

The God of Christmas

1. **God loved us** (John 3:16 cp Romans 5:8)

- **John 3:16-19 HCSB** "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (18) Anyone who believes in Him is not judged, but anyone who does not believe is already judged, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God. (19) "This, then, is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.
- **Romans 5:8 HCSB** But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!

Lots of people are willing to say "I love you" but their love is a shallow, pale imitation of God's love for us. His love is not static. It doesn't stop at a trite phrase or a meaningless, repeated ritual. It flexes with our response, always doing what is best for us.

His love is not self-centered. It reaches out and draws us in. It is willing to put up with a lot in order to facilitate our good. If God's holiness were the only factor, we would all be in hell now. If God's love stopped at simply being nice and cuddly, there would never be any long-term hope for us because our sins would never be confronted and we would be caught in a trap of our making.

God's love is dynamic, extroverted, and confrontational. It is the single greatest hope we sinners have. Let me show you what I mean.

2. **God spoke to us** (Hebrews 1:1-2; 3:6-8)

- **Hebrews 1:1-2 HCSB** Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. (2) In these last days, He has spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe.
- **Hebrews 3:6-8 HCSB** But Christ was faithful as a Son over His household, whose household we are if we hold on to the courage and the confidence of our hope. (7) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: **Today, if you hear His voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the desert,**

God did not have to speak. He could have been the remote clock maker who created all the intricacies of the universe and then watched from afar to see what we would do with it. He could have sat back and thought "there! I created the universe; gave it life and gave it beauty. That should be enough." Who would blame Him?

Yet, He chose to reach out from His transcendent state and reach down into our immanent, mortal condition. In the grand silence and division created by our sins He spoke out and offered instruction on how to return to our glorified condition.

He gave us the Torah, in order to teach us what true holiness and righteous living looked like. Trapped in their sinful natures, generation after generation proved woefully inadequate to the task of keeping the simple, clear rules that had been given to us by the Lord.

He sent us judges and we only obeyed as long as the good ones were alive.

He sent us prophets and we disregarded them. Many of them we abused. Some of them we killed.

Finally, **He sent us His Son.**

- **Matthew 21:33-37 HCSB** "Listen to another parable: There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. He leased it to tenant farmers and went away. (34) When the grape harvest drew near, he sent his slaves to the farmers to collect his fruit. (35) But the farmers took his slaves, beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. (36) Again, he

sent other slaves, more than the first group, and they did the same to them. (37)
Finally, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

3. **God identified with us** (Philippians 2:5-8 cp Hebrews 4:14-16)

- **Philippians 2:5-8 HCSB** Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, (6) who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. (7) Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, (8) He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death-- even to death on a cross.

Jesus didn't have to do this. He didn't have to set aside His transcendent glory for a manger and a poverty stricken family. He didn't have to trade the veneration and adulation of angelic hosts for the hostile questions of hypocritical religious leaders. He didn't have to set aside His rights – but He did.

He took a physical form that allowed Him to experience sickness, exhaustion, hunger, thirst. He was rejected, misunderstood, and misquoted. He had His righteousness challenged. He was tempted by Lucifer himself! There is no one on this planet who empathizes with us more than He.

- **Hebrews 4:14-16 HCSB** Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens--Jesus the Son of God--let us hold fast to the confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. (16) Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.

He has thrown open the doors to the throne room and allowed us to scamper in. He has shown us the way to heaven and is willing to ensure our safe arrival. He understands our weakness; our self doubt, and has given us the Holy Spirit to empower and encourage us.

4. **God acted on our behalf** (Galatians 4:3-5 cp Matthew 1:23)

- **Galatians 4:3-5 HCSB** In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elemental forces of the world. (4) But when the completion of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

We were prodigal children, confused, alone in our sins and completely unable to save ourselves. We were slaves, shackled to a post in the slave market of sin, subject to the whims of the world and the hatred of our master the devil. We could not free ourselves.

People like to have long lists of “dos and don'ts” because the list's focus on externals gives them the mistaken impression that they can actually make a difference in themselves; that they can save themselves. The Gospel's appeal to change the inner man is most often rejected because we absolutely cannot do it. It must be done for us. God is our Savior. God is the One who acted on our behalf. He is El Gibhor, God our Hero.

- **Matthew 1:23 HCSB** **See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."**

The message of the birth of the Messiah is this: we are not alone in this battle. We do not have to face the devil and his minions in our own puny strength. The battle is winnable because we have a great Hero on our behalf. The world may have its devilish goliath, but we have the Son of David on our side.

Never doubt God's love for you. Do not underestimate the wickedness of the human heart or the implacable consequences of sin; but do not doubt God's love or His willingness to reach out and save you from yourself.