

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-16-12 AM NOTES  
"BORN TO GIVE LIFE TO THE DEAD" (PART 1)  
EPHESIANS 2:1-3

From the ongoing Christmas Series, "Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary"

**Luke 2:11 (NKJV)** "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is Christ the Lord."

"The Bible tells us that man was in such a condition that it necessitated the coming of the second person in the blessed, holy Trinity from heaven to earth. He had to come down and take to Himself human nature and be born as a babe. That was absolutely essential before man could be redeemed. Why? Because of sin, because of the nature of sin. Therefore, you see, you cannot understand the incarnation unless you are clear about sin."

—Martin Lloyd-Jones

**Romans 3:12 (NKJV)** "They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is **none who does good**, no, not one."

I. We Were Dead (v. 1)

**1 Corinthians 15:22 (NKJV)** "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

**Romans 5:12 (NKJV)** "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."

"The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin—and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live."

—Warren Weirsbe

II. We Were Deluded (v. 2a)

A. By the Course of This World

B. By the Prince of the Power of the Air

**1 John 5:19 (HCSB)** "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one."

III. We Were Disobedient (v. 2b)

**John 8:44a (NKJV)** "You are of *your* father the devil..."

IV. We Were Defiled (v. 3a)

The “flesh” is not a thing, but it is a condition of yielding to the power of sin and being controlled by our unbiblical programming.

**Galatians 5:16 (NASB)** “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

**Romans 1:21 (HCSB)** “For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless **minds were darkened.**”

V. We Were Doomed (v. 3b)

**John 3:18 (NKJV)** “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

“Such then was our past condition. We were without God, without Christ, without hope. We were sinners by birth, by choice, and by practice. Our lot was cast in a world controlled by the evil one, and our eternal destiny was to live forever under God’s wrath and curse.”

—John Phillips

**Ephesians 2:4 (NKJV)** “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.”

**Ephesians 2:5-7 (NKJV)** “<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

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“BORN TO GIVE LIFE TO THE DEAD” (PART 1)  
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From the ongoing Christmas Series, “Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary”

Typically, I struggle with what to preach more during the weeks preceding Christmas than any other time. Throughout the year, I normally don’t struggle with the passage to preach on because I am in a series 90% of the time. Last Christmas I decided to try something new for me. I decided I am going to preach an ongoing series for the two or three weeks before Christmas that continues from year to year. The title of the series is “Connecting Bethlehem and Calvary”. Christmas time presents a golden opportunity for Pastors and teachers to preach doctrinal messages relating to the person of Christ and why He came. The birth of Christ is important because it was a means to an end. The birth of Christ saved no one. The focus of Christ’s life was the cross! It is in the cross of Christ that salvation is procured. Any message that does not connect the birth of Christ in Bethlehem to the cross of Christ on a hill called Calvary is a deficient

message. It was at the cross that our salvation, our sanctification, and our glorification were procured. We need to acknowledge His birth, praise God for this miraculous conception in a virgin's womb, praise God for the timing and the protection from those who wanted to kill the Savior, but our highest praise is for what was accomplished at Calvary's cross about 33 years after His birth. I know that those of you who were a part of the church last year remember the messages that were preached leading up to Christmas☺. Just in case you had some "brain leak", let me go over the titles of the messages. On December 11, 2011 we saw that Jesus was "Born to Be the Mediator"; on 12-18-11 AM we saw that He was "Born to Bring Us to God"; On 12-18-11 PM we studied about how He was, "Born to Destroy the Devil". On Christmas morning last year, we saw that He was, "Born to Show God's Love for Sinners". This year we are looking at the fact that He was "Born to Give Life to the Dead" and we will take two weeks to finish it.

When the angel appeared to the shepherds just after the birth of Jesus, he said in **Luke 2:11 (NKJV)** "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is Christ the Lord." The good news that a Savior has come is not perceived as good news until we see why we need a Savior. The majority of people in the USA don't really think that they need a Savior. In their spiritually blinded condition, they pridefully see themselves as being OK with God because they are as good as anyone else and even better than most. The first step in salvation is realizing that in God's eyes we are not good, and how much we need a Savior. I also believe that there are true believers who do not really appreciate their salvation as they ought because they have never seen the utterly hopeless condition they were in before they came to Christ. In our text, Paul is reminding the Ephesians how hopeless and helpless they were apart from Christ. When we see how much we needed a Savior, we begin to live praise filled thankful lives that worship God for sending us a Savior. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said it well: "The Bible tells us that man was in such a condition that it necessitated the coming of the second person in the blessed, holy Trinity from heaven to earth. He had to come down and take to Himself human nature and be born as a babe. That was absolutely essential before man could be redeemed. Why? Because of sin, because of the nature of sin. Therefore, you see, you cannot understand the incarnation unless you are clear about sin." [Martin Lloyd-Jones, "God's Way of Reconciliation", Ephesians Commentary, page 15]. Only when we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the utter helplessness and hopelessness of spiritually dead mankind can we truly appreciate God's sending a Savior. This desperate need and the total inability of mankind was one of the main emphases of the reformers in the Protestant Reformation. There are many today who call this truth about our desperate condition that was emphasized by the reformers "the total depravity of man". I don't have a problem with that terminology, though I prefer the phrase "total inability". Some people misunderstand the phrase "total depravity". It is not saying that all men are as bad as they can be. It is saying that all men are as ***bad off*** as they can be. Certainly those without Christ could be more evil by human standards than they are, but all men are equally lost, blinded, and spiritually dead because they are separated from God, and all mankind are equally helpless to do anything about it on their own.

