

Five Forks Church
Sermon: "Not of This World"
Series: Heaven Came Down
Text: John 18:36
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Chapel: December 23, 2018

INTRODUCTION

John 18:36a – Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."

During this very special month of the year, we've all been preaching how "Heaven Came Down." Today, on this Sunday before Christmas Day, I'd like us to consider together for a few moments just how strange and wonderfully mysterious it was when Heaven came down! Because it seemed most appropriate to the theme of Heaven coming down, I've titled this Christmas sermon "Not of This World." Because Jesus is not of this world. And neither is His kingdom. And because He is not of this world, events surrounding His birth certainly were strangely wonderful!

John, chapter 18, relates what is certainly one of the most dramatically pointed conversations in all human history. A conversation between a Roman ruler and the King of kings. As governor in Judea, Pilate represents the power and authority of Rome. Before him stands Jesus of Nazareth, accused by Israel's chief priests of "doing evil" – those are *their* words. Pilate had to consider: Could this Jesus have been plotting insurrection? Was Jesus planning to organize a resistance, revolt against Roman authority in Palestine, oust the Roman appointed king Herod, and then take the throne for Himself? Does this Jesus of Nazareth seek to be King of the Jews?

Many years before, when Herod the Great was king, mysterious visitors to Jerusalem set the king and his immediate advisors on edge, with fears of insurrection. A caravan of Magi scholars from Persia arrived and sought audience with Herod....

Matthew 2:1-3 – Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him."

³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him...¹

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 2:1-3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Herod, you see, was *appointed* as king of the Jews by the Romans. Now he hears there is a report of one who has been *born* king of the Jews! A possible heir to the throne by right of inheritance! Certainly, Herod was troubled at the news! For this could foment a revolution among the people!

A few years before this happened, a young girl from Nazareth experienced a visit herself, but not from anyone of this world. Her visitor was otherworldly....

Luke 1:30-33 – [T]he angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

Now, whether Pilate was aware of the Magi’s visit with Herod the Great, or whether he knew the story of a heavenly angel’s visit with Mary, we cannot say. But he was likely aware that the Jews placed their hope of deliverance in a prophesied man known as the Anointed One, the Christ, the Messiah. In years past, messiah-like Jewish insurrectionists, rebelling against Roman authority, had caused Rome much grief. And this Jesus of Nazareth, now standing before him, could also well be a man bent on revolt. Word was He had been creating quite a stir among the populace. He had numerous followers. Pilate certainly desired to keep the attention of Rome off himself. If this Jesus planned to be trouble, Pilate had to nip that in the bud. Therefore, Pilate no doubt felt he might as well get straight to the point with the man. So, he asks Jesus....

“Are You king of the Jews?.... Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You over to me. What have You done?”

Jesus’ answer was unexpected....

“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from the world.”

Pilate likely was intrigued. This man was saying He indeed had a kingdom – but not of this world. He said His kingdom wasn’t even *from* this world. If it were, the insurrection, the rebellion, would have already begun. Jesus’ servants in His kingdom would have already been fighting to keep Him from

ever being handed over to Jewish leadership in the first place. No, Jesus' kingdom meant something else, something different, something foreign and strange.

And the strangeness of this case would be underscored for Pilate later that day when his wife sent a rather peculiar warning to him about Jesus....

Matthew 27:19 – While [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of Him today in a dream.”²

Imagine that! A *Roman* woman with troubling dreams about this *Jewish* king! Very strange, very mysterious! We've already seen that, many years before Pilate's wife's had this dream, eastern mystics had learned of Jesus' birth and came looking for this newborn King of the Jews. We've seen how Jesus' mother, before He was born, heard from the otherworldly angel Gabriel that she would give birth to the Son of the Most High, to Whom the Lord God would give the throne of His father David. There would be no end to His kingdom. A high society Roman woman has a vision fraught with warning. Noted Magi scholars come from far away to see this King. An angel announces this King who, tho' the angel said He would take the throne of David in *Jerusalem*, would Himself later say, “*My kingdom is not of this world!*” Almost contradictory, isn't it! Strange indeed!

