

“SAVIOR FOR ALL SEASONS”

HEBREWS 1:1-6,8

DECEMBER 21,2008– SUNDAY 11:00 AM –DR. JACK GRAHAM

Christmas really is the most wonderful time of the year, isn't it? I enjoy it. And I hope you are enjoying this Christmas season with your family and friends, loved ones both near and far.

This time of the year is a reminder everywhere you turn of the love of Christ, the love of God that came down at Christmas. And whether it's hearing carols, participating in a church service, seeing a nativity, attending a Christmas party where Christ is honored... everywhere we go we see the signs, we hear the signals of Christ who is a Savior for all seasons. And while it is wonderful to take time on December the twenty-fifth to celebrate the birth of Christ, we are anticipating an advent of Christ every day in our lives.

You know we really don't know when Jesus was born... the exact date of His birth. We know He was born. That is an historical fact. We're not certain of the year. It was probably around, based on the New Testament Passovers... It was probably around 4 B.C. But as far as Jesus' birthday being on December the twenty-fifth, we, of course, don't know that. Probably not. Many early Christians celebrated the birthday of Jesus on March the twenty-fifth. The fact that shepherds were in their fields at night seem to indicate that it was not a cold season but a warmer season in Israel. But be that as it may, many Christians from the outset of our faith worship Jesus on His birthday as December the twenty-fifth.

Some have suggested that this was an attempt by Christians to Christianize a pagan feast or celebration of the winter solstice, but in fact Christians in that era determined that Christmas would be on December the twenty-fifth as a rival to the superstitious gods of the ancient world of the Greeks and the Romans. Knowing that their Savior is alive and the... and the gods of the ancient world were no gods at all, the Christians of that time put this dead-center into one ancient ah... feasts in order to lift up Christ in the midst of darkness. And while most of us could never name or remember these ancient Greek or Roman deities, the name of Jesus is proclaimed throughout the whole earth.

The fact is it really doesn't matter to me when you celebrate the birth of Jesus because every day is Christmas for the Christian. And it's my prayer that you will not only have a Christ-centered Christmas, but that you will have a Christ-centered life. This is why Jesus came, lived, died and rose again. And, of course, we wouldn't even be discussing Christmas were it not for the resurrection. The fact that Jesus is alive and came out of the grave is proof of the supernatural power of God in Christ. And we celebrate Christmas because Jesus truly is alive.

And so I want to talk to you today about a Savior for all seasons. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 8 says: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever... yesterday, today and forever!"* So whatever season

of life you may be in... whatever stage or age or circumstance in life you may find yourself today, I want you to remember that Jesus is a Savior for every season of your life.

I've been celebrating Christmas a long time now, but I'm just as excited as a little child. Now I tell you, it's fun having a little child around our household these days with our gr... grandson Ian ah... at this Christmas season. And the other day he came home from his four year old class at Prestonwood Christian Academy and he had a great report card. And there was just all checks and pluses. I think they called them balls and strikes, or something like that. And he had a great report card. And this was a good thing because... well, it was a good thing! [laughter] And Ian held his report card up to me and said, "Daddy Jack, look at this!" He said, "I'm showing this to Santa Claus!" [laughter] So he did! He took his report card to Santa just as a little more leverage ah... with Saint Nicholas! [laughter]

You know, as ah... as I am in this season of life now, you know I don't consider myself old. I... I really don't but I... people start sending me these you know, things about aging now. And ah... for example, ah... there was an elderly gentleman who had some hearing problems and... He was deaf in one ear and couldn't hear out of the other basically, and so he got hearing aids. And he went home with perfect hearing. He came back for his monthly checkup and his doctor said, "You are hearing 100 percent." He said, "I bet your family is very happy that you're hearing so well now." He said, "Well, my family doesn't know that I'm hearing. [laughter] I've just been listening to conversations and I've changed my will three times!"

