

## Upside Down Christmas 2: Upside Down King

Welcome to Redemption Church. I am asked often, “What kind of Church is Redemption?” We are not defined by a denominational label or our own version of scripture interpretation. We are defined by Jesus Christ. The truth He spoke, we want to speak. The life He lived, we want to live. The love He showed, we want to show.

“What kind of Church is Redemption?” We want to be like Jesus, centered on Jesus. We want to be willing to serve like Jesus.

We are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of our Christmas Sermon Series, “Upside Down Christmas.” Last week we talked about the need for an upside down Christmas. The norm of this season has become greed, materialism, stress, pressure, depression, suicide... We need to turn this season upside down.

### Fairy Tale?

When you hear the Christmas story it takes upon a fairy tale feel. Once upon a time there was a virgin who was visited by an angel.. Once upon a time a baby was born and laid in a feeding trough, a manger.. Once upon a time shepherds and wise men showed up..

The birth of Jesus has become a fairy tale to many. It shares time with stories of St. Nick, flying reindeer, and dancing singing snowmen. Many parents are concerned how their kids will respond to the knowledge that... S.A.N.T.A. is not real.. Let's become concerned with how our kids will respond to the knowledge that the birth of Christ is real.

**The birth of Jesus Christ is not a fairy tale.** The birth of Jesus is real. It is BLOOD & GUTS real! The birth of Jesus is not an abstract story. It's not a fable that we can get some symbolic morals and metaphors out of, but nothing more. More than a story, it is a true story.

It is true historically. When the birth of Christ is told it connects the happening with the historical setting.

Matthew connects the birth of Christ with the family tree of Joseph, and Luke does the same for Mary. This is a real historical lineage.

Luke goes a little further and ties the birth of Christ to historical nations and government census.

Luke 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.(NIV)

Luke 2:2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)(NIV)

The Eternal God was manifest in the flesh as a baby.. and He chose a precise time to visit us this way.

I always wondered... The fall of man in the Garden of Eden happens in Genesis 3... Why isn't Jesus the savior born in Genesis 4... dies and is resurrected in Genesis 5... bodda bing bodda boom we are raptured and in heaven in Genesis 6. I mean, why wait!? God let's get this salvation, redemption from the fall thing going ASAP! Why would God wait millennia to do what so desperately needs to be done?

There is a specific reason why the messiah was born when He was born. Jesus came to turn everything upside down.

### Jesus born in the shadow of Rome

Jesus was born at a time when Rome dominated the World.

It had been a long time since Israel had lived in peace and freedom. Israel went from Persian rule, to Greek rule, and then in 63 BC, Roman rule.

There was a philosophy in these large sprawling national empires set on world domination...

**If you want peace on earth you should have 1 nation and 1 ruler...** Alexander the Great had a concept called Hellenization, where he would conquer a nation and then impose his language, his ideas, his culture, philosophy on the conquered nation. And now Rome had taken on this idea of world conquest.. and everywhere they spread they would change the language, change the religion, change the ideas and culture, change the throne and the king who sat on it...

If you want peace on earth you should have 1 nation and 1 ruler... was the thought of the emperor Caesar. They brought about peace by winning battles and then beating the opposition into submission. This is how this largest kingdom the world had ever known was bringing peace..

The Roman philosophy was, if people are terrorized enough you will have peace... there would be no uprising or war because people are too afraid of what would happen to them and their family. No uprising, equals peace... If they even expected that an area was thinking about an insurrection, Rome would march in an army and drag random people out of their homes and in very public terror filled ways, torture and kill them.

Rome's favorite instrument of terror – the cross, the crucifixion.

Jesus was born in the shadow of Rome. He was born in the shadow of the world's largest kingdom. This is the setting of the Christmas story.

I want to remind you that **Jesus was born to turn the world upside down**

**It is by no coincidence that Jesus is born in the shadow of Rome. God chose this moment as the perfect opportunity to compare God's Kingdom & the kingdoms of this world.**

### **Jesus is an upside down King**

Caesar and other world emperors would send in armies to kill off the resistance. Still today this is how nations deal with conflict. If you want peace you need to send in an army. And not just an army... A bigger army. A stronger army. A more fierce and deadly army.

But **God in his upside down ways... sent a baby, not an army, to bring peace into the world.** ..not a stronger more destructive emperor... but a baby.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.(NIV)

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.(NIV)

**God and His Upside Down Kingdom sent a child.. a son.. a baby.. to bring peace. He didn't send violent warriors.** He did not send a bigger more destructive army. The rulers of this world were called according to their viciousness... The Terrible, the Impaler, the Great... But Jesus is called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, & Prince of Peace.

His very name is given because He will save people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."(NIV)

The kingdoms of this world seek to expand through violence & taking... But how does God's kingdom expand?

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.(NIV)

The greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. Jesus expands the Kingdom... but not through violence.. not through hatred.. not through evil. His kingdom expands in Peace. Every step His kingdom expands, that step is taken in Peace.

WHAT AN UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM!?! Every other kingdom expands in violence, but His expands in peace.

Every other kingdom has an emperor, a dictator, a queen, a president that is housed in a palace. They are given the best of the best. And they don't grant access to very many people. It is likely that you have not ever met a national leader.. because not just everyone meets them.

When you become a part of their kingdom you are met at the gate by someone the emperor hired. You are met at the gate by guards trying to keep you out of the kingdom... you have to convince them to let you in with money..

But in God's Kingdom.. in His upside down Kingdom... you are met at the border of His Kingdom by the King Himself. You could be an American citizen all your life and never meet a sitting president... but in God's Kingdom you are met at the border by the King of Kings & Lord of Lords. In fact, no one comes into God's kingdom without meeting the King.

