

FIT TO BE TIED
Matthew 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION:

Well, welcome to December. Sure seemed to get here quickly this year, didn't it?

December is a big deal.

- December is a big deal because it is the end of the calendar year and, for most of us, the end of our fiscal year because taxes are calculated on the basis of income and expenses during the calendar year.
- December is a big deal because soon it will be a new year. We will feel like we got a fresh start: a clean slate. We will make our new resolutions...or recycle the same old wish-list. And we can start using that 2011 antique tractor calendar we've been dying to hang on the wall.
- December is a big deal because Christmas comes in December. And my, my, oh my, our expectations are high for Christmas.
In 1943, Bing Crosby crooned, "I'll be Home for Christmas" and persuaded us that this is a universal expectation.

11 years later, Robert Allen and Al Stillman published a song that heightened the expectation that home was where people should spend Christmas. Perry Como recorded the song...twice...and now we know that "There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays". And we've even come to expect that "from Atlantic to Pacific, Gee the traffic is [going to be] terrific".

Irving Berlin has convinced us that Christmas ought to be white. I find it odd that we have been told what Christmas ought to be like, by a Russian-born Jew who never did believe that Jesus was the Messiah, God with us and the one whose birth Christmas is to celebrate.

- The retailers have convinced us that Christmas is about presents. It is not by chance that Macy's Department Store in New York City sponsors the massive Thanksgiving Day parade. Santa Claus comes to town in that parade. Santa's entrance during the parade is the official start of the Christmas shopping season. And we have all heard the statistics about how much retailers rely on holiday season revenues to move from operating in the red to finishing the year in the black.

We have been persuaded that Christmas is about presents. The stores want us to think that Christmas is about the presents. The advertisers want us to think it is about presents. Our children and grandchildren want

us to think it is about the presents. People who ask the church for benevolent money want us to think it is about the presents. Every year there are people who call and want money and who tell me, "I don't even have enough money to be able to buy Christmas." "Buy Christmas?!?!?" I want to tell them that Christmas is not for sale. You can't go to Wal-Mart or K-mart or Knapp-mart or any other place and find Christmas on a shelf so you can pick up a pound or two, pay for it, have it gift-wrapped and bring it home. Christmas cannot be bought.

Christmas is not about presents, wrapped in pretty paper and tied up with a bright ribbon bow and gently placed under a pine tree. Christmas is not about presents; it is about presence: God's presence with us wrapped in swaddling clothes and eventually hung on a tree.

God's presence is His present, all fine and ready and fit to be tied with a bow and given to the world.

I. Jesus fit the plan of the Father

It is remarkable how exactly Jesus Christ fit God's plan. The beginning of the story of God's relationship with Man is found in the early chapters of Genesis. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Six days after the beginning, God created man and placed him in a garden where all of his needs were supplied and his full potential could be realized.

But the story of Adam and Eve is not just the story of the Garden of God's provision. It is also the story of Satan's deception, sin's temptation and man's rebellion. The Garden that was the place of God's provision became the place of man's punishment. But it also became the place of God's promise: the promise of a Savior who would defeat Satan, destroy death and deliver man from the consequence of his fall.

Genesis 3:14-15 is the first record of God's plan to redeem man from the penalty of sin. After man sinned and then confessed that to God, God revealed His plan.

¹⁴ *So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all the livestock
and all the wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.*

¹⁵ *And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."*

Jesus fit that plan. Jesus was God's instrument for crushing Satan. Jesus was God's agent for saving man. Jesus was the central character in what Robert Milligan called "The Scheme of Redemption". Jesus fit the plan of the Father.

II. Jesus fit the prophecies of the Savior

And Jesus fit the prophecies of the Savior.

Did you know that there are over 700 prophecies about the coming of a Savior – and Jesus fulfilled them all? II Corinthians 1:20 says that all of God's promises are "Yes" in Christ. All of God's promises are "Yes" in Christ because Jesus fulfills them all.

