

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG281 – Christmas – Celebrating the Son of Man

As with so many religious observances, there is much that could be discussed regarding Christmas. For instance, because the Western and Eastern churches use different calendars, Christmas is observed on different days. In the Western Church, which uses the Gregorian calendar, Christmas is observed on December 25th, whereas for the Eastern Church, which follows the Julian calendar, Christmas is observed on January 7th. Many in the Messianic and Hebrew Roots movements follow a tradition that Yeshua was born somewhere during the Fall feasts, between the Day of Trumpets and Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. But rather than try to unravel all of the doctrinal scheduling dilemmas surrounding Christmas, I want to focus this podcast on what is very personal and important to me: Christmas is supposed to be about the birth of the Messiah as the Son of Man.

When we think about the symbolism that most defines Christmas, we think of that nativity scene that we see so often. But Christmas is not a birthday party for Jesus. In fact, in Jewish tradition, birthdays are not even celebrated, or really recognized. So it has to be about more than just the birth of Yeshua as the Messiah. It is about the reality that Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the King of Kings, was born and lived as a son of man, a human being.

In Luke, the second chapter, starting with verse 1 and going all the way through verse 52, we see the story told of Christ's birth and His early years. When we read this, again we recognize that He was a human. He was born; He had to grow and mature just like all of us. I know that we have been discouraged from knowing Yeshua after the flesh and relating to Him on a human level. I think that is very much taken away from us in school, and Sunday school, whatever, as we study about Jesus, about Yeshua. But I believe that first we must know Him after the flesh, and we must know that He was flesh and blood. We must know that He lived as a human in order for us to properly relate to Him in His resurrection.

I want to read Second Corinthians 5:16: "Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer." Many times I think this Scripture has been used to say, "Okay, we do not know Christ after the flesh. We do not relate to Him after the flesh. We relate to His glorified state. We relate to His place at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realm." But if we really read this Scripture, it says, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh." So, in other words, we must know Christ according to the flesh. And that is what is important to me, if we want to talk about celebrating or recognizing something in Christmas. It brings us back to that moment in time where Christ was born the Messiah. He was born in that manger. He was born a baby. He was born a child; and from that place, He had to be raised, He had to grow. He went through everything that a baby goes through. He had to be cared for. His parents had to protect Him. In fact, because of the threat against His life that was there from Herod, they actually took Him to the land of Egypt to protect Him from being destroyed. So He was a human; He did not exist and come down to Earth in a divine form. And I think many times that is confusing to people. I think, somehow, even if it is not confusing, there is almost this desire that we have to make Jesus, to make Yeshua, a figure of divinity.

We know that He was born from a virgin, and His Father was God. And that, again, helps play into this idea, “Well, He was not really just human. He was part human, part divine.” We are not sure at times what He was. But I think we need to recognize that God, our Father, brought Him as our Messiah into the earth as a human. To me, He had to be human; and what I want to celebrate, what I do celebrate when I look at His life, is His humanity. I need Him as a human, because I need the strength that I receive from His humanity. I need the help that I receive from Him, knowing that He, likewise, was a human, and He experienced what I experience, what you experience, in living a human life on this earth.

We know that in our concept of salvation, we receive eternal life and we are looking forward to living in an eternal glory with the Lord. But before that happens, we are living a natural life in a natural level of physical Earth; and it is very important for us to try to live as humans in a relationship with God, finding God, relating to God the Father. This is what Christ did. He, like us, was human. He lived in the flesh. He lived on the earth. He faced the circumstances of life as every human does – and it does not take away from who He is. It is the meaning behind who He is and what He provides to me on a daily basis. I know I personally went through a great deal just getting prepared to bring this podcast and deliver it to you, because I went through days that were very difficult. And I know the Lord was making this a reality for me, that I was having to draw from Christ as my Messiah. It is this idea of Messiah that has to become important to us if we are going to truly celebrate the concept that is called Christmas. It is about Him being born. It is about Him living in a human life.

