and they gladly answered God’s call. The gospel appealed to them. Joy overflowed. That is what the gospel does. It begins by confronting us, but it ends its work by eliciting a glad response.

The pricked heart, the call to leave their own generation and the world, and the confrontation of the message, were all heeded. Their stony hearts were melted. They received salvation gladly. God opened their hearts for them to see the gravity of their situation, their great need and most importantly His great love for them. (Eph. 1:18, Acts 26:18)

God’s love for sinners, His very love for you, is an everlasting love. (Jer. 31:3) He knows you, and is drawing you to Him for salvation. Have you acted on the realiza-

tion of God's great love for you?

Be it through tears, leaping, songs or quiet thankfulness, those who come to Christ are moved by a deep gladness for what He has done for them. They realize His great love for them, and they respond.

This is what happens to everyone who accepts Christ. Through this we see that being confronted by the gospel is a good thing indeed.

### Conclusion - Triumph

In today's lesson we found ourselves back in the book of Acts. We learned what it means to be confronted by the gospel, and we discovered why it is actually a good thing to be confronted by it.

Remember the professor from the start of today's lesson? I ran into her randomly years later walking the halls of my old college.

She was talking to a student and as I stepped by not only did she look completely different, she was sharing the gospel message to the student! She had become a Christian...and she was glad to be counted among the family of God!

This is the pattern of all believers. Jesus takes us from anger to comfort. From despair to strength, from being lost to being found, and from eternal death to being

joint-heirs with Christ in glory. (Lk. 15:32, Rom. 8:17)

From a confrontation comes a supernaturally remarkable triumph. May you accept His grace today and may your words echo the Psalmist...

“For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.” (Ps. 92:4)

Let today be the day you triumph in God’s work of salvation in your life. Amen!



## About The Greater Heritage



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