Now I am no mathematician. I am not a mathematician, but David Williams is. In fact, David Williams is Computer Systems Manager for the mathematics faculty at the University of Newcastle in England. David Williams wrote:

Anyone can make predictions. Having those prophecies fulfilled is vastly different. In fact, the more statements are made about the future, and the more the detail, then the less likely the precise fulfillment will be.

For example, what's the likelihood of a person predicting today the exact city in which the birth of a future leader would take place, well into the [next] century? This is indeed what the prophet Micah did 700 years before the Messiah. Further, what is the likelihood of predicting the precise manner of death that a new, unknown religious leader would experience, a thousand years from now - a manner of death presently unknown, and to remain unknown for hundreds of years? Yet, this is what David did in 1000 B.C.

Williams notes that the odds for Jesus to have fulfilled each of just eight different prophecies would be 1:10¹⁷ or 1 with 17 zeros after it. To help us get our minds around what that means, David Williams uses this illustration:

*If you mark one of ten tickets, and place all the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10¹⁷ silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They'll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would've had of writing **eight** prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.*

OK. Got it? The odds of eight prophecies about the Messiah: his family, his place of birth, his manner of death, a star guiding foreigners to come to him, that he would heal the sick, cause the lame to walk and the blind to see, even raise the dead – just eight prophecies all coming true exactly as predicted – the odds are about the same as picking one specific silver dollar out of a pile two feet deep covering the entire state of Texas.

But there were more than eight prophecies: there were 700. And Jesus fit all 700 precisely. David Williams submitted his research to an academic board for peer-review and these mathematicians, many of whom were unbelieving skeptics about Jesus, concluded that his scientific method was correct and his findings were accurate. Do you know what that means? It means that God so thoroughly vindicated Jesus Christ that even mathematicians and statisticians, who were without faith, had to acknowledge that it is scientifically impossible to deny that Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus, God's gift to the world, fit the promise of the Father and the prophecies of the Savior. And he fit the problem of man.

III. Jesus fit the problem of Man

Romans 3:23 says that man's problem is sin: "There is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Respectable people and disreputable people have all sinned. Women and men, rich and poor, white and black, old and young, poor and prosperous: every one of them has sinned. All have sinned. A-L-L !!

Let me make this more personal: we have all sinned. Every one of us has sinned. And that's a problem. Romans 6:23 says that the wages, the price, the consequence of sin is death. That is a big problem. Not only that, it is your problem and it is my problem. We are each under the death penalty. Each one of us is slated for capital punishment. We are all living on death row. And that is a problem.

But Jesus fit the problem of man. I absolutely love the way Paul put it in Romans 5:

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We were doomed, living on death row and merely putting in time until our sentence was to be carried out. But then, at just the right time, when it seemed all hope was gone and we were powerless to mount any appeals or make any pleas, our sentence was commuted...because of Jesus. Jesus fit the problem of man because he lived sinlessly and then died sacrificially so that our price would be paid.

Jesus' presence is God's present to us – and he fits our problem perfectly because he paid our penalty completely.

CONCLUSION:

According to the National Highway Safety Administration, in 2009 there were 5,474 people killed on U.S. roadways and an estimated additional 448,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes that were reported to have involved distracted driving. Believe it or not, December is the worst month for distracted driving because people have their attention diverted to decorations along the streets and highways.

There is an entire FaceBook site called “I Get Distracted by Pretty Christmas Decorations and Almost Cause Accidents.” Some people will never have a very merry Christmas again simply because someone who was driving got distracted by the decorations and killed or seriously injured one of their loved ones during this season.

Even more serious, though, are those who are distracted by the tinsel and trimmings of Christmas such that they fail to see God's present of His presence. He is our beautiful savior, the glorious Lord, Immanuel (God who is with us), our blessed redeemer and the living Word.

INVITATION: *#86 – “Jesus, Name Above All Names”*