INTRODUCTION:
The Christmas story did not begin in Bethlehem and did not end in Bethlehem. The story had its beginning in eternity past when the triune God decided to redeem fallen human kind. The Christmas story has its ending in the same heavens from which Jesus Christ came in the incarnation as the Son of God. If we focus upon the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem without giving adequate consideration to the rest of the story we may get bogged down in sentimentality.

It is obvious that there has never been another life like the life of Jesus of Nazareth. James Frances has written of Him: “Here is a man who was born in an obscure village the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty and then for three years He was an itinerate teacher. He never wrote a book, he never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never traveled 200 miles from the place that He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the power of his divine manhood. While still a young man the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying. When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone; today He is the
masterpiece of the human race – I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as this one solitary life.”

The writer to the Hebrews gives us as much insight into the rest of the story as any other New Testament writing. He helps us see the glory of this one solitary life and the current position of this man who was born in Nazareth. In His opening to the letter to the Hebrews, the writer says “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His son whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by His powerful word, after He had provided purification for sins, He said down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. So He became as much as superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs” (Heb. 1:1-4).

Later in this same Hebrew Letter the writer focuses our attention upon the enthroned Christ when He writes, “The point of what we are saying is this: we do have such a high priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven and who serves in the sanctuary. The true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man” (Heb. 8:1-2).

Later the writer makes yet another reference to this exalted Christ with these words. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He set down at the right hand of God.
Since that time He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool, because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made perfect.” (Heb. 10:11-12)

And there is yet one more reference to this exalted Christ in this letter. When He writes, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such a position from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:2-3).

Mary’s little boy has become the enthroned God-man sitting at the right hand of the father in all His glorious majesty in the heavens. As we celebrate His birth, we need to remember the rest of the story.

I. RESTING.

When the writers of the New Testament describe Jesus as currently seated or sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, they want us to understand that Jesus is resting. In the Hebrew letter the writer uses Old Testament language to help us understand the nature of His rest. What the Old Testament priest was to the nation of Israel, the Lord Jesus is to all the people of God. His death is best understood in terms of a priestly act and sacrifice. In the ordeal of the cross He was both the priest and the lamb that was to be offered. As the priest after the order of Melchizedek He offered Himself to God as the lamb for the sins of the world. The offering of Himself was so complete that God the Father gave His approval of this sacrifice when He raised Jesus from the dead.
When Jesus was raised from the dead there was nothing else to be done with reference to the redemption of the world. So, he ascended through the heavens and was received into the presence of the Father and seated Himself at the Father’s right hand in a posture of rest. The writer of Hebrews dramatically contrasted this position with that of the Old Testament priest. There was no place for the priest to sit down in the Old Testament tabernacle. He could never sit while he was carrying out His priestly responsibilities because His work was never done. He could never offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the world or of any sinner permanently. There was always an incompleteness to that act which He did. When the Lord Jesus offered Himself on the altar of the cross, the work of redemption was finished forever. So he is now seated at the right hand of the Father in a position of rest.

As you and I celebrate the birth of Mary’s baby we need to keep in mind the rest of the story. Mary’s son is now seated in the heavens at the right hand of the Father.

There is one other aspect to this rest. The writer of Hebrews along with many other New Testament writers picks up a quotation from the Psalms that reminds us of this other aspect. He writes, “To which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?” The writer understood this word of the Psalmist as being fulfilled in the ascension of the Lord Jesus. His position is that of rest because He is waiting the day when the purpose of the eternal Father is finally completed. The Father’s eternal purpose is that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.
While that doesn’t seem to be the sentiment of our world today, we need to keep in mind that Jesus is restfully sitting in the heavens awaiting the ultimate accomplishment of His father’s will which will be His universal acknowledgement as the only sovereign and the only Lord.

II. REIGNING

The other thing that we are to understand from His position in the heavens at the right hand of the Father is that He is currently sharing in the rule of the Father. Peter in his first letter reminds us of this present reality with these words, “It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him” (I Peter 3:21b-22). In the imagery that used in sitting at the right hand of the Father we are to understand that the Father is now sharing the rule of both the physical and spiritual universe with the man, Christ Jesus. The baby that was born to Mary in Bethlehem is now the executive ruler of the whole universe.

