

Christmas is God's work to make you his son or daughter. So you and I have to ask ourselves, "Is God my Father?"

**English Standard Version Chapter 4**

3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

**We need to be set free before God becomes our Father.**

"The original sin in which man is conceived and born is not a dormant, passive quality, but a root, rather from which all kinds of sin come up, a force which is always impelling the heart of man in the wrong direction...the human heart is the same for all people, in all places, and at all times---so long, that is, as it is not changed by regeneration and renewal" (Herman Bavinck, *Wonderful Works of God*, 228).

**God the Father sent his son to make us free.**

More than a just about a baby, however, Christmas is about a body. At Christmas, God takes on himself a body---incarnation.

**The Father sent his Son at just the right time**

**The Father sent his Son into our condition**

"Salvation isn't a mere word or attitude but a sending and a being sent, a giving and a being given" (John Webster, *Christ Our Salvation*, 3).

## The Son of God was born of a woman

“If God is not truly incarnate in Jesus as he accomplishes his work on the cross, then nothing has really happened from God’s side and we are thrown back on ourselves.” (Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 32).

All of Israelite history pointed toward the birth of a baby. From the protoevangelion in [Gen 3:15](#), to the supernatural conceptions of Issac, Jacob & Esau, Joseph, Samuel, and John the Baptizer, to the royal lineage of Joseph through David and Solomon, the Bible wants us to be looking for a baby.

What is this baby to do? This is a baby born as a King, born to die.

## The Son of God was born under the law

Our sin makes us crush relationships; we destroy families; we degrade our own bodies in this rebellion. When Paul says “the wages of sin is death,” he highlights the most unnatural part of our fallen condition, that is, death! *Our sin kills us*. And, we are enslaved to this broken pattern of self-destruction and open rebellion to God’s loving rule on our life.

So, this baby isn’t just born to grow up. No, he’s born to break you free by coming in under this--by playing by the same rules you and I have but not breaking them.

God the Son is broken so that you may become a son of God.

## The Father sent his Son to make us sons and daughters

*Incarnation, Redemption, and Adoption. These---not the manger—is what Christmas is mainly about. The Bible does not separate the incarnation and the cross-work. Instead, we move directly from our doctrine of Christ’s incarnation to the doctrine of Christ’s salvation.*

You don’t get the incarnation without the cross, and if you don’t have a cross, the incarnation is unnecessary.

But the progression of the words themselves here are important too. That phrase “so that” clues us in on the fact that salvation isn’t merely about saving us from something.

It is that, of course! But more than that, it’s a saving us to something! More specifically, it’s a saving us to someone! We are saved from our self-destructive, other-destructive, and God-rebelling tendencies, all of which the Bible calls sin, and returned to the place we were created to be: sons and daughters of the most high God.

And in verses 6-7, we move from doctrine of salvation to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We don't just get Christ, we get all of God. Paul, here shows us the Father's initiation, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's indwelling. The inseparable work of God to save sinners.

At the beginning of the passage, before Christ's work, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, called us "underage." We were like wards. Unfree to make decision about our life. Worse, we were enslaved.

Now at the close of this passage, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows us that Christ's work is move us towards adoption, wherein our entire relationship with God changes and we know his as our Father because we are hidden in the Son by grace through faith.

So, I close where I opened. Has the Holy Spirit of God done this for you? Do you know if God is your Father? If you don't I plead with you to not miss the true meaning of Christmas in the work of Jesus Christ.

### **Grow Group Questions**

1. Many of us have difficult relationships with our earthly fathers. Some of us do not. How is reflecting on God the Father as a "father" affected by your relationship with your earthly father?
2. Did you agree with Zach's insistence that all of life's more important questions---e.g., "What is my place in this world?"---are actually subsets of the question, "Is God my Father?" Support your conclusion with Scripture.
3. Why are the incarnation and the cross are inseparable? What implications might that have for Christians living today---not yet taken up into heaven and still called to what some call "incarnational ministry." What implications might that have for Christian suffering?
4. Trace out the various supernatural conceptions highlighted above (e.g, [Gen 3:15](#), etc.). In what ways do those conceptions foreshadow Christ? Consider, even, the roles of supernaturally conceived child himself when reflecting on how these types reveal something about who the Messiah would be.
5. Why is doing "nothing" the only proper response to receiving the gift of salvation? What is at stake if we believe we must do "something" to receive salvation? Don't just proof-text, reflect on what the implications of a "nothing"/"something" position might be.