HANDOUT · CHAPTER ONE

Born of a Woman

Galatians 4:4–7 · Paul says nothing about the story and plenty about the birth.

> *When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.*
>
> Galatians 4:4–7, Christian Standard Bible

WHAT PAUL DOES NOT GIVE US — AND WHAT HE DOES

1. Paul is silent about the Christmas story. He is not silent about the _____.
2. A writer argues for what his readers might fight him on, and he _____ on what nobody is fighting about.
3. A letter isn't a _____, and silence isn't _____.
4. Where a Gospel would start telling the story, Paul has a verb. In Greek it is *ginomai*, and it means to _____.

FOUR CLAIMS IN ONE SENTENCE

5. **The time came to completion.** Was God late? Paul says no. He says the glass was _____.
6. **God sent his Son.** Whatever arrived at Bethlehem did not _____ at Bethlehem.
7. **Born of a woman.** Whatever we are, he _____. And if he did not become it, he did not save it.
8. **Born under the law.** He did not lift them out from above. He went and stood in the place where the _____ falls.

THE DOOR THIS CLOSES

9. God sent his Son, so the Son already was. So what happened in that young woman's body in Nazareth did not make a person. It _____ one.
10. An ordinary conception, with the Son joining himself to the child, would give you two persons in one body. That is not the incarnation. That is a _____.

NO LONGER A SLAVE BUT A SON

11. The one who was never adopted is sent, so that the ones who were never sons could be adopted. He is Son by nature. We're sons by _____.

YOU WILL HEAR IT SAID Paul never mentions the virgin birth, so the earliest Christians didn't believe it.

AND THE ANSWER IS Paul never mentions the Sermon on the Mount either, and nobody concludes he had never heard of it. Silence isn't denial. And what Paul does say needs a miracle: God sent *his Son*, so the Son already was before Bethlehem. A conception that receives someone who already was can't be an ordinary one.

THREE WORDS PAUL CHOSE

γίνομαι *ginomai* · GHEE-noh-my · to come to be; to arrive into a condition that wasn't yours before *The day you came to be a grandparent: you were already you.*

πλήρωμα *plērōma* · play-ROH-mah · the amount that fills a thing to the brim *A bus is late. A baby is not yet.*

ἐξαπέστειλεν *exapesteilen* · ex-ah-PES-tay-len · he sent out; he sent forth *You can only send a boy who already lives in your house.*

A few paragraphs later in the same chapter, telling the story of Hagar and Sarah, Paul uses the begetting word, *gennaō*, for Ishmael and Isaac. Of Jesus he does not. Your English says *born* for both.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SAID

> *For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary according to a dispensation, of the seed of David but also of the Holy Ghost.*
>
> Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians* 18.2, about A.D. 107, on his way to be executed

> *What he has not assumed he has not healed.*
>
> Gregory of Nazianzus, fourth century

TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE NEXT WEEK

1. Paul says the time came to completion: filled up, not run out. For four hundred years after Malachi it looked from the ground as if God was late. What was going into the glass all that time, and who was holding it? Then bring it home: when you are waiting on God, what does this sentence promise you, and what doesn't it promise?
2. We love the manger partly because a baby asks nothing of us. Paul skips the part you can look at. What does he go straight to instead, and why does it make a claim on you that a baby in a manger never will? Then be honest about which one your Christmas is built around.
3. Verse 6 says the Spirit in you is crying *Abba*. Not that you are. A Roman adoption could give a son everything except one thing. What was it, and what does God send to sew that seam shut? So when you call God Father and mean it, who is doing the calling?

THE SENTENCE TO TAKE HOME

God did not send a message. He sent his Son, and he sent him through a womb.

God sends twice. He sends the Son out into the body of a girl in Nazareth, and he sends the Spirit of that Son into the chest of a Gentile in Galatia who had no business being in the family at all. The second sending is why the first one happened. Christmas is not a visit. It is a household being enlarged.

THE ONE THING I WOULD SAY TO SOMEBODY WHO ASKED

NEXT WEEK Philippians 2, He Emptied Himself. This week God made slaves into sons. Next week the Son takes the form of a slave.

He Emptied Himself

Philippians 2:5–11 · The emptying shows what God is like.