Jesus born... not in a palace, but lying in a manger, an animals food trough. Jesus born... not in an upper class family, but a blue collar family in an impoverished area of Israel. Jesus born... not in designer clothes, but wrapped in swaddling clothes. Jesus born... not in a secret location where no one could find Him... but He was born just like the prophet said...

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."(NIV)

Jesus born... and He is surrounded not with rich... He is visited by shepherds. Jesus born... and people of other pagan belief systems... the Magi gathered and gave Him gifts. They followed a star right to the feet of an upside down King. No one barred them from coming into the presence of this King. Religion sometimes bars people from having access to Jesus... But I want you to understand that everyone can have access to this King.

You can have access to this King. He invites ALL to come..

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.(NIV)

Jesus born... Not bringing Peace through terror... but bringing Peace through love.

Jesus is born in the shadow of Rome... but He shows us a different Kingdom.

Julius Ceasar set up a common religion that placed himself as god. To be in his kingdom... AND BY THE WAY HE GAVE YOU NO CHOICE IN BEING IN HIS KINGDOM OF WORLD DOMINATION... To be in His kingdom you had to Worship the emperor as God incarnate.

But Jesus is actually God incarnate. He forces no one to worship Him. In fact as He is born... even though He sent prophecy that it would happen... His people stood by and did not worship Him.

In Rome they had a greeting... They would say "Caesar is Lord".. If someone greeted you this way you were forced to greet them back the same way.. Kind of like in Nazi Germany when someone would say "Hail Hitler."

Caesar was worshipped as God. The poet Virgil refers to Caesar as "the savior of all mankind." He was called a bringer of peace and the son of a god.

The Romans also had a word "Euengalion" which meant "Good News." They used it to refer to the Good News that Caesar was still on the throne...

Jesus was born in the shadow of this kingdom and the emperor Caesar... and the presence of this King Jesus stood in direct opposition to Rome. Jesus stands in direct opposition to the Kingdoms of this world.

He is an upside down King. Jesus is subversive and politically charged. Even the language that He is called by is in direct disagreement to Rome.

Jesus is the Son of God! Jesus is God incarnate! He is God in a bod... The creator made visible, wrapped in Human flesh. What do you think Caesar would think about that...

Jesus is Lord! If Jesus is Lord... then Caesar isn't.

Jesus is the savior of ALL mankind. Jesus is the one who brings real peace.

And Jesus spoke of the Euengalion... the Good News of the Kingdom. And after Jesus ascended into heaven, His disciples spread the GOOD NEWS that Jesus was born, died, was buried, and then rose again.. and that He is still on the throne of heaven. That is good news for us! But it was bad news for Caesar.

This birth of Jesus is not a fairy tale... It was an act of war. The presence of Jesus de-legitimized Caesar and his claims.

Jesus is the real King. His Kingdom will have no end. Bad news for Caesar. Caesar had no resurrection, but Jesus is alive.

If Jesus' birth is an act of war... How would this war be fought and won?

Colossians 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.(NIV)

That baby lying in a manger that you like to sing carols about... He disarmed the powers of the kingdoms & authorities of this world. One man would make a spectacle of these powers and authorities and would triumph over them... He would triumph over them with the same tool they used to control and punish the world... Jesus triumphed by the Cross!

He is an upside down King. Don't lose sight of this.

How do we worship this upside down King?

Jesus came to give peace... so in order to worship Him we too must be living in that peace. If you aren't walking in peace... if you are walking in hatred... if you are walking in bitterness and unforgiveness... if you are violent... that is no way to worship this King.

Christians listen up.. If we are yelling a screaming our beliefs in unpeaceful ways.. that is no way to worship our King. If we are fighting the nations of this world with the violence of this world... that is no way to worship this King.

Jesus told Peter if you live by the sword you die by the sword. Peter didn't understand... to use the sword on people in violence was to be a part of the kingdoms of this world. Caesar's kingdom used the sword... in Jesus' Kingdom we stoop down pick up the ear and bring healing.

Is there peace in this season? There ought to be. You are a part of God's Kingdom right?

Colossians 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.(NIV)

Jesus shows up and disarms the power and authority of Rome. He triumphs over them by the Cross.

It says he made a spectacle of them... When armies would go off to war and win they would return with the king of the fallen nation and lead them through

the city like a court jester or fool. It would signify the defeat and humiliation of the enemy.

Jesus has done this with our enemy. He made a spectacle of death when He rose again. He made a spectacle of sin when he lived a sinless life. He made a spectacle of hell when he stole the keys of hell and released the prisoners.

This Jesus is not a fairy tale! This Jesus has fought a war against our enemy... and He fought it and won it in an upside down way.

In Daniel's vision of the end times and in Revelation we see the presence and spirit of Rome return. Once again we will see the philosophy of 1 nation with 1 ruler bringing peace to the world by coercion, control, and conquest... This ruler will be the anti-christ...

Who is going to show up in the shadow of this Rome? Jesus shows up and He once again disarms the powers... Watch how He does it...

Revelation 19:14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.(NIV)

Revelation 19:15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.(NIV)

He does it with a sword that comes from His mouth... This is not violence. The Sword coming out of His mouth is not literal.. It represents His words. The truth that comes out of Jesus mouth will defeat the enemy...

This is how our upside down King fights. He speaks truth in peace and love.

## **MUSICIAN**

This is also how we are to do warfare. We are to fight like babies. We are to fight like lambs. We are to stand in the shadow of the kingdoms of this world and reveal Christ... to do it by speaking the truth in love and peace.

Don't do warfare by sending in a larger army.. Don't win this war by hitting them harder than they hit you... instead.. Turn the other cheek.

This is how we worship the Prince of Peace.

His arrival is always marked by peace. His Kingdom is covered and filled with peace.

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."(NIV)