A couple of elderly couples had dinner one evening and after dinner the wives went into the kitchen. The guys were sitting around the living room. One of the men said, "You know, we went to a restaurant the other day... it was one of the finest restaurants ah... we've ever been to." And he said, "It was just a great evening." The man said, "Well, what's the name of that restaurant? I'd like to know." He said, "Let me think, let me think, let me think." He said, "What's the name of that flower? It's red and it's got thorns and you give it to people you love?" He said, "Rose?" [He] Said, "Yeah, that's it! Hey, Rose, what was the name of that restaurant we went to the other day?" [laughter]

Can you take one more? [laughter]

Two elderly men from a retirement center were sitting on a bench under a tree. One turns to the other and says, "Slim, I'm 83 years old now and I'm just full of aches and pains all over." [He] Said, "You're about my age, Slim." [He] Said, "How do you feel?" He said, "Man, I feel like a newborn baby." [He] Said, "Yeah?" [He] Said, "Yeah, like a newborn baby... no hair, no teeth and I think I just wet myself!" [laughter]

Had enough? Yeah, that's what I thought! [laughter]

Christmas really is for kids of all ages and everything in-between! It's a wonderful time of the year. But again, what I want to talk to you about is a daily advent. The word *advent* means coming of Christ... the Advent of Christ, the coming of Christ into the world. And there's a first advent and there's a second advent. The First Advent... when Jesus was born, the Second Advent when He comes again in great power and glory.

But in a spiritual sense we may experience the reality and the relevance of the advent of Christ every day in our lives. The coming of Christ... His very presence filling us. His name is Emmanuel which means *"God with us"*, and because God is with us, God is for us; and because God is for us, He is also now in us! God is with us, God is for us and God is in us! And the promise of Christ which is the promise of Christmas, means that at the end of the day, when all of the packages are unwrapped and all the food has been eaten and all the bills have been almost paid, you won't have that empty feeling that so often people experience after Christmas, which wonders: Is this all there is?

No, we know there is more... so much more because of what Christ has done for us and the love and the joy and the peace, and yes, the very presence of God fills our lives each day! The most oft repeated promise in all of the Bible are the words, *"I am with you always... I am with you always."* And this is the promise that we plead, this is the promise that we proclaim! Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever!

And in amplifying that truth in the first chapter of Hebrews... and let me invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to the first chapter of the book of Hebrews in your New Testament... we discover why Jesus is a Savior for all seasons of your life. You may be in a very bad season in life... a tough time in your life. Or these may be the best days of all for you. But regardless of what kind of day it is, the Bible says there is a time and a purpose for every season in life. Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 1: *"For every season there is a purpose, there is a time for everything under the sun."* And so because He is a Savior for all seasons we discover why in the first six verses of Hebrews 1:

1) *Lone ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* 2) *but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom He also created the world.* 3) *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. And making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,* 4) *having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.* 5) *For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You?" Or again, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"?* 6) *And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "Let all God's angels worship Him."*

The only begotten of God, the Savior of the world! Worshipped by men and... and angels. The incomparable Christ! There is no person who has ever walked upon this planet whose life has impacted the world like Jesus of Nazareth. No one!

Ah... one of the ah... the great historians of all times, LaTourette, said this of Jesus: *"As the centuries pass the evidence is accumulating that measured by His affect upon history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on the planet."* Well, you probably didn't need an historian to remind you of that, but all of history speaks of a Savior for all seasons. In every era, in every epoch, in every century Jesus is the incomparable Savior.

And this is why you cannot compare Christianity to any religion in the world. Christianity is Christ. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have the basic tenants of that religion. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still the... the philosophy remains. You can take Muhammad out of Islam and you still have the religion of Islam. But if you take Christ out of Christianity there is nothing left!

That would be like taking numbers out of mathematics! It would be like taking notes out of music! To speak of a Christless Christmas is not only ignorant; it is ludicrous because there is no Christmas without Christ! Others who develop religious systems in the world came, saying, "I am a pathway, or I am a sign pointing you to God." Jesus said, [John 14:6] *"I am the way and no man comes to the Father except by Me!"* Religious leaders and founders of other faith came and said, "I am a teacher." Jesus came and said, "I am the Truth!" And while others built philosophies of life, Jesus said, "I am the Life!" Jesus, [John 14:6] *"The way, the truth and the life!"* A Savior for all seasons. Why?