> *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross. For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
>
> Christian Standard Bible

THE SHAPE OF IT

1. Six steps down, then one word, *for this reason*, and the climb. You can't skip the bottom of the V. The way up went through the _____.
2. Most modern scholars hear a _____: something the churches were already singing. Inside a generation of his death, the church was singing that he was *in the form of God*.

WHAT HE WOULD NOT USE

3. *Form* isn't a costume. It means the form a thing has because of what it _____.
4. In plain English: he had it, and he wouldn't use it on _____.
5. *Harpagmos*: the phrase means a _____. A stroke of luck. Money that falls into your lap, yours fair and square.
6. _____ he was in the form of God, he didn't treat equality with God as something to spend on himself. The self-emptying isn't something that happened to God's nature. It's the _____ of God's nature.

WHAT HE TOOK

7. He emptied himself *by taking*. The emptying isn't subtraction. It's _____.
8. *Doulos* doesn't mean an employee. It means a _____: a person who is property. He took the form of one, and he died the death of one.

THE SENTENCE NOBODY WAS ARGUING ABOUT

9. 2 Corinthians 8:9, in the middle of a fundraising letter: *Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor.* Paul doesn't call it a sacrifice or a strategy. He calls it _____, a gift given to people who had no claim on it.

WHAT GOES UP

10. What can exaltation add to God? What gets exalted is the _____. He goes down alone. He doesn't come up alone.

WHAT IT IS FOR

11. *It is God who is working in you both to will and to work* (Philippians 2:13). Not just the doing, but the _____.

YOU WILL HEAR IT SAID At Bethlehem the Son put his divine attributes in a drawer, lived without them, and picked them back up at the resurrection.

AND THE ANSWER IS Then either God changes or the one in the manger was never God, and Paul rules it out with the very next word: he emptied himself *by taking*.

THREE WORDS PAUL CHOSE

ἁρπαγμός *harpagmos* · har-pag-MOSS · a windfall; something that's yours to cash in for yourself *Money that falls into your lap, yours fair and square.*

ἐκένωσεν *ekenōsen* · eh-KEN-oh-sen · he emptied himself; he poured himself out *Read it with the very next word: he emptied himself by taking.*

δοῦλος *doulos* · DOO-loss · a slave; a person who is someone else's property *Not a man who works for wages. A man who is owned.*

Philippi was a Roman colony, settled with retired soldiers, a town that measured a man by his rank. Everybody there knew where *slave* sat in the order of things. It sat at the bottom.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SAID

> *For both natures retain their own proper character without loss: and as the form of God did not do away with the form of a slave, so the form of a slave did not impair the form of God.*
>
> Leo the Great, *Tome to Flavian*, A.D. 449, read aloud at the Council of Chalcedon in 451

> *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through his transcendent love, become what we are, that he might bring us to be even what he is himself.*
>
> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V, Preface, a bishop in Gaul, around A.D. 180

> *For as Christ died and was exalted as man, so, as man, is he said to take what, as God, he ever had.*
>
> Athanasius, *Against the Arians* I.42

TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE NEXT WEEK

1. Paul is settling a quarrel between two church members. Why reach for the incarnation? What would have been lost if he had simply told them to get along?
2. If *emptied himself* doesn't mean he laid down his divinity, what did it cost him? Give something concrete out of the Gospels: an hour, a scene, a sentence.
3. We've admired a descent, and we've been asked to make one. The passage puts one question to every advantage we hold, the same question the Son answered with his. What is that question? And why isn't it a crushing one, when the standard is a man who went to a cross? Read verse 13 (*it is God who is working in you both to will and to work*) before you answer.

THE SENTENCE TO TAKE HOME

He had every advantage in existence, and he did not spend one of them on himself.

Verses 10 and 11 borrow Isaiah 45, where the God of Israel swears that every knee will bow to him, and Paul aims it at Jesus. Nothing was taken from God by the coming down. The coming down was God. And Paul doesn't ask you to manufacture the mind of Christ. It belongs to people who are in Christ. Use what you've been given.

THE ONE THING I WOULD SAY TO SOMEBODY WHO ASKED

NEXT WEEK Romans 1, Descended from David. Paul opens his letter to the Romans with words the church was already saying together.

Descended from David

Romans 1:1–4 · Paul quotes the oldest confession we have that begins with Jesus's birth.

