

The Christmas Aftermath

Matthew 2; Luke 2; 1 John 3:8b

12/27/2025

Custom

Announcements

Scripture

1 John 3:8b (NKJV) [8] ...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Introduction:

Christmas has a rhythm we all recognize, doesn't it?

There is anticipation—the weeks of waiting, the preparations, the gathering excitement. There is celebration—the moment itself, the gathering of loved ones, the joy of worship, the realization of gifts. There is wonder—that brief, sacred pause where the incarnation feels almost tangible, where heaven seems to brush close to earth, moments we want to pause and cherish with family and friends.

And then there is the aftermath.

The decorations come down, often more quickly than they went up. The melodies of Christmas carols fade from the stores, restaurants, and halls of our homes. The calendar turns with its relentless forward motion. And the reality that we lived in before Christmas presses back in with all its familiar weight.

For many of us, the Sunday after Christmas is quieter than the Sundays leading up to it. And it's heavier. Because while Christmas has passed, while the celebration has concluded, many of the struggles remain exactly where we left them.

IMPORTANT: This is not to suggest that Christmas miracles don't or haven't happened. Praise God for the restored relationship, the healing, the restoration of someone to God. Yet, honestly, in the midst of miracles, sometimes the sting of sin and fallenness still hangs on beyond the rush of Christmas.

It's not my intent to bring a downer sermon, and I think you'll see that it's not. But many of us have learned that pain doesn't pause for holidays, no matter how much we wish it would.

Application

Grief doesn't take a break when the Christmas lights come on. Temptation doesn't disappear because we sang carols about holiness. Bodies still weaken. Diagnoses may not have changed. Homes are still strained. Conversations remain difficult. Relationships bear the same fractures. Which raises a question many people feel but rarely say out loud, especially in church: If the angels announced "peace on earth and goodwill to men," why does it still feel like we're living in a battlefield? Did the promise of Christmas fail? If Christ came to bring salvation, why does my life still feel so unsaved in so many ways? If God became flesh to dwell among us, why does He sometimes feel so distant?

These aren't faithless questions. They're honest ones. And the Bible has much to say to them. It's important to answer those questions in faith because the answers prove that the hope of Christmas isn't a false hope or a broken promise.

Illustration

For me personally, the day after Christmas didn't unfold the way I expected it to. I ended up in the hospital dealing with a complication from my recent back surgery. Nothing dramatic—I'm fine, no need for concern—but it was sobering nonetheless. And sitting there in that hospital room, surrounded by the beeping of medical equipment and the sterile efficiency of healthcare, I was reminded of something simple but profoundly important: Christmas doesn't promise the absence of pain—it promises the presence of God within it. Christmas doesn't offer an escape from the brokenness of this world—it offers an invasion into the very heart of it. Christmas doesn't promise the inactivity of evil, but promises ultimate victory over it.

That realization doesn't belong to me alone. I know many of you walked into Christmas carrying burdens that didn't magically lift when the last song was sung. Some of you may have found the hope of Jesus for the first time this Christmas, only to go back home and realize that there's still a deficit in the bank account, still a strain on relationships, and still distress and anxiety.

Yet you now also recognize that there is a new peace that passes all understanding. New joy that makes no sense in the midst of your trials, a new hope and faith that has an invisible assurance that God will not forsake you, he will work things out to your good, and, in His way and time, will bring about His victory in your life.

The lack of an immediate fix to all your problems, or the arrival of a new one, doesn't mean Christmas failed. It means Christmas is doing something far deeper and more meaningful than we often realize.

Main Point

Point 1

The Response of Evil

People often romanticize the Christmas story, don't they? We soften its edges. We fill in the gaps with sentiment and sanitize the narrative until it becomes something almost magical—removed from the harsh realities of human existence.

Without question, the first Christmas was filled with miracles. A supernatural pregnancy fulfilling centuries of prophecy. Divine messages and divine warnings. A divinely orchestrated star, and angelic host surrounded by the glory of God, caroling the Savior's birth, gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But in between all the miraculous moments were moments of fear, wonder, questions, struggle... those moments shouldn't be scrubbed and sanitized.

When you read it carefully, when you allow the text to speak on its own terms, you discover that the first Christmas is not neat or safe. It's not all tranquil. It's not even entirely joyful for long.

In Luke 2, heaven rejoices. Angels fill the sky with glory. Shepherds run to Bethlehem in wonder.

But in Matthew 2, hell retaliates in full force.

Herod's response to the birth of Christ is not curiosity. It's not even dismissive indifference. It is fear, rage, and calculated violence. When he realizes the Magi have not returned to report the location of the child, he orders the massacre of every male child in Bethlehem under two years old.

The result is death. Lamentation. Weeping. Mourning. The fulfillment of prophecy: Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more.

That matters deeply. Because it tells us something the Bible never hides, but we often try to ignore: The arrival of Christ did not end evil immediately—it provoked it.

Light exposes darkness. And darkness does not surrender quietly. It doesn't simply evaporate when confronted. It fights back. It lashes out. It attempts to destroy what threatens its dominion.