First, because He is... Jesus is a sovereign Savior. The word sovereign means to rule, and Jesus rules. He is the Christ of the Cosmos... the Creator of all things, and the Upholder of all things! We read that in the first chapter of Hebrews. That He holds in His hands all of creation. The Creator and the sustainer is our Redeemer! And the little baby of Matthew chapter 1 is the Almighty God and Creator of Genesis chapter 1! And because He is Creator of all things, we're told here that He is the heir of all things. All things belong to Him! Jesus is the sovereign Savior because he sovereignly reveals God's word to the world!

That's why in verse 1 it tells us in times passed God spoke to us in many ways, in many different times. But in these days... these final days in human history God has fully and finally and forever spoken to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. God has spoken in creation. God has spoken to us in our conscience, but ultimately God has spoken to us in His Son Jesus!

[John 1:1-4] *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and that life is the light of men."* He is a sovereign Savior! Because He has spoken to us the Word of God! He is the Word of God!

In the Old Testament you have Jesus... you have God on a page. Now in Christ, because Christ was born, we have God in a Person, Jesus... 100 percent God, 100 percent Man. Not God... not a man who pointed people to God, but the God-Man. Not a man who became a God which is impossible, but God who became a Man; the incarnation in flesh. This is the fundamental foundational truth of the entire Christian faith! It is the person of Jesus Christ!

And unfortunately today many are discarding or deluding that central cardinal virtuous doctrine of the Christian faith! But we must hold strongly and firmly to the faith once delivered! And at a time eclectic religion and the homogeneity of religious experience in our lives, we must hold to the solid singular truth that Christ is sovereign and that He and He alone is to be worshiped!

The Word of God and the works of God are given by Him! He is the possessor of all creation, the Heir of all things! The universe, every thing in it, include... including, as one astronomer [astronomer] called this little blue spot in the universe called planet earth! Everything in it is made for Him, by Him, and, yes, is coming to Him! He's the Heir of all things! He is present in creation, the possessor of creation, the preserver of creation!

And therefore, He receives worship as God. Verse 6 tells us that He is worshipped as God by angels. Later, in verse 8, look at verse 8 in Hebrews chapter 1: *"But of the Son he says (who says? God says!)... Of*

the Son God says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom." God the Father calls the God the Son God Almighty who is to be worshipped.

Now at the top of the list on the Ten Commandments is that commandment not to be idolatrous or to worship other gods or false gods. That's the top of the list. So if Jesus is worshipped by angels... if He is declared worthy of worship by God the Father, surely... surely we recognized this central tenant and truth ourselves. This is why I'm excited about Jesus. This is why I am enjoying Christmas and every day of my life; because I am excited about our sovereign Savior for every season!

But not only a sovereign Savior, He is a solitary Savior. And that is seen in the end of verse 3. A solitary Savior. After making purification... that is purging our sins, *"He Himself sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."* By Himself. He Himself! The One who said, [John 12:32] *"If I be lifted up I will draw all unto Myself."* Jesus and Jesus only has dealt with sin!

Now ultimately the human problem... the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. And there are all kinds of ideas as to what's wrong with the world. Is it a class struggle? Is it deviant behavior? Is it ah... emotional, psychic development? Is it that we need more education? Or do we need more s... ah... self analysis? Or even this financial problem that we're facing. The real problem in the world, every problem that we have is a result of sin. Every one of them! You say, *"Even this financial problem?"* The greed, the massive lack of wisdom and management for the sake of greed. We have seen the ugliness of this whole thing, knowing that we have broken God's commandments. We have not lived according to His principles and according to the wisdom of God's Word, and therefore, we're near collapse of a financial system not only in America, but around the world! Therefore our problem is not financial, our problem ultimately is not cultural, our problem is not historical or behavioral! Our problem is moral and spiritual! [applause] We have a moral problem!

And that problem can only be solved by a Savior! And the greatest gift that God gives is the gift of a Savior! I need a Savior; you need a Savior! And He and He only... He Himself! The emphatic is written here in this text. He Himself! God didn't send someone else; He sent His only Son! He Himself purged, purified us from our sins.