These must be the kinds of things that happen when Heaven comes down! Jesus, this Jewish King, surrounded by such mystery! And there's even more mystery! Mary is a virgin, and yet she conceives this baby by means of the Holy Spirit of God. And her husband-to-be must come to terms with this very bizarre reality....

Matthew 1:18-21 – Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 27:19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”³

As with Mary, Joseph also is visited by an angel in a vision, and the angel calls Joseph the “son of David.” Through His adoption by Joseph, then, Jesus would be a legal heir to David’s throne. And His bloodline through His mother Mary was also connected to the house of David. Jesus could both hereditarily and legally be King of the Jews in this world. But, as He told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world!”

Virgin birth, visions, visits from angels and wise men are all part of the story of when Heaven came down! These unusual and extraordinary events, taken together, sound like something not of this world! Yet there is even more strange mystery when we consider ancient prophecies, such as this one from seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth....

Micah 5:2 - But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. ⁴

Ancient prophecies regarding a king in Israel who would come from Bethlehem! I find it a wonder-filled irony that fulfillment of this heaven-sent prophecy is, in part, enabled through the decree of a very earthly Roman emperor....

Luke 2:1-7 - In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.⁵

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 1:18-21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mic 5:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 2:1-7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Because of a decree by Caesar Augustus, a *ruler* of this world, God's Son Jesus, the King whose kingdom is *not* of this world, fulfilled a prophecy of His birthplace, the very place where God decreed He should *enter* this world!

We sometimes may think we know this Christmas story so well. But we rarely take time to consider how strange Jesus' story really is! And we've only scratched the surface this morning. When He came into our world, Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies. During His time in our world, Jesus demonstrated who He was through so many uniquely amazing miracles and signs and wonders. This must be what it is like when an otherworldly King has a kingdom on earth that is not of this world! All this, and so much more, is what it must be like when Heaven comes down!

Then there is the question of why. Why a kingdom? Why did Jesus come into our world to establish His kingdom? The Apostle Paul explains....

Galatians 4:4-5 – But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶

Jesus the Son of God came to our world to be adopted by His earthly father, that He might redeem us – buy us back through His own payment – so we could be adopted by our Heavenly Father! Being in the kingdom of Jesus the King means being in the family of God.

See, there once really was an insurrection! An insurrection that reached beyond the confines of this world! An insurrection against God, when humanity rebelled against our Creator – a rebellion of sin....

Romans 5:12 – [S]in came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...⁷

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Ga 4:4-5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Ro 5:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

In our state of sin, our state of rebellion against the Creator God, our relationship with God is fractured and broken. Because our very first earthly parents fell from God's favor through rebellion, each one of us has this sinful, broken condition which we can't repair. I have sometimes illustrated this through the old nursery rhyme about a broken egg, one you know so well....

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall!

All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again!

Broken by a fall; do you know what it's like to fall? Do you know what it's like to be broken? See, the king's men can't put it all back together again. *But the King can!* The King can mend the brokenness! The King can repair the breach! Jesus the King can restore and heal and make whole once again our connection to, our relationship with, God our Creator! And Jesus the King can do that, you see, because this King is not of this world. Nor is His kingdom of this world!

Each of us has this brokenness that needs mended. I know that, in my life, a time came where I saw that need. And I realized I could do nothing to mend my own brokenness before God. I couldn't restore what my sinful rebellion had done to my life. So I asked Jesus the King to be my Savior. You can do the same today! Hopefully, you know Jesus as your Savior, your Lord, and your King just as I do!

We began with John the Apostle, so allow me to conclude with him as well....

1 John 4:14-16 – And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.⁸

John 3:16-17 – For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. ⁹

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (1 Jn 4:14-16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 3:16-17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.