



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

CHRISTMAS: THE WISDOM OF GOD

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 11:33 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Micah 5:2 | Matthew 1:20-21 | Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20
John 1:29; 6:35, 51 | Romans 8:28 | Galatians 4:4-5 | Philippians 2:9-11

► SUMMARY

Knowing that God is guiding our lives and choosing what's best for us is a great source of comfort and peace.

He will always bring about the best outcome—at the right time and in the appropriate way—in order to achieve His purposes. God's all-encompassing wisdom in our lives is emphasized by Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

► SERMON POINTS

From Genesis to Revelation, God's wisdom is on display. Romans 11:33 sums it up, saying, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

God's Wisdom at Christmas

Nowhere is God's wisdom more apparent than in His plan of redemption. In eternity past, He planned a way for sinful humankind to be saved. To appreciate God's unfathomable ways, we need look no further than the events of the Christmas story when His Son came to earth.

God's Timing

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we

might receive the adoption as sons and daughters" (Gal. 4:4-5).

Throughout history, empires have risen and fallen, each with their own unique achievements and contributions to civilization—the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks—but the Lord chose the time of the Roman Empire for the coming of His Son. This was the predetermined time, and all the events came to pass just as He planned.

Jesus Christ's life didn't begin on the day of His birth. The Son of God existed forever, but when the incarnation occurred, His deity joined with human flesh. Some were looking for the Messiah's arrival, but many were not. And they certainly didn't expect Him to come as a baby. Many were awaiting a strong military leader who would set them free from Roman domination.

The Place of Jesus' Birth

Hundreds of years beforehand, Micah prophesied God's choice for the location of the Messiah's birth: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will come forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His times of coming forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (5:2).

God didn't choose an impressive city as the setting for His Son's birth, but a town of little to no significance. The name Bethlehem means "house of bread," which is an appropriate birthplace of the One who said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

The fact that Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth was no hindrance to God's plan. He ordained that Caesar

Augustus would take a census, requiring everyone to register at the place of their origin. Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem because they were descendants of David (Luke 2:1-7). The leaders may have thought they were in charge, but they were merely used by the Lord to fulfill His plan that the Messiah be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

The Birth Announcement

Great events are usually announced by important dignitaries, and to authenticate the message of the Messiah's birth, God sent a holy angel from heaven. But instead of proclaiming the birth to multitudes, He sent the angel to a group of shepherds in a field (Luke 2:8-20). By doing so God identified His Son with these humble men, because Jesus would become the Good Shepherd who leads people to salvation.

In response, the shepherds hurried to where Jesus lay and then made known to everyone they knew what the angel had said and how they'd seen the newborn Savior.

The Incarnation

God's wisdom is on full display in Jesus' incarnation. His birth was that of a normal human baby, but His conception was miraculous because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin (Luke 1:26-35). The eternal Son of God, who has no beginning and no end, became a human baby without surrendering His deity.

To be the Savior, He had to have the perfection of God, but He also needed to be human in order to identify with humankind and die for their sins. The incarnation was the only way to accomplish God's plan of redemption.

The Surroundings

We also see God's wisdom in the surroundings of Christ's birth. He wasn't born in a palace or even an inn. Because He was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of

the world (John 1:29), it was fitting for Him to be born in a place used by cattle and sheep. He came into the world without riches and prominence because God's ways are not like ours. The manger scene is a proclamation that God the Son came in humility to be our Savior.

The Name

The name Jesus was very common in that day. In Hebrew, it's Joshua, which means "Jehovah's deliverer," and that's exactly what the Messiah was. God told Joseph to name the child Jesus "because He would save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21). It's the name above every other and the only one by which we can be saved. One day at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth (Phil. 2:9-11).

God's Purpose

The Lord's wisdom is expressed in the purpose for which He sent His Son—our redemption. The baby in the manger was born to be the Lamb of God who came to "give His life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Mankind could never be good enough to be reconciled with God because everyone is born with a sin nature. Jesus alone was qualified to bear God's wrath for our sins so we could be forgiven. There was no other way. Every detail of the plan of redemption was wisely and meticulously fulfilled by our heavenly Father.

► RESPONSE

- Does seeing God's wisdom in the events of Christmas bring you comfort? What does it say about His care and wisdom in directing your life?
- What have you learned from the Christmas story about God's unfathomable wisdom and ways? Are you willing to follow where He leads, even when it doesn't make sense to you?

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