No doctrine flies in the face of the world system and infuriates those in the world more than the doctrine of the total inability of man. Over and over we are told that while there are a few really evil people (Hitler, axe murders, and child molesters), humanity is basically good. In poll after poll, even evangelicals say they believe that mankind is basically good. Examples are given about relief funds given when there is a natural tragedy and gifts to the poor. The world is quick to point out that some of those gifts and good deeds are from Christians, and some are from other religions, and some are from people who have no religion. From a human standard, man may be capable of doing good, but not from God's evaluation and God's evaluation is the only evaluation that counts. **Romans 3:12 (NKJV)** "*They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is **none who does good, no, not one.***" Why doesn't God count as good what man counts as good? It is because God looks beyond the outer action and looks at the heart (the motive). The only deeds that God evaluates as good are those done out of a heart of love for Him and for His glory. Only those who have been born again and who have been transformed by the Savior can do any deed out of a heart of love for God and do that deed completely for His glory.

In our text, in just three short verses we are given the true condition of all mankind apart from Christ, and in seeing this description, we see why we desperately need this Savior who was announced by the angel to the shepherds. Remember, this is how God sees all of mankind apart from Christ and how God sees us is how we are! I am approaching this from a standpoint of a saved person looking back at what we were before we were made new creations in Christ.

## I. We Were Dead (V1)

Obviously he is not speaking of physical death since He speaks in verse two of these dead people **walking** according to the course of this world. It is speaking of spiritual death. While physical death and spiritual death are different, there also have a lot in common. Just as a physically dead person cannot respond to physical stimuli, a person who is spiritually dead does not respond to spiritual things. A corpse does not hear the conversation going on in the Funeral Home. A dead person does not eat, drink, or even get hungry. Neither can a physically dead person respond to commands. They are dead! In the same way those who are spiritually dead hear commands to change, but they are powerless to really do a heart change with the right motive and give God the glory. They have no spiritual hunger or thirst. They are spiritually dead. This condition is not something that is the result of a certain amount of sins. It is the condition in which we were born! We are all descendents of Adam and we are told in **1 Corinthians 15:22a (NKJV)** “For as in Adam all die...” Romans five speaks of Adam and his descendents and summarizes things in **Romans 5:12 (NKJV)** “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned [in Adam]”. Apart from Christ, all men are spiritually dead and dead people cannot do anything about their condition.

Notice that we were dead “in trespasses and sins”. There is obviously a difference between these two words or he would have just said “sins”. Whereas trespasses refer to wrong that we do unintentionally, sin is falling short because of the violation of truth that we know to be the truth. In other words we were dead in unintentional sins that we fell into because of the nature that we inherited from Adam and we were also dead in sins that we knew were sins and did them anyway. The “in” does not mean that the trespasses and sins we committed were the cause of our being spiritually dead. It is in the Greek what is called “the locative of sphere” which indicates the sphere in which something exists. We were dead in the sphere of trespasses and sins. To put it in a simpler way, “We are not spiritually dead sinners because we committed trespasses and sins; we commit trespasses and sins because we were born spiritually dead sinners because we were descendents of Adam.” Let me allow Warren Weirsbe to sum it up: “The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin – and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live.” [Warren Weirsbe, “Be Rich”, pages 40-41].

## II. We Were Deluded (2:2a)

These spiritually dead people are deluded by two means:

### A. By the Course of This World

That means that we walked according to the values of the world system; according to the world’s ways. The world is society or culture’s views and values apart from God and His Word. The spiritually dead person is under the control of the world. The lost person marches to the world’s drumbeat. He believes what the world tells him. His values are determined by the culture that leaves God out instead of by the word of God. Here are some examples: “A woman’s body is her own and she should not be forced to house a fetus for 9 months when that is not what she wants for her life. She should have freedom of choice to abort the baby”. Here is another: “A person cannot help it if they have an attraction for the same sex. Why shouldn’t they be allowed to marry and have the blessing of society like someone who is attracted to the opposite sex?” The spiritually dead person walks according to the course of this world. He adopts the world’s values even though these values change from time to time. That is why Christians are

admonished to refuse to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2) and love not the world (1 John 2:15). We are a peculiar (different) people who derive our values from God's never changing word that teaches that same sex relationships are sinful and that we are not to take another persons life whether that person is living inside or outside the womb. Those without Christ are deluded by the course of this world.

