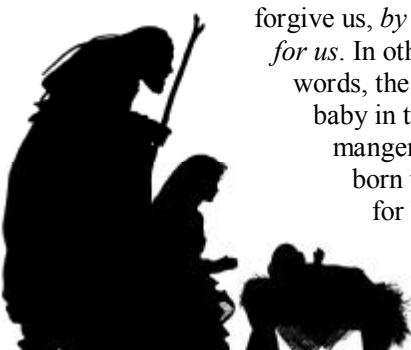


Christmas – more than a Manger!

A Christmas Truth by Pastor Craig Ledbetter

On the first Christmas Eve, the very first Christmas Eve, the whole world was unaware of what was magically happening in a barn in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary knew what was happening; angels gathered in countless numbers praising and rejoicing because of what was happening; Shepherds gathered to see what was happening. It was the wondrous birth of God's Son, Jesus! But that birth was not the point. It was not the climax. Jesus had not been born to become great and powerful, and take over the world. The Bethlehem baby, born in a humble manger, born the Son of Almighty God, had been born... to die!

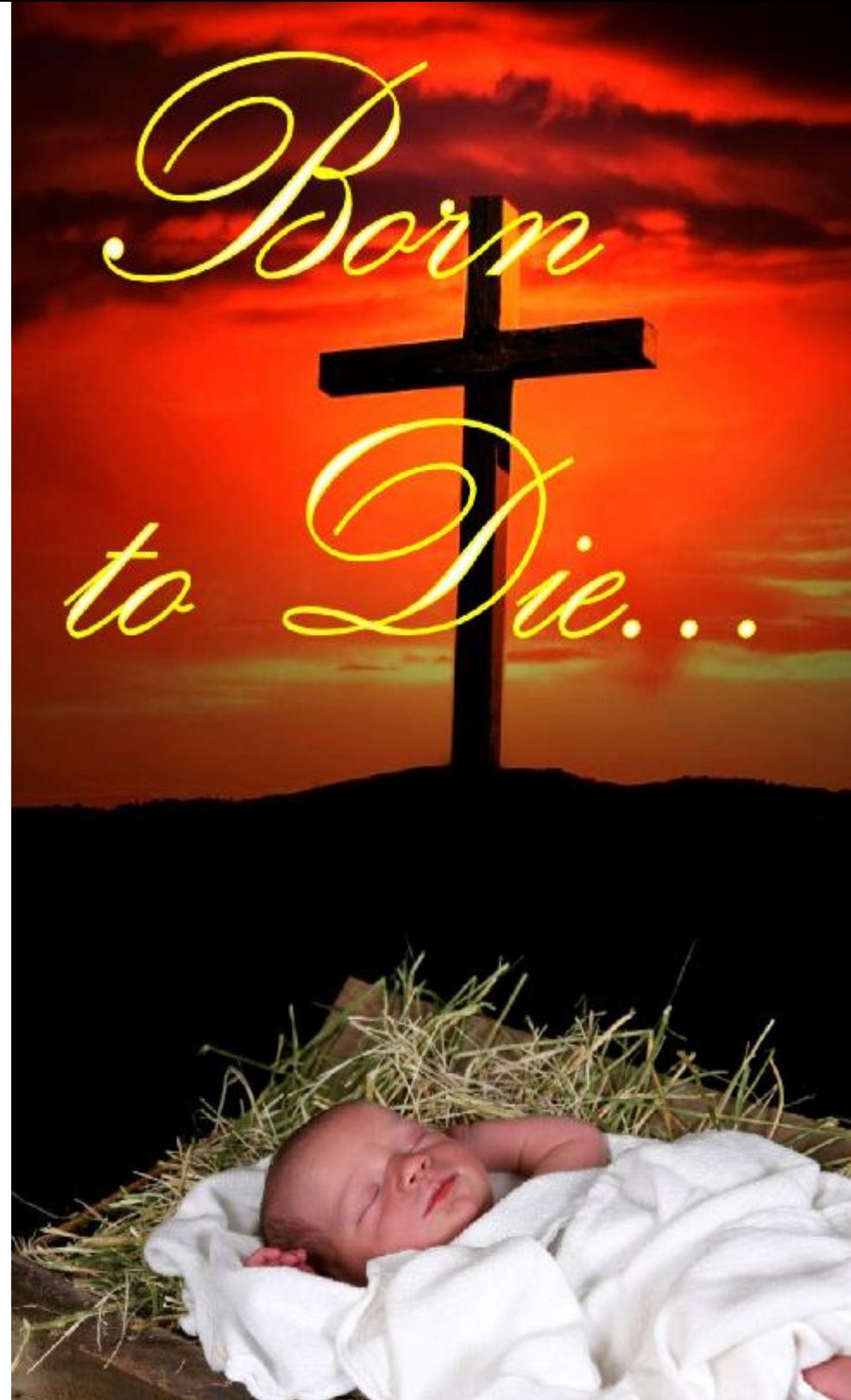
The world has many stories about deities, and great people being born. But until Jesus, the world had never heard of one being crucified! It was absurd — it was like saying that GOD had come into our world for the sole purpose of being judged as a criminal, and then executed. Certainly God would never have wanted such a thing, and yet that was the point—God had become flesh for this very purpose! His birth would have no effect upon the condition of the world, but His death would! Because God wanted to save us, He became like us, so that He could forgive us, *by dying for us*. In other words, the cute baby in the manger was born to die for YOU!