The Savior was born to die and to pay the penalty on the cross for our sins. The only way to salvation is through Christ and His cross and resurrection. Jesus doesn't need any help in saving us. He doesn't need my help or your... your help. It's not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He has saved us. [Ephesians 2:8-9] *"For by grace have you been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: lest anyone should boast."*

I've said it many times through the years. Religion is man's effort... futile effort to please God. Christian faith is God reaching down to us. The love that came down in Christ at Christmas! The One who was born in obscurity and lived in humility, and died in ignominy! The Savior who rose in triumph! This is the One who is worthy of our worship!

When the priest of the Old Testament would offer the blood sacrifices for the sins of the people to purify and purge the sins of the people, that priest in the holiest of the places would never sit down. The priest was always standing; would never, never sit. But when Jesus died, He cried out on the

cross "It is finished - Tetelestai!" It is paid in full! And the Scripture here tells us after making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high! Finished the work of eternity! Purged us from our sins! Paid in full! He sat down [strike] because the work is done in Christ! Paid in full!

Do you know the first recorded words of Jesus in the New Testament are these: "I must be about My Father's business." And the last recorded words of Jesus before His resurrection and ascension are the words "It is finished." What was finished on that day that Jesus died? The work of the Father... the will of the Father! He had finished the purging and the purification of our sins. And therefore, we are now saved forever who trust in Him and name His name and confess Him as Lord and Savior!

One of my favorite Christmas hymns is that wonderful song written in Britain in the ah... early 1800-early nineteenth century, and made popular in America near the turn of the twentieth century called "*God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*". Love that song! But we often miss the meaning of this carol because we place a comma where the author of the hymn did not place a comma. We place a comma... "God rest ye merry (comma) Gentlemen." But there was no comma there originally. And we miss the meaning of it because we don't understand the word *merry*. We think the word *merry* means happy or joyous. But the word *merry* when this was written also meant strong and valiant; courageous!

Have you ever heard of Robin Hood and his *merry* men? Now his merry men weren't, you know, men in tights, you know, kind of moving through the forest. [laughter] They were strong, courageous manly men! So the merry men are the manly men!

And the word *rest*... the word *rest* means to make... God... You ever understood...? "God rest ye merry gentlemen." What does that mean? God make you strong courageous powerful gentlemen! It was a song written to the men of his generation to call them and challenge them to godly living! To be strong and courageous for God! God make you strong, valiant men and women! And so that's the reason the rest of the sentences make sense.

"God rest ye merry gentlemen. Let nothing you dismay./ Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day, / To save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray. / O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, comfort and joy."

He is a solitary Savior! A singular Savior! And that one solitary life made it possible for us to be saved from the grip of Satan's power and to be forgiven from the guilt of sin that we may be set free in the power of Christ.

A sovereign Savior, a solitary Savior... but there's one final thing; a superior Savior! In fact the entire book of Hebrews was written to show a more excellent way, a superior way, a greater way, a better way than the way of man, then the way of religion!

A group walked up to the disciples one day looking for Jesus, and they said, [John 12:21] "*Sirs, we would see Jesus.*" I so often think about that verse when I stand in this pulpit. I look into your faces, realizing that so many people are expecting me to deliver on that promise... or that request. "*Sirs, we would see Jesus.*" And if I sound like a Johnny-one-note sometimes in the message that I bring, it is because my prayer... my plea constantly is that you will see Jesus! Because philosophy fails! Religion fails!

Human effort fails! But Jesus never fails! Because He is a s... He is a superior Savior! [applause] and is worshipped as God!

You may wonder why in writing these verses... it's a powerful Christmas passage really in Hebrews 1. Verse 6 as we noted earlier, *"Let all God's angels worship Him... let all the angels worship Him."* And, of course, that was evident on the night that Jesus was born and the angel pronounced His glory into the heavens, the birth of Christ. But He is greater than the angels. While He makes (according to verse 7) His angels as ministers of flames of fire, and yes, there are angels, and they worship God day and night. There are angels who like God's secret agents are in... involved in our lives. But even these angels worship Jesus because He is superior. He is to be worshipped as God!

We have something so much better in life than what typical life brings because we have Jesus. Jesus adds to life; He doesn't take away. I would say to every student here today: don't think that you're missing out on something in life because you are a follower of Jesus. You have a superior life because you have a superior Savior! You have a great life because we have a great God!