#### B. By the Prince of the Power of the Air

This prince of course is Satan. He is called the prince of demons in Matthew 12:24 and the god of this world in 2 Corinthians 4:4. In John 12:31 he is called the ruler of this world. The "power of the air" speaks of the realm where this rebel prince and the vast number of demons that he commands operate. It is the spiritual world that we can't see with our physical eyes but is more real than the physical stuff we see with our eyes. Remember that Satan, the rebel prince and all his armies were created as angels and they operate in the spiritual realm. When someone is under the control of alcohol and try to drive a car and are stopped by the police, we say that they were "driving under the influence" (DUI). Those without Christ are spiritually dead and are walking under the influence (WUI) of the world's values and programming and the manipulation of the prince of this world. This influence is described in **1 John 5:19 (HCSB)** "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one."

We needed a Savior because we were dead and deluded.

#### III. We Were Disobedient (2:2b)

That can be interpreted two ways and both are so similar that either may be true because both are clearly taught elsewhere. The phrase "sons of disobedience" may simply mean those characterized by disobedience. Those who are spiritually dead think they are ruling their own life, living like they want to live, but they don't realize that they are under the influence of the world system's programming and the manipulation of the rebel prince of this world. They see themselves as simply being free to do what they want, but God sees them as being disobedient and controlled by the world and the devil. That phrase could also be translated "sons of the disobedient one". In other words, before we had a Savior, we were children of the devil. Jesus told the Pharisees that in **John 8:44a (NKJV)** "You are of *your* father the devil..." Contrary to what the world system tells us, all men are not the children of God; apart from a Savior, we were children of the disobedient one, Satan.

#### IV. We Were Defiled (V3a)

Here is the reason that people without Christ are disobedient and helpless to stop. They are controlled by the desires of the flesh and their darkened mind and are thus defiled. Let's define some terms here. The word translated "lusts" means strong desire. It can be either a positive Godly desire or an ungodly negative desire; the context tells us which it is. Obviously, here it is a negative consuming desire. **The "flesh" is not a thing, but it is a condition of yielding to the power of sin and being controlled by our unbiblical programming.** A person without Christ is said to be "in the flesh". A saved person can walk "after the flesh", choose to yield to the flesh, but is not under slavery to the flesh. When a saved person, who has the Holy Spirit in them, walks yielded to the Spirit, he walks in victory over the flesh. **Galatians 5:16 (NASB)** "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." In other words, a saved person is not a slave to the power of sin in our members or their old programming. A person without Christ conducts himself in the lusts of the flesh because he is a slave to sin.

The word "desires" is a totally different word than the word translated "lusts". This word refers to commands or strong drives. The person without Christ gives in to the strong desires of the flesh treating them as commands and they become what drive him. In addition to the flesh, he adds the mind. The mind of an unsaved person is said to be "darkened" in Eph 4:18 and in **Romans 1:21 (HCSB)** "For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless **minds were darkened.**" What a description of the defilement of mankind without Christ! They are powerless against the strong desires of the power of sin that dwells in them and the pull of their unscriptural programming. The desires of their flesh drive them and their darkened minds justify what they do.

Without a Savior, we were spiritually dead, deluded, disobedient, and defiled.

#### V. We Were Doomed (V3b)

Because we were “sons of disobedience”, we were then “children of wrath”. The phrase “by nature” means through our human birth as a descendent of Adam having the consequences of his sin imputed to us. We were from birth children of God’s wrath. Let me say a word about God’s wrath. God’s wrath is not emotional; it is judicial. By that I mean it is not a divine “temper tantrum”; it is His response as a holy God to sin in Adam and all his descendants. We do not become children of God’s wrath after we commit a certain amount of sin; we were “by nature” children of God’s wrath. That is another way of saying what Jesus said in **John 3:18 (NKJV)** “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Wrath and condemnation is the “default mode” of every descendent of Adam. Understanding this helps us understand why Jesus had to be born of a virgin. Had Jesus been a descendent of Adam, He would have been a child of wrath and thus unqualified to be our substitute.

#### CONCLUSION

John Phillips gives a good summary of why we need a Savior: “Such then was our past condition. We were without God, without Christ, without hope. We were sinners by birth, by choice, and by practice. Our lot was cast in a world controlled by the evil one, and our eternal destiny was to live forever under God’s wrath and curse” [John Phillips, “Exploring Ephesians”, Page 63]. We need a Savior! We desperately need a Savior! That is why those first two words of verse 4 are among the most precious in the Bible. They follow the most devastating truth we could ever hear about our lostness and our hopelessness. Those two words are “But God”. But God sent a Savior! Hallelujah, bless His name! **Ephesians 2:4 (NKJV)** “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.” What did He do? **Ephesians 2:5-7 (NKJV)** “<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Those are the verses we will look at next week! I thank God at Christmas and every other day of the year that He sent a Savior to give those who were spiritually dead, life – eternal life.