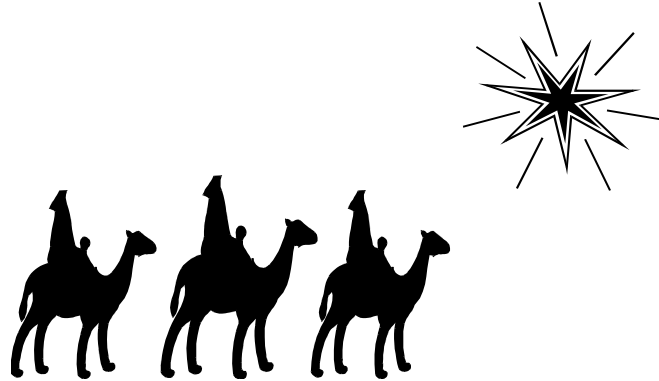


More Than Words



A Christmas Eve message for you from the First Church of Merrimack, NH

More Than Words: The Bible Was Not Enough!

An Incarnation Message for Christmas Eve

By Pastor Allen Tomlinson

The First Church of Merrimack, way back at our very beginning in 1771, believed that the Bible was God's Word, and today we still believe that the Bible is God's perfect Word of absolute truth. We believe that the Bible, being God's Word, is a self-attesting Book, since only the infinite God Himself can tell finite creatures like ourselves Who He Himself is. As the church father, Ambrose, put it, **"Whom rather than God should I believe concerning God?"** We believe there are many objective reasons or evidences that demonstrate the Bible to be God's Word, but in the end of the day we believe that **it is the Holy Spirit bearing witness in our hearts to the Bible as God's Word that convinces anybody.** We also believe that the Bible **alone** is God's Word.

Of course other religions have holy books, but there is some-thing unique about the Bible. The Bible after telling us that it alone is God's true Word and that it is the only Book which sinners need in order to come to a true knowledge of God, also tells us that it is not enough that God has given us the Bible. In one sense the Bible is not enough, and it is the Bible itself that tells us this! **The Bible makes it clear that the Almighty God Who has revealed Himself in the Bible is "more than words"!** He is not just a Divine Talker, He is a Divine Doer!

The Bible is not enough to make sinners right with a holy God, and **we have all sinned and all of us fall short of God's glory.** The Bible tells us that we need to be put right with God. The Bible tells us what standard would be required, kept perfectly for our entire lives, in order that we might be holy enough to live in the holy God's holy heaven. But the Bible does not itself, by itself, by just its words, give us that heaven. It does not by itself, just by its words, take away our sins. It does not by itself, just by its words, bring us forgiveness of sins. It does not by itself, just by its words, give us righteousness and holiness before this absolutely righteous and holy Creator and eternal Judge.

The Bible tells us how our sins can be forgiven, how our sins and guilt can be removed, how we can be seen by God as perfectly righteous people, how we can be made into a holy people for a holy God, how we can know that we have eternal life and go to heaven. It is my job as a minister of Christ's Church, to tell people these things on behalf of God and on behalf of His people. It is my job as a minister of Jesus Christ to tell you tonight, that the story of Christmas, the story of Jesus Christ, is the story that can bring you forgiveness of sins and make you a new person before God and bring you to heaven when you die. **It is my job, as a minister of the Gospel, to tell you that no matter what spiritual condition you were in when you began reading this message, you can conclude your reading of this message with every one of your sins forgiven by God.** You can conclude your reading of this message viewed by God as perfectly righteous in His Son, Jesus Christ. You can conclude your reading of this message with a guarantee that you will go to heaven when you die. **God's grace in Jesus Christ is the message of the Bible and therefore of this Church.** I solemnly make these promises to you right now, that if you will trust in the message of the Bible, all these things will be true for you!

But the message of the Bible itself includes this truth, that the making of this salvation available for sinners took more than just the words of God. **"More than words" were needed.** It took divine action, for us sinners to be delivered from our sin and from the horrible eternal consequences proper for sin. God had to do something very radical for our deliverance!

I. And That, of Course, Is What the Story of Christmas Is About! God Did Act! God Did Something Very Radical. God Did More Than Just Talk to Us Sinners. God Has Come and Rescued Us. God Has Come in Person and Rescued Us!

It was radical for God the Son to even come to this earth. To come down into the womb of the Virgin, and to take on genuine humanity, without sin (of course). **Truly God and Truly Man in one utterly unique Person.**

It was an even more radical step for **the Son of God, the God-Man, to give His human life a sacrifice for sinners on the Cross.** To die taking the punishment that His people deserved, and which He Himself did not deserve, so that they could have the heavenly reward which they did not deserve and which He did deserve! As the inspired Apostle puts it in Romans 5:6-8, ***"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."***

Perhaps there is no more poignant expression of the radical nature of what God the Son did, when He acted on behalf of His people, than that found in Philippians 2:6-11, which sums up both His radical action of Incarnation (becoming a true Man while remaining truly God) and His radical action of crucifixion (of dying for the sins of His people): ***"Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,***

of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

And so, we see that in the very coming of the Son of God to this earth, and even more so by the reason for which He came, which was to die, as He Himself put it, **“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost, to give His life a ransom for many”**—we see from all of this divine activity in our behalf, that the testimony of the Bible itself is that our faith is more than words. It is even more than just the inspired holy Book of the one true and living God—it is God putting His words into action and doing something very deliberate and radical in our behalf! **Coming as that Baby in Bethlehem, and come not to just lie in a manger, but to hang on a cross, for our eternal deliverance!**

II. And This Radical Activity on God’s Part, God the Son Coming to This Earth, Born of the Virgin and Taking on Perfect Human Nature, so That He Could Eventually Die for the Sins of His People—that Is the One Main Theme of the Entire Bible!