> *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures — concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.*
>
> Christian Standard Bible

WORDS THE CHURCH ALREADY KNEW

1. Paul quotes back to a church he has never visited the words that church already knows by _____.
2. Romans was written about twenty-five years after the crucifixion. The creed Paul quotes in it is _____ than the letter that carries it.
3. Earlier than any of the four Gospels, inside a single generation of the cross, in words Paul assumes total strangers already know, this creed begins with a _____.

OF DAVID'S SEED

4. A *descendant* is a noun: a box he belongs in. The Greek word Paul uses, *genomenou* (a form of *ginomai*), is something that _____.
5. *Of David's seed* is not a biographical footnote. It's a _____ claim.
6. The birth at Bethlehem is not God starting something new; it's God _____ something very old. Advent has a backlog.

A RUMOR ABOUT EASTER

7. Romans 1:3 begins *concerning his Son*. Anyone who wants the adoptionist reading has to start the sentence in the _____.
8. Nothing about who he was changed on Easter morning. What changed was the way he was seen and the place he _____.
9. There is no copy of Romans that lacks the words *in power*. The "original" the theory needs has never been _____ by anyone.

THE FIRST OF OURS

10. It says, word for word, *by the resurrection of the dead*, and in Greek *the dead* is _____. Not his resurrection; theirs.
11. We'll gladly take a Jesus who is an example. We're slower to take a Jesus who is a rescue, because an _____ flatters us and a rescue doesn't.
12. Nicaea didn't invent that shape. Nicaea _____ it.

YOU WILL HEAR IT SAID One of the oldest creeds in the New Testament says Jesus was *appointed* Son of God at the resurrection. So before the resurrection he wasn't the Son of God. The first Christians thought he was a good man whom God promoted after his death. (That reading is called *adoptionism*, and it's at least as old as the second century.)

AND THE ANSWER IS Read the verse again, in three moves.

First, the Son is the subject. The sentence begins *concerning his Son*, and this Son *came to be of David's seed*. He is God's Son before David, before the flesh, before the resurrection is mentioned.

Second, take the harder word, *appointed*, and look at what he's appointed to: not *Son of God*, plain and simple, but *the powerful Son of God*, the Son *in power*. He isn't appointed to sonship. He's appointed to the throne that belongs to the Son.

Third, the theory needs *in power* to be a later addition, and no manuscript leaves it out. The theory rests on a guess, not on a copy anyone has ever seen.

And the picture: A king's son is his son from the day he's born. At thirty he's crowned, and nobody in the crowd concludes he was adopted that morning. The coronation didn't make him a son. It gave the son his throne.

THE VERB, A THIRD TIME, AND THE WORD FOR EASTER

γίνομαι *ginomai* · GHEE-noh-my · to come to be; to arrive into a condition that wasn't yours before *The day you came to be a grandparent: you were already you.*

γενομένου *genomenou* · gen-oh-MEN-oo · the form of *ginomai* in Romans 1:3: who *came to be* of David's seed *Galatians, Philippians, Romans: one verb, every single time.*

ὁρισθέντος *horisthentos* · hor-iss-THEN-toss · appointed; marked out for an office *A king's son is his son from birth. He is crowned at thirty.*

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SAID

> *Fully persuaded with respect to our Lord, that he was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power of God.*
>
> Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Smyrnaeans* 1.1, around A.D. 107, on his way to be killed in Rome: the same confession, fifty years on

> *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father … For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.*
>
> The Nicene Creed, A.D. 325 and 381: the same three moves, defended and not invented

TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE NEXT WEEK

1. Paul is introducing himself to strangers whose trust he needs and doesn't have. Why open with a creed instead of a credential? What does that assume about them?
2. For a thousand years, faithful people held God to his promise to David. What had he promised, and what thread were they still holding on to when 2 Kings ends?
3. The verb changes at Titus 2:11 from *came to be* to *appeared*. Before you read the next chapter, say what you think the difference is.

THE SENTENCE TO TAKE HOME

He came to be the Son of David. He was always the Son of God.

The first line is something that happened, with a date, an address and a mother. The second is who he was before the sentence ever began. Easter didn't make him the Son. It crowned him.

THE ONE THING I WOULD SAY TO SOMEBODY WHO ASKED

NEXT WEEK Titus 2, *Grace Has Appeared*. Three times he came to be. Then grace appeared.

HANDOUT · CHAPTER FOUR

Grace Has Appeared

Titus 2:11–14 · The manger is not where grace begins.