This is not a peripheral detail of the Christmas story. It's central to understanding what Christmas actually accomplished and what it set in motion.

Main Point

Point 2

The Fate of Evil

This brings us to the verse that frames the entire Christmas story—not just the sentiment of it, but the strategy behind it. 1 John 3:8b:

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

That word "manifested" matters more than we might realize at first glance. It carries the weight of revelation, of unveiling, of making visible what was previously hidden. Jesus did not appear symbolically, as a distant expression of divine goodwill. He did not arrive as an inspiring idea or a moral example floating above human experience.

He entered history. He took on flesh—real, vulnerable, human flesh. He entered weakness, suffering, and limitation. He submitted Himself to hunger and fatigue. He experienced rejection and betrayal. He felt the sting of human cruelty.

And His purpose in all of this was not merely therapeutic, not simply to comfort us in our pain, though He does that.

His purpose was destructive.

Quote

— Pastor Josh

Jesus came to save, and He also came to destroy.

Not people. Not creation. He came to destroy the works of the devil. What are those works?

Jesus came to remove sin's grasp dominion over humanity (Romans 6:14 - "For sin shall not have dominion over you")Jesus came to remove death's finality and terror (Hebrews 2:14-15 - that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death and release those in bondage)Jesus came to silence Satan's accusations against the redeemedJesus came to render powerless the fear that enslaves the human soul (John 8:36 - "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed")

This reframes everything about Christmas.

Christmas is not merely comforting. It is confrontational. The manger, which led to a cross, was not a retreat from the battle. It was an invasion into enemy territory.

The incarnation is not God backing away from conflict. It is God charging into the heart of it, stripping Himself of divine privileges to engage the enemy on the enemy's own ground.

This is why Herod reacted with violence. This is why darkness still resists. Because Christmas represents a declaration of war against everything that oppresses, enslaves, and destroys human life.

Main Point

Point 3

The Continuation of Evil

So this brings us back to the question: Why does the pain remain? If Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, why do we still experience so much brokenness?

Scripture gives us a clear and consistent framework: Victory secured, consummation pending.

Listen to how the New Testament describes what Christ accomplished:

Colossians 2:15 tells us Christ "disarmed the rulers and authorities" and "made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Hebrews 2:14 says that through His death, Jesus destroyed "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Romans 16:20 promises that "the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly."

These are declarations of accomplished victory. Past tense. Done deals. The decisive blow has been struck.

And yet—and this is crucial—Peter still warns us in 1 Peter 5:8 that "the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Why this apparent tension?

Because a defeated enemy still resists—but no longer reigns.

Think of it this way: On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy. It was costly. It was brutal. But military historians agree that D-Day guaranteed the outcome of World War II. From that point forward, the defeat of Nazi Germany was certain. The victory was secured.

But the war wasn't over. In fact, some of the fiercest fighting, some of the bloodiest battles, happened after D-Day. Because a defeated enemy doesn't simply surrender. It fights harder. It becomes more desperate. More vicious.

But—and this is the key—it can no longer win.

That's where we live right now. Between the securing of victory and the final consummation of it. Between the decisive blow and the final surrender.

Christmas didn't end the war. It guaranteed the outcome.

And that changes everything about how we live in this aftermath, in this in-between time.

Because of this reality, Christmas does not remove suffering. It redefines it. Because of the incarnation, because God entered into human flesh and experienced the full weight of human existence:

Pain is no longer meaningless (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory") Suffering is no longer isolating (Hebrews 4:15-16 - "We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace") Death is no longer ultimate (1 Corinthians 15:54-57 - "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?")

Do you see what this means?

Application

Jesus didn't come to eliminate every symptom immediately, to remove every difficulty, to fix every problem before we get to heaven. He came to destroy the disease at its root. To strike at the source. To dismantle the foundational powers that held humanity in bondage. And that's why believers can experience something the world cannot explain and cannot replicate: We can grieve—and still hope. We can ache—and still trust. We can suffer—and still worship. This isn't denial. It's not pretending the pain isn't real. It's not putting on a fake smile and claiming everything is fine when it clearly isn't. It's living in light of a greater reality. It's anchoring our souls to a truth that transcends our circumstances without dismissing them. It's saying, "This is hard. This hurts. This is not how things are supposed to be. But it is not the end of the story. Christ has come. Victory is certain. And this present suffering cannot compare with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Main Point

Point 4

Our Response to the Evil

Now this is where the message turns outward, shifting from comfort to commission.

Because Christmas doesn't just comfort the individual believer—it commissions the collective church.

Our church, this body of believers, has not been placed in a neutral environment. We have not been positioned in some safe, sanitized spiritual bubble removed from the real battles of life. The church doesn't dwell in a Neutral Zone.