When you look into the Hebraic understanding, when you look into the Hebrew Scriptures about Messiah, you see there is a different concept than what we have been taught many times in Christianity. We think of Messiah, or Christ, and we think of salvation. What is that? It is forgiveness of sin. He comes to take away our sin. He forgives our sin, we receive eternal life, and therefore we can live in eternity with God, the Father, with Christ, the Son; and it sets up this time in the future for us. But when you look at the Jewish understanding of Messiah, it is different. The Messiah was a very human figure, which is what we are being taught in the story of the New Testament. It begins with Him being a human. It begins with Him being a child. It begins with Him being raised and growing, learning a skill, all of these things that He had to do as a child. And that fits very, very much into the Hebrew understanding of Messiah. We see the disciples, even at the Ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father; they were saying, “Is it at this time You will restore to Israel the Kingdom?” They were still looking for something on a natural level to happen. Now, many times that is mocked in Christianity; to me it is the importance that we have of Christ as our Messiah.

When we say Christ, we are saying the “Anointed One”; that is taken into the Greek from the Hebrew word Mashiach, or Messiah, as we would say it in English. So He is the figure of the Messiah. And we must look at the Hebrew understanding of Messiah to really gain what we need, I think, in a real walk with God in our lives on a daily basis. I know we will do fine when we get to glory. When we live in the days of His Kingdom, it is going to be much different. But for me right now, I live in the flesh. I live as a human, in a human world, by the laws of nature that surround me, in the circumstances that I face every day; and you do also. So we need to take on, I think, this true identity of Messiah. When we look at the disciples, maybe they were missing the aspect of what was happening in the complete picture of Messiah; but I do not know that we are not missing some of the complete picture of Messiah, too.

If we would say, “What is an illustration from the Hebrew Scriptures of a messiah?” King David was a messianic figure. I say that because as a young man, in the flesh, without necessarily being divine in any way, shape or form – we do not think of David being divine as we do not think of the Judges being

divine, or Moses being divine; but all of these figures serve as examples of what a messianic appearance is – and so, what did David do? He comes along when all of Israel is cowering in fear because of Goliath, and they do not think they can face Goliath. They do not think anybody can beat this guy. But David comes along, and he was just a man; and he faced Goliath and he took him down by his faith in God and drawing from the power and the strength of God, and he defeated Goliath and delivered Israel in that day. That, to me, is a messiah. That, to me, is the figure that we need to have of Christ during the days of His flesh. He lived in the flesh; and in the flesh, He was successful in being a human who related to God, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, who was enabled to move and enact and bring the will of God into Earth – just as we pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.” So this idea of the messianic figure from Judaism is something that I think we need to inculcate into our relationship with Christ, as we talk about and celebrate the Christmas event. He did come as a child. He was raised. He was a young man, and He went through all the phases of life that we face. Therefore He is able to help us, and that is what the Scripture makes very, very clear.

When those disciples were talking to Him as He was ascending, and saying, “Are You going to return the Kingdom to Israel,” what were they saying? They were saying, “As a Messiah, You should remove the oppression of Rome from us.” They were looking for something in their daily life on a human level that Messiah meant. And I think we lose that too much. In our Christian faith, we look too much to Christ as this divine figure who moves in a divine way. But I think in doing that, we make Him so far above us that He is unattainable in my today's life. I am facing very real needs and problems. They may not seem great to you, or to Him; but to me, they are something that many times I do not feel like I can be successful in life to accomplish what I need to do, or to overcome the circumstances or situations that I personally face. And so when I come to Christ, when I come to Messiah to relate to Him, to Yeshua as my Messiah, I can draw on the fact that He lived in the days of His flesh; and we must know Him in those days of flesh. Remember what the verse says. It says, “Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh.” We need to know Him according to His flesh, how He lived, how He was successful. How did He overcome circumstances and everything that He faced? – the stress, the oppression, the futility of living in this earth that is surrounded by futility, in an earth where the prince of the power of the air was still Satan surrounding all that He did, seeking to kill Him every day. He was under threat of His life almost on a daily basis. How did He do that? How did He live as a man in the earth? This is what we need to be able to draw from. Yes, we will know Him in His risen, resurrected state; but I believe first we must connect with Him as He lived through in the days of His flesh.

Hebrews 2:14-18 says,

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made [in other words, God the Father had to make Christ] like His brethren [like humans] in all things [He had to be human in all things], so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able [He is able today] to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

What a beautiful picture of what God has done in delivering to us a Messiah, born as a baby into this earth, raised as a young man, living as an adult, relating to God, doing the whole will of God, being tempted in all ways like ourselves. And it makes it very clear that Christ had to share in flesh and blood,

He had to partake in the same thing that we partake in. He had to feel what we feel, He had to experience what we experience, because He is our help. He comes to our aid in the time of need. He is the aid to those who are tempted. Why? Because He faced it all. Because He did it. He was the forerunner. He is the big brother that was able to go through all of these things, and therefore He is able to help us through these things in our daily lives.