> *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.*
>
> Christian Standard Bible

THE VERB CHANGES

1. When the Son came to be of a woman, something new happened to him. When grace appeared, nothing new happened to grace. Something that appears was there all along and is now in _____.
2. Before Paul used it, the word already meant a god stepping into view, an emperor arriving at the gates. The great arrival of God in the world came in the shape of a _____.

WHO DOES SOMETHING HERE?

3. Go back and look at verse 11. The only thing in the whole sentence that acts is _____, and the only thing grace does is show up.
4. Bethlehem had no room, and grace appeared anyway. If grace had waited for us to be _____, we would still be waiting.
5. A page later, "the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared" (3:4). That love is a ruler's clemency, and nobody earns a pardon; if you earned it, it wouldn't be a pardon, it would be a _____.

WHERE WAS IT BEFORE?

6. 2 Timothy 1:9–10 holds two moments apart. The grace was *given* before time began. The grace was *made* _____ now.
7. Nothing in God changed. God didn't become gracious at Bethlehem or at Golgotha. He became _____.

YOU WILL HEAR IT SAID God helps those who help themselves.

AND THE ANSWER IS That line isn't in the Bible, though plenty of people would bet it is. Read verse 11 and look for the human being who does something first. The sentence has one subject, and it isn't us.

THE WORDS BEHIND "EPIPHANY"

ἐπεφάνη *epephanē* · eh-pef-AH-nay · it appeared; it came into view *The sun doesn't come to be at dawn. It comes into view.*

φιλανθρωπία *philanthrōpia* · fil-an-throw-PEE-ah · love for mankind; a ruler's kindness to people who have no claim on him *Not a check written to a cause. A king stooping to people in his power.*

παιδεύουσα *paideuousa* · pie-DYOO-oo-sah · training, the way you raise a child: teaching, correcting, disciplining *A father teaching his sixteen-year-old to drive, willing to be unpopular for the boy's sake.*

ἐπιφάνεια *epiphaneia* · eh-pif-AN-ay-ah · an appearing; an arrival into view *The same family as epephanē. In Titus 2 the verb looks back to Bethlehem, and the noun, in verse 13, looks ahead.*

λυτρόω *lytroō* · loo-TRO-oh · to ransom; to set free by paying the price *The family that empties its savings to bring a son home from the men who are holding him.*

FOR ALL PEOPLE, AND A GRACE THAT TRAINS

8. Verse 11 begins with *for*, and it reaches back over the whole household list, down to the slaves. The grace that appeared didn't stop at the level of the household where respectable people live. It went all the way to the _____.
9. Verse 12 still has grace as its subject: grace appeared, *instructing us*. Grace isn't the thing that excuses you from the training. Grace is the _____.

TWO APPEARINGS, AND THE ONE WHO GAVE HIMSELF

10. One appearing is behind us, and one is ahead. Advent is not a pageant. We are not acting out waiting. We are _____.
11. One *the* stands over *great God* and *Savior*, like "my brother and friend Tom." So Paul, in the middle of a clause about what to expect while you wait, calls Jesus Christ *our great* _____.
12. *He gave himself … to redeem us … and to cleanse for himself a people*. The ransom happens once. The _____ takes the rest of your life.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SAID

> *I have not first risen up to You, but to awake me You have come: for His mercy shall come before me.*
>
> Augustine, *Exposition on Psalm 59*

> *He speaks here of two appearings; for there are two; the first of grace, the second of retribution and justice.*
>
> John Chrysostom, *Homily 5 on Titus*

TO THINK ABOUT

1. In verse 11, who does something? Name the subject, then every human being in the sentence. What are they doing?
2. Second Timothy says the grace was "given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" and "has now been made evident." Where was it in between?
3. Think of one thing you've been doing to get ready for Christmas. In verse 11, whose move came first, and what happens if we forget?

THE SENTENCE TO TAKE HOME

The manger is not where grace begins. The manger is where grace becomes visible.

Three times he came to be: of a woman, in the likeness of human beings, of the seed of David. Then grace appeared. Go back through all four passages, look at every sentence about his coming, and find one place where a human being does anything but receive.

THE ONE THING I WOULD SAY TO SOMEBODY WHO ASKED

ON CHRISTMAS EVE When the candle comes down the row to you, take it the way you'd take a baby somebody hands you at a party. You didn't prepare for it. You don't have to bring anything. You only have to hold out your arms.