We live in a community where spiritual warfare touches every layer of existence:

Families fractured by sin, by pride, by unforgiveness, by patterns of dysfunction passed down through generations. Lives enslaved by addiction—not just to substances, but to approval, to control, to comfort, to the endless scroll of digital distraction. Minds burdened by fear and deception, by anxiety about the future, by lies about identity and worth. Homes weighed down by grief and despair, by the loss of loved ones, by dreams that died, by hopes that were crushed.

And we have been placed into that environment—not despite it, but because of it—God has placed us.

Why? Because the mission of Christ did not end with His incarnation. It continues through His body.

Jesus said in John 20:21,

Scripture

John 20:21 (NKJV) [21] So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

We are not spectators of Christ's victory, nor are we merely partakers, watching from a safe distance, admiring what He accomplished while remaining uninvolved in its outworking.

We are participants. Co-laborers. Ambassadors. Agents of the Kingdom advancing his victory into territory still contested by darkness.

Application

So let me be specific. If Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, then the church must live as though that is actually true. We are not called to passivity. We are not called to retreat. We are not called to hunker down and wait for rescue. We are called to advance. To press forward. To bring the reality of Christ's victory into every dark corner we encounter. And we can do this with great confidence because we have a savior who proved his victory by walking out of a grave. Christmas proved that God was serious about entering the battle; Easter proved He was capable of winning it. So we go...

But here's what we must understand: The battles we can see are never just the battles we can see.

Ephesians 6:12 tells us plainly,

Scripture

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV) [12] For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

This means that when a marriage is crumbling, it's not just about two people who can't communicate. There are spiritual forces at work seeking to destroy what God has joined together.

When addiction has its hooks in someone you love, it's not just a chemical dependency or a failure of willpower. There is an enemy behind the curtain who comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

When depression settles over a believer like a fog that won't lift, when anxiety becomes a constant companion, when despair whispers that nothing will ever change—these are not merely psychological conditions to be managed. They are often spiritual assaults to be resisted.

When our children are being bombarded with lies about identity, about sexuality, about meaning and purpose—we're not just dealing with cultural trends or generational shifts. We are watching a deliberate demonic campaign to capture the next generation.

We must name this. We must see it for what it is.

Not so we become paranoid, seeing demons behind every difficulty. But so we become strategic—recognizing that our real enemy is not the person in front of us, not the circumstance pressing down on us, but the dark powers working through both to accomplish spiritual destruction.

This is why Paul doesn't just tell us to try harder. He tells us to put on armor. To take up weapons. To stand firm. To pray in the Spirit at all times.

The invisible war is the real war. And it requires weapons the world doesn't understand: prayer that moves heaven, faith that cannot be shaken, truth that cannot be compromised, righteousness that cannot be bribed, readiness to speak the gospel at every opportunity, and above all—the Word of God spoken with authority.

How?

By bringing hope where despair reigns. We speak life into situations that feel dead. We refuse to let hopelessness have the final word, because we know Someone who conquered the grave. We bring truth where lies dominate. We counter deception with Scripture. We replace false narratives about God, about humanity, about meaning and purpose, with the truth that sets people free. We preach it, proclaim it, and live it. We bring love where hatred has hardened hearts. We don't match anger with anger or bitterness with bitterness. We break the cycle. We absorb the hostility and return blessing, just as Christ did.

This happens through:

Prayer that pushes back darkness (Ephesians 6:18 - "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit") - interceding for the lost, the hurting, the enslaved, believing that our prayers move the hand of God. Faith that refuses fear (1 John 5:4 - "this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith") - trusting God in situations that would naturally breed anxiety. Generosity that breaks the grip of selfishness (2 Corinthians 9:8 - "God is able to make all grace abound toward you") - giving of our time, resources, and attention to meet the needs of others. Unity that resists division (John 17:21 - "that they all may be one... that the world may believe") - refusing to let secondary issues fracture the body when the world desperately needs to see our love for one another. Love that reflects Christ Himself (1 John 4:11-12 - "if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us") - practical, sacrificial, costly love that cannot be explained apart from the presence of God.

This is how the aftermath of Christmas becomes the advance of the Kingdom.

This is how we live out the mission in 2025 and beyond.

Conclusion

Christmas 2025 has officially come to a close (though some of us might try to hang onto some decorations for another month).

But hear this: "The Son of God has been manifested."

He came. He entered our world. He took on flesh. He lived, died, rose again. He conquered.

And the works of the devil—sin, death, bondage, deception—are living on borrowed time. Their defeat is certain. Their days are numbered. Their power is broken, even if their presence lingers. And by faith. We can begin to walk in that reality here and now.

So if this feels like a Christmas aftermath...

If the joy hasn't yet caught up to the theological hope you know is true...If the battle still feels uncomfortably close, if the struggle hasn't subsided...

It does not mean Christmas failed. It means Christmas did exactly what it came to do: It invaded. It confronted. It secured victory. It set in motion forces that cannot be stopped and will not be turned back.

And now, as the church of Jesus Christ, we step into a new year not retreating, but advancing.

Not cowering—but confident. Not defeated—but deployed. Because Christ has come, the victory is secured. And the mission continues—through us.

Let's pray.