Angels are at times named in the Scripture. One of the angels that we know is Michael, the Archangel. The word *Michael* means "who is like God". How many Michaels do we have here today? All right. "Who is like God" is your name! And then there's Gabriel which means "man of God". Lucifer, the fallen angel, the son of the morning, an angelic being created by God who became Lucifer the father of the darkness... His name means "light bearer."

These myriads of mighty angels! Michael means that He is glorious in might! Michael is the archangel, the commander-in-chief of the Lord's armies... angelic armies. Gabriel is glorious in ministry. It was Gabriel who came with the pronouncement and announcement to Mary of the child, the Savior who would be born. [Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:21] *"And you will call His name Jesus."* It is Gabriel that with a sh... shout and voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God that will present to announce the... the rapture of God's people, His church! And then Lucifer is glorious in majesty. There was none like Lucifer who apparently in eternity past was responsible for the worship of God in heaven. And his name means, as I said, "light bearer".

Well, Jesus has a more glorious name than all of these. Jesus is not mighty like Michael; He's the Almighty! He... Jesus is not a glorious message [messenger?]; He is the message! Jesus is not a star, not a light bearer; He is the Light of the world! He is the [Malachi 4:2] *"Son of righteousness who arises with healing in His wings!"* And [Philippians 2:10] *"at the name of Jesus we're told that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father!"* And while the name of Jesus is offensive to some, it a prec... it is precious to the believer! To every person who bows before Him!

He is a sovereign Savior! He is a solitary Savior! And yes, He is a superior Savior! Don't give your life to anything less than Jesus the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He's a Savior... I promise you He is a Savior for every season in your life!

I've been a follower of Jesus for a long time now. I'm so glad that I began walking with Him as a little child. And now I guess you could say I'm playing on the back nine of my life. But you know I like the back nine. There's still some birdies to be made, some good things to happen. And I can tell you from my childhood to those growing up years as a teenager, those early years of marriage when God was

blessing us with our children when they were small, our family... Those... those wonderful years of ministry up in Oklahoma, down in Florida and these almost twenty years in West Palm (Prestonwood) Throughout these days of my life and to this very day I'm one to say among millions of others that He is a Savior for every season of life. I don't know about you, but I intend everyday to celebrate Him and to seek Him and to obey Him and to follow Him! To experience His advent every day of my life.

So whether it's December the twenty-fifth or March the twenty-fifth or any other day, because Christ came and lived and died and rose again, we can know this life and this wonderful Savior! And I look forward to being with Him and worshipping at His throne forever and ever and ever. Amen? [Amen]

Would you bow your heads with me in prayer? Every head bowed and every eye closed.

I want to invite you to know Jesus. You know your religion won't satisfy you. Relationships without Christ certainly won't satisfy you. Human effort and energy and all the things you do to... to enjoy your life... None of that will ultimately satisfy. Only Jesus can save and forgive. Because our biggest issue is that we all need to be forgiven. We've all broken God's commandment. We all need to be saved.

Mary, when the angel announced the birth of Jesus, said, [Luke 1:38] *"Yes, Lord, be it unto me [music begins] according to Your word."* I want to invite you... Let me be a messenger, an angel of the Lord today, to invite you to welcome Christ into your heart. And to encourage you this day to say as Mary said, "Yes, Lord... yes, Lord... yes, Lord. I welcome You into my life."

And as we stand and sing a hymn of decision in just a moment, I want to invite you to come forward. Our pastors... ministers are going to be standing here to answer your questions to help you find Christ and fulfillment in Christ. You can walk out of here a brand new person. I can't think of a better time, a better place than right here right now for you to come and say, "I want to be a follower of Jesus; Savior for all my... all my life." Come to Him.

There are others who need to join Prestonwood. You've been thinking about it; you've been talking about it. Now's the time to do something about it. Why don't you come today, as a family or just you, and join this church as God the Spirit is prompting you, and be a part of this wonderful church. We would love to have you.

Lord, thank You for this time together, for the message that we bring. Thank You for the truth of it and the power of it. And I pray, O God, now that You would draw unto Yourself even as You said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all unto Myself." Lord, we've done our best to lift You up in this place today. Lord, we know that You are drawing unto Yourself many today who will profess their faith and follow You. In Jesus' name. AMEN