Doesn’t this make the behavior of Western man appear to be utter folly in our day? In our own nation we are debating about whether or not it is proper for our children to sing Christmas carols. We are debating about whether or not it is proper to have a manger scene on some public property. We are debating about whether or not it is proper for the name of Jesus to be spoken in prayer in public places. Do you see the folly of such behavior? We are not debating about whether or not you give recognition to a baby born 2000 years ago in a remote Judean village. Rather we are debating whether or not we give any public acknowledgement to the executive CEO of the universe. The one about whom we are debating is indeed the one upon whom God the Father has placed the government of the whole universe.
Can you imagine some lowly employee of Microsoft contending that it would not be proper for a picture of Bill Gates to be placed in a prominent place in one of their factories? Or can you imagine such an employee protesting a conversation in the halls of the corporate offices of Microsoft that centers around Mr. Gates and his place in the company? I am confident that every employee of Microsoft is aware of who Bill Gates is and what his position is in the company. What Bill Gates is to Microsoft, Jesus Christ is to the whole universe. He is currently the ruling executive seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavens. It is time for all of us creatures of earth to give the heavenly executive, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, His rightful acknowledgement through worship, prayer, and praise.

III. REPRESENTING

The other aspect of His being enthroned at the Father’s right hand relates to His continuing representation of us in the heavens.

This is the theme that is developed throughout the pages of the New Testament. The writer of Hebrews holds this truth up before us in these words: “Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

The Apostle Paul states the same truth in the Roman Letter in these words: “Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall
trouble or hardship, persecution, or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” (Romans 8:34-35). It is from that position at the right hand of the Father that He makes intercession for us.

The Apostle John in his first letter sets forth this same glorious truth when he discusses the relationship of the believing Christian to sin. “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the righteous one. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins for the whole world.” (I John 2:1-2).

Can you appreciate what we have? We do not have just a baby born in a Bethlehem manager; we have that one who was born in the Bethlehem manager now seated at the right hand of the sovereign God of this universe as our personal representative before God. The word that the Apostle John uses means to be an advocate, to be a defense attorney. Our case is in His hands and He is committed to defend us before the Father. Based on the completeness of His redemptive work at the cross and His victory over death and His resurrection, He appeals on our behalf to holy God. Our salvation depends today upon His continuing and effective representation for us before the Holy Father.

When you remember some of the other analogies that are developed in the New Testament concerning our relationship to the exalted Christ, this becomes even more meaningful. He not only defends us as a legal representative, he defends us on a much more personal bases. By the Holy Spirit we have been made members of His body. You and I are to the Lord Jesus what a hand is or a foot or an eye or an ear is to our physical bodies. Can you imagine the intensity
with which you would work if the welfare of your hand was at stake? Jesus Christ represents us before the Father with the same level of personal intensity because the welfare of a member of his body is at stake. His very body is being defended before the Father.

This aspect of the enthroned Christ puts the Christmas story in a much different context. You cannot be casual about Christmas if we are celebrating the birthday of the exalted enthroned son of the Eternal God. Many of you have attended the rendition of the great oratorio by Handel, the Messiah. You may have heard the story about Queen Victoria when she had just ascended the throne and attended such a presentation of the Messiah. Her advisors had instructed her that it was not proper for royalty to rise with all the others when the mighty Hallelujah Course would be sung. But as the singers lifted their voices to shout “Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reignth” she could hardly remain in her seat. It seemed as though she would rise at any moment and violate the traditional custom of kings and queens. When the fourth course finally came to that last grand climax, proclaiming Jesus Christ the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, repeating the phrase with increasing crescendos, the young queen suddenly rose to her feet and stood with bowed head as if she would take her own crown from her head and cast it at His feet. She understood. She knew that when you stand before Mary’s son, God’s son, who is now the enthroned Christ at the right hand of the Father, every knee must bow and every tongue confess that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Why don’t you get everything ready for a real Christmas by bowing your head before the One born in Bethlehem and enthroned in heaven? You can do that by a full submission and surrender of your life to His Lordship.