

Home for Christmas Series# 1, Look Who's Home!

By Zach Sloane, Dec. 1, 2020

Home for Christmas

Lots of us are home for Christmas... whether we like it or not.

What do you think about when you think of Christmas? Incarnation?

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

"Look who's home!"

1. Introduction to Christmas theme.
2. Address the "lie of separation": a lie that the incarnation of Jesus and the events of Christmas completely blow out of the water.
3. Have a "God with us" experience: Immanuel

Look Who's Home!

What does home for Christmas mean to you? For some:

*special times with loved ones, traditions, time spent together under one roof.

* Home is where my people are.

* The darker side of home for Christmas and how that has not always been a happy moment in lives. Instead it reminds some people of the brokenness, or pain, or how lonely it can be.

But here is some good news: Christmas is a time where above all else we can celebrate the homecoming of Jesus. Every Christmas we get to focus on the miracle that was the incarnation of Jesus, a sign and proof that there is no separation between God and humanity. The "Home for Christmas" feeling is now not just a once a year deal, but a perpetual experience we have with a God who has sown himself into the very fabric of our being and even our world.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

The lie of separation

How is God with us? It doesn't feel that way. God is only close to those who seek him, or those who know and obey him.

If our Christmas message is framed through the lens of distance and separation, it is not good news for everyone, only some, and only those who qualify.

Luke 2:10

"Don't not be afraid, I bring you good news that will bring great joy for all people. Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you..."

Our dilemma: in the west we have a spiritual paradigm that says God is over/up there and we are over/down here. Between us exists a huge space, that if we come to believe hard enough, do the right things in the right way, we will cross over the bridge / or climb up the ladder / ascend the hill / climb the mountain, and get closer to God.

The problem with this paradigm is that it's not biblical. Its Greek philosophy.

The basics of Greek thought that has infiltrated our Christian worldview:

- * God is pure spirit and he exists out there, away from us.
- * There are defined layers and levels between God who is out there as pure spirit and all of us mortals who are encased in evil fleshly matter with bodies.
- * Somehow, if we can come to the right knowledge by acquiring it through our virtue, neglect of our bodies, or correct thinking, we can climb through the levels to get closer to God and become more spiritual and less fleshly or natural.
- * Our universal sin is that we are stuck in a condition of being controlled and dominated by our humanity; our emotions, physical appetites and desires, and our attachments to the natural things around us that are merely shadows of ultimate reality itself; spirit.

Does any of that sound familiar? Through this lens we read verses like:

Isaiah 59:2

"Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

Our a priori, or pre-conditioning to see the world through the lens of distance between a far off God and ourselves, hinders us from seeing the other parts of the same verses that suggest this may not be the case.

Isaiah 59:1

See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

It's not that God can't and won't see you, its not that he cant hear you because of your sin, its not that he is unwilling and standing away from us because he can't stand our sins. Rather, as the Bible says, the sense of separation and distance we have is one of caused by our inquiries and our sins.

The problem with us was that our sins and our knowledge of good and evil and philosophy like these Greek fellas gave us, it all leads us into darkness.

Is. 59:9-10

"...we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope like the blind along a wall, groping like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among the vigorous as though we were dead.

Sin and iniquity didn't separate us from God, it made us blind to him and his presence. The Truth of the matter is that God is and always has been present with us, even in our sinful state. The bible tell us that in some mystical way, Jesus is the one who holds all things together.

Colossians 1:15-17

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation... "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Hebrews 1:3

"...who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power..."

He is the word that holds all things together.

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

In Him we all live and move and have our being.

Acts 17:28

28 For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

God is not "over/up there," separated and away from the sinners of humanity, he is here wth us all. So we want to LOOK at who is home. Jesus, this person, we want to recognize him with us this season and open our lives and experience his presence with us.

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

St. Ignatius “On the Incarnation”

“For this reason, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, he was not far from it before, for no part of creation had ever been without him who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet fills all things that are. But now he entered the world in a new way, stooping to our level in his love and self-revealing to us”.

This word that was never far from us, became one of us, so that now we would no longer be blinded by our own ignorance and alienated from the life of God due to the ignorance that is in us:

Eph. 4:18

*for their [moral] understanding is darkened and their reasoning is clouded; [they are] alienated and **self-banished from the life of God** [with no share in it; this is] because of the [willful] ignorance and spiritual blindness that is [deep-seated] within them, because of the hardness and insensitivity of their heart.*

We didn't see, didn't understand, couldn't perceive it. Our our shame and guilt and pride clouded our view to what was right in front of us, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

So Jesus comes in a body, as a man, as one of us, understandable, touchable, tangible, he come to his own the Bible tells us in John 1:11. No more light over here and darkness over there, no more separation. John says the light that Jesus is that gives light to everyman man who comes into the world, unlike the Genesis story where light and darkness were separated, in John the light shines **IN** the darkness.

Ninja turtle illustration.

Communion.

In every way that sin, shame, guilt, distortions, clouded, confused, and blocked our ability to experience God and enjoy his presence, Jesus himself dealt with every single one of these issues.

Hebrews 2:17

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Col. 1:19-22

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind

by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

The blood had a sin destroying power, but it also speaks a better word. The blood of Jesus speaks a word of closeness unlike Abel's that spoke of banishment.

Hebrews 10 :19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, through His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let's approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

AMEN!