This radical divine activity, of God coming to this earth as a man and giving His life to redeem lost sinners, was predicted in the Old Testament many times over! Let us just remind ourselves of two of the many examples:

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.”* [which means, “God with us”]

Isaiah 53:4-6. *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

Then when the New Testament prophets and apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the four Gospel accounts, those accounts of our Lord’s earthly life and death and resurrection, they too emphasized **this radical activity of God in sending His divine Son to die for sinners!**

In the account of Matthew, we read that the angel told Joseph that the Baby is virgin-conceived, the eternal Son of God, Immanuel or “God with us”. He also tells Joseph to name the Baby Jesus, “for He will save His people from their sins”. (See Matthew 1:18-25.)

Luke gives us that full story of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem, emphasizing the virgin-conception and the deity of this Baby, Who was both God and sinless Man, and then tells us in Jesus’ own words why Jesus came: “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”. That is, to save lost sinners! (Luke 1-2)

Mark 10:45 makes the same point as it tells us that Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

John describes Jesus' eternal deity as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and again emphasizes the reason that He came: **to redeem the people the Father had given Him, to redeem them by giving His own life as the propitiatory sacrifice for their sins.** (See John chapters one and ten especially.)

In the New Testament Epistles, we have statement after statement regarding this radical activity of God in sending His only begotten Son, and in the divine Son's eternal purpose to come and die for sinners.

Romans 9:5, in speaking about the Israelites, says: *"of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came [Mary was a Jew of course], who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."*

II Corinthians 8:9, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."* And what did His "becoming poor" involve? Three chapters before in the same book we are told: "For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us [that is, to take the guilt of our sins upon Himself on the cross], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" [that is, that His righteousness might be legally considered ours by the Father in Heaven].

I John 4:14, *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world."* And, **I John 4:10**, *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* [A propitiation is an atoning sacrifice for the guilt and punishment of our sins]

We could multiply such texts from the Epistles, but let us move on to one more piece of biblical evidence concerning God's radical activity in saving sinners, another text that emphasizes the Son of God coming to die for His people.

The last book of the Bible also has this teaching. As usual with the Book of Revelation, it is put in symbolic language. This book uses symbols to describe what John, in his writings at large, tells us are literal realities.

Revelation 12 speaks of a woman giving birth to a Son Who by His own suffering defeats the devil and all the demons, with an eternal victory. **Those who trust in this Son are His people, who themselves overcome the devil and his hatred by "the blood of the Lamb"**. Earlier in the Book, in chapter 5, when the Father in Heaven is looking for a volunteer who could deliver His chosen people from their sin, only One Person in heaven or earth could be found who qualified. That One Person, the eternal Son of God, volunteered freely to come and to be "the Lamb of God". The glorified church in Heaven praises Him with these words, ***"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."***

So every part of the Bible teaches this and emphasizes it as the Bible's main point—that the true God is more than words! He has acted! Jesus Christ, God the eternal Son, has come as the true Man, the sinless and perfect Man, the God-Man, One whole Person with two distinct natures, and in that human nature has died for sinners! Died to take their guilt upon Himself! Died to take their punishment upon Himself! Died to bring them forgiveness of sins and eternal life!

Personal Application:

How can you and I receive the full benefit of Christ coming as the virgin-born Savior, as the eternal Son of God made flesh? **How can you and I receive the full benefit of Christ coming to die for sinners? By confessing our sins to Him and coming to Him, trusting in His work of atonement for sinners, and trusting Him to forgive our sins and to make us right with the heavenly Father, trusting Him to give us eternal life. Bowing before Him as the Lord from Heaven, and trusting in Him as the merciful Savior for sinners!**

Does that sound like radical activity on our part? It does to many! But the only proper and logical response to God's radical love and self-sacrifice in behalf of His enemies (and all of us by nature as sinners are His enemies) is this radical reciprocated love and commitment of faith!

We celebrate Christmas because for God it was more than just words! It was this incredible action on His part in coming and being our Savior! The proper response is a radical one also: to give ourselves to this God of infinite and eternal love, and to trust in His radical work for our salvation. For the Bible, by itself, is not enough. The Bible tells us this itself. "More than words" were needed. Bethlehem was infinitely more than just words.

John 20:31 *"These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name."*

For More Information, Please Do Not Hesitate to Contact Us At:

Phone: (603) 424-3133

Email: pastorallen@firstchurchofmerrimack.org

Address: 7 Baboosic Lake Road, Merrimack, NH, 03054

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 507, Merrimack, NH, 03054