In Hebrews 5, starting at verses 7-8, it says, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death," speaking of the Father, "and He was heard because of His piety." That word *piety* kind of gives a wrong impression, but it means because of His reverence, His sense of awe, His sense of amazement and wonder of the Father. He was heard because of those things. "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." Christ learned obedience. He did not just come into the earth and automatically was obedient and was perfect. And I think, again, sometimes that idea that we get, from wherever we get it, makes us feel like, "Oh, He was perfect, but I am caught in my flesh and I can't get out of it." No, He learned to be obedient to the Father. He learned through what He suffered.

"And having been made perfect" – verse 9, read this verse – "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Isn't that wonderful? He did not come perfect. He came as a baby. He was not perfect. He had to have His diaper changed. He went through everything you went through as a baby. He had to be protected, fed, clothed, taken care of. But He became perfect through what He went through. We are being made perfect because of what we are going through. God is taking us through a process of perfection. And what He has given us is He has given us Jesus, Yeshua, a Messiah that enables us to walk through what we could not walk through ourselves. We are able to walk through because of Him, and we are able to walk through these things with Him, in our process of learning obedience, of being made perfect. He went through these same steps that we are going through.

Verses 10-11, "Being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you" – we – "have become dull of hearing." I do think at times we are dull of this reality, of being able to connect with the reality of Christ in the days of His flesh. Hebrews 4:14-16 says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." Do you get that? He has been tempted in **all things** as we are. There is nothing you go through that He cannot relate to. Maybe the circumstances were varied, but He had the same feelings and emotions. "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

That is what I need. I know we will live in the days of glory. I know that we will live with Him in His Kingdom. But right now, in the days of our flesh, we need help. We need to receive the mercy, we need to receive the grace in this time of need. And we go through many times of need, sometimes daily, of the help that we must have in order to live a life unto God, in order to have a faithfulness in our faith unto God, in order to experience that learning process of obedience, becoming perfected in Him. We must have help. And I am telling you, Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, is that help that we need, that gets us through those days when it seems impossible that we will get through what we are experiencing.

In Hebrews 7:24-25, it says, "But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Sometimes we feel like, "Yeah, but now He has ascended to the right hand, and He is up there and I am down here." No, He is in that position every day not to be disconnected from you, but to be more connected; so that at the Father's right hand, He is moment by moment crying out in intercession to provide that grace, that help that we need in this life that we are now living.

I want to read to you from Romans 8. I know there are several verses here, but they are just so key to our life that I want us to hear them. Starting at verses 27-29 of Romans 8, it says, "And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Yeshua is daily ministering to you by intercession and praying for you according to the will of God. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." He is the firstborn. He was born in the flesh that we might live in the flesh and come in this state of flesh into the very image of the Son who lived through these same days of flesh.

Verses 30-31 say, "And these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" And how God the Father is for us! He has provided us a Messiah that can relate and feel our need, that can minister to us in our time of crisis and need. And so we are so thankful, because He will bring us into the glory that He has determined. Verses 32-35 say, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" He will freely give to us all that we need. "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" And you are God's elect. "God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" – on that daily basis. "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Going to verse 37-39, it says, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer" – all these things we face in life, in all of these things, whatever you are facing today, you will be overwhelmingly a conqueror – "through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Think about this. Think about what He has provided. Nothing can separate us – not death, but more so not even life itself. Whatever we face in life, it is not enough to separate us from the love of God that was ministered to us in giving us Christ, Yeshua, our Messiah, our Lord, who would be able to help us, deliver us, comfort us, impart to us, train us, and bring us into all that God has for us.

So as we think about celebrating Christmas, just remember these few points. Let's not just celebrate a time of Christmas as we have in the past, or what many people think about it. Let's instead identify with our Messiah as a son of man. Let us know, number two, that during His days on Earth He was a human, He was not divine. Know that He lived as a human being. His circumstances may have been different from yours, but He was tempted in all points like you. He felt every human pain and suffering. He felt every human need and emotion. There is nothing in your life that He cannot relate to. I know sometimes that seems impossible, but remember this point, emboss it upon your heart and your mind: there is nothing that you are going through, or have gone through, or will go through, that He cannot relate to.

Know that He lives every day to intercede for you, to help you through what you are needing. Life is meant to be lived in Him and through Him. He is your Messiah.

God bless you in these days of Christmas.