The Holy Spirit had taken nine months to fashion in the womb of Mary a body like no other body. A body that was to be inhabited by the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus! Every Christmas we all stop and almost flippantly acknowledge the birth of the baby Christ as if there is some kind of magical effect in just believing that fact. But the issue is not that He came, but rather WHY He came.

So, Why did He come? It may surprise you, but there is really only one reason, one plan, one purpose — Jesus came to suffer and to die for a world that is lost and away from God. *That is why He came and was born in that manger!* Bethlehem happened only so that the crucifixion on Calvary could happen. He was born as a baby only so that He could die as a man. Jesus lived only so that He could one day, on a cross, die. So, in reality, those soft baby hands, fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, were made in order that nails might be driven through them. Those tiny feet, unable at first to walk, were one day to climb a hill and be nailed to the bottom of a cross. That beautiful head with sparkling eyes was formed in order that some day men might crush into it, a crown of piercing thorns. That tender body, soft and warm, wrapped in swaddling clothes would one day be lashed and whipped, and finally ripped open by a spear to reveal a broken heart. That's why God made that body - *Jesus was born to die.*

The Son of Almighty God, had been born... to die!



But why did He HAVE to die? Simply put, Jesus had to die because every last one of us are separated from God *by our sins*. Isaiah 59:2 says, "*your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" So, no matter how few sins you may believe you have committed, they are enough to keep you out of God's sinless and perfect heaven, and send you to a devil's hell: "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*"

No amount of praying, doing good works, or trying to make up for your sins will make everything right between you and God. Sins are not mistakes that we make — they are wilful rejections of God's commandments in the Bible, which every one of us have done throughout all our lives.

All sinful actions are going to be judged one day by God unless someone takes our place in punishment. The church can't take our place, or the priest, or even one of our best friends. God's only way home for every sinner is through the death of His Son Jesus Christ in their place!



The Bible says only Jesus is our sinless substitute. "*When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*" (Romans 5:6). Jesus said in Matthew 20:28 that He came, "... *to give his life a ransom for many.*"

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15, "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" Even Jesus' name means the SAVIOUR from our sins, "*And she (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21).

Wouldn't it be wonderful if it was really true? That GOD Himself actually came into our world, and went to the cross, so that anybody, absolutely anyone could be saved from sin's penalty, and could be made ready for heaven? Well, **it is all true!** It is the Gospel truth! And this letter is God's attempt to convince you that Jesus wasn't *just born* in a manger long ago, but was born, to die for YOU!

God says only those who turn from their wicked ways of living, and accept the free gift of His Son into their hearts *by faith*, will have perfect forgiveness applied to them. Hear what God's word says: "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*" (Acts 3:19).

Jesus said in John 3:16-17, "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.**" To be "saved" means to be delivered from the eternal punishment of my sins so that I can finally live a life free from the bondage of my sin — not only here and now, but live forever with Jesus in a real place called heaven!

Only Jesus makes it possible to live beyond the grave. He proved it when He Himself arose from the grave: and He now lives in heaven waiting to save all who call in faith upon His name! "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**" (Romans 10:13).

We don't find forgiveness and new life by being good, or by being religious, or by going to church. We find new life, and especially *eternal life* by placing our faith, not in a manger, but in what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross of Calvary. "**The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Romans 6:23).

Take a new look at the manger this Christmas. No longer see just a baby, tender and sweet, but a perfect sacrifice in the place of you and me! No longer see only the brightness of gifts and of angels singing, but rather a cross, and the death of God's Son as the only way to save any sinner from all their sin! You can believe that it will work *for you* because Jesus promises it will!

So what should you do now?

Repent of your own sinfulness, and stop trying to be religious enough to earn heaven. Just believe that Jesus did everything needed to save your soul, and then pray and ask Him to "save you right now!" He will, and you will never be the same! Then you need to start learning the Bible, and live God's way! Come visit a Church that helps people grow! You'll be glad you came!

"*Buiochas le Dia*"

**From the people of
Bible Baptist Church,
of Ballincollig**



Westgate Foundation, Main Road
Sundays, 10.30am and 7pm
Wednesdays, 7pm is Open Bible Study
Post: Unit B, Enterprise Business Park,
Innismore, Ballincollig, Cork
Contact Tel: 021-4871234
Email: biblebc@gmail.com
www.biblebc.com

Christmas Schedule:
21 Dec, 10.30am Christmas Cantata
25 Dec, 11am Christmas Day Service

Other Helpful Church Ministries:
Reformer's Unanimous Addictions Programme Fridays 8-10pm
Cork Bible Institute - Saturdays 9am-12.30pm
Teen Rebel Nights - Every other Saturday at 7.30pm
Children's Summer Bible Clubs