

INTRODUCTION

Now I invite to open your Bibles with me to Matthew 1. We're going to look at one verse, verse 21, but it's going to be a little bit later in the service, actually on our second part when we get to the backside of our outline. But please have your Bible open to Matthew 1:21.

'Twas the day after Christmas and all through the town, the ones who weren't Christians were all feeling let down. The stockings weren't hung by the chimney anymore and boxes and wrappings covered the floor. The kitchen was covered from floor to ceiling with enough dirty dishes to set mother reeling. The children were whining over what they *didn't* get, and rather than sharing they were throwing a fit. The malls were bustling with post-Christmas shoppers searching for bargains on racks and in hoppers. The salesmen looked haggard, the shoppers looked worse, as credit cards flew out of wallets and purse. There were no joyful sounds of carolers singing and the only bells heard were registers ringing. The scene was altogether too grim for all of those people who don't know Him. If only this unhappy crowd could know that the spirit of Christmas isn't tied with a bow and stacked in piles underneath the tree, it lives forever in you and in me. It didn't start in a sack in a sleigh; it started with Christ being born in the hay. The perfect gift from our father above sent to us sinners to show us his love. He came without wrapping or boxes or strings, no glitter or glamour or earthly trappings. He came with a promise of hope for all men that even in death, we'd have life again. So, the next face you see that's covered with strife, introduce them to Jesus, and He'll change their life. And teach them that Christmas is a daily thing that comes from intimately knowing the King.

Isn't it great to know that those of us who know Jesus Christ, that Christmas isn't just a holiday that happens once a year? It is a time when all throughout the year we rejoice that Christ has come. Well the next big event on the calendar—and I say calendar—is the clicking over from the year 1999 to the year 2000. That's why I started this short series entitled "Are You Prepared for the New Millennium?" Last Sunday I talked on the topic, "God's Impeccable Sense of Timing." And whereas you and I are slaves to the calendar and to the clock, God is not bound by time. With God, *timing* is much more critical than time.

Today, I'm going to talk to you about the man who divided history. And then this Friday night at our Celebrate 2000 service right in here, I'm going to be preaching the entire book of Revelation entitled, "Where Are We Now in the Book of Revelation?" So folks, even if you go to a New Year's Eve party, you be right here. 9:45 the music starts. I'll start preaching a little after 10, teach the entire book of Revelation, and then just before midnight, we'll be on our knees to pray in the year 2000. And then a week from today, the final message in this series, "2000: Now What?"

Well, when we come to look at the idea of calendars and times and this date change to the year 2000, the theses of this entire series can be summarized in this sentence: This date change is the result of *man's* calendar, God doesn't operate according to man's calendar. So relax, calm down. God is in charge.

Now today I hope you learn something. You know it's okay to learn something in church every now and then. You don't check your mind when you come to the foyer. I hope you'll learn

something today about calendars. The first half of this message is informational and it has to do with history and that’s okay, I love history. I love to study history. I was a major in history in college and so the second part of the message is not going to be informational, it will be inspirational.

I. THE CALENDAR WAS DEVELOPED BY MAN

How in the world did we even get our calendar that brings up this idea of 1999 and 2000? The first thing lets learn today is this: Man developed the calendar. Our calendar is not anything instituted by God; it was developed, and by the way, redeveloped and redeveloped and redeveloped by man.

Now to be precise, and I always try to be precise, I agree with those who say that new millennium doesn’t start until January 1, 2001, because really the year 2000 is the final year of the 20th century. It’s the final year of the second millennium. But, we all know this “millennium madness” that’s going around has to do with watching those numbers click over from 1999 to 2000.

Well, how in the world do we get our calendars? First of all, lets talk about where we arrived at the months that we use to measure time. You see, ancient man knew that there were two heavenly bodies that were to be regulated or at least systematically determine time. One was the moon, so there were lunar calendars and then the other was the sun, the other was a solar calendar. For instance, the Jewish people developed and still use a lunar calendar. But did you know a lunar calendar that is determined by the cycles, the phases of the moon, from a new moon to a full moon doesn’t coincide with a solar calendar? For instance, every 29-½ days, the moon goes through its phases. And so if you follow a lunar year, there are only 354 days, so it’s like 11 days short of a solar year.

Now you guys understand what earth in relationship to the sun is. Here we are, all living on a planet, and we’re spinning around the sun in orbit at a tremendous velocity. And in addition to spinning around the sun, this planet is also rotating one complete revolution every 24 hours. Are you dizzy yet? If you’re not, in addition to that, our planet is also rocking on its axis ever so slowly and that creates the seasons of the year. And even ancient man as far back as the ancient Egyptians determined by counting the amount of daylight and the amount of dark that there were these four points during the year, where you could regulate time. The two equinoxes, one in the fall, one in the spring, known as the vernal equinox, when the time of light and darkness were the same; and then the winter solstice, when the dark is longer and the daylight is short, and then in the summertime, just the opposite, long daylight, short night. They could determine those were things that happened regularly every year.

A. Months (How can lunar = solar?)

Now the problem was getting the lunar that developed months to coincide with this solar year. And so there were several attempts through the years. For instance, the Romans were the first ones to come up with a monthly calendar. They had 10 months. The first month was the month March. The second month was April, May, June, the fifth month was called Quintilis, the sixth

month was called Sextilis, then Septemberus, Octoberus, the eighth month –that’s were we get our word “October.” November, the ninth month, Decimbris [December for decimal] the tenth month. The problem was this year did not coincide with the months.

1. 46 B.C. – Julius Caesar (Old style)

And so the first thing we want to talk about was in 46 B.C. Here’s the first guy who had a tremendous influence on the calendar we use today. Believe it or not, it’s Julius Caesar, of all people. Now he wasn’t doing it himself. There was it himself. There was this Roman astronomer by the name of Sosigenes who influenced Julius Caesar. And in the year 46 B. C., Julius Caesar said, “We need to add two more months.” And so he added Januarius and Februarius. Twelve months. But then he said, “We need to reckon this idea of how a year is 365 days and approximately 6 hours.” So every fourth year we need to add another day that we call a “leap year.”

And so, because he changed the calendar and developed what’s called the “old style” calendar that is the basis of that Daytimer you use, that Palm Pilot you use, it’s the basis of it. They honored Julius Caesar by naming the month Quintilis after him and that’s why we have the month July after Julius Caesar.

But the Romans made a mistake, I don’t know why they did, nobody does. But instead of counting a leap year every fourth year, they started counting it every third year, and so they got out of sync again. And so when Caesar Augustus came along, he said, “We need to go back to what Julius said,” and so for 16 years they didn’t have any leap years and they got back on track. And in honor of that, they named the month “Sextilis” after Caesar Augustus and that’s why you and I have the month of July and August in the summer, because they developed the first old style calendar that is the basis for our calendar.

Now, everything rocked along pretty good for a while; except did you know that a solar year is not *exactly* 365 days and six hours? It is exactly 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 42 seconds. You say, 11 minutes, what’s the difference? Well folks, you stretch it out over about 15 centuries and it did make a difference. They got out of sync again. Every year the date of the vernal equinox in the spring became earlier and earlier and earlier on the calendar. Now you, of course, know all this I’m telling you. I know that. But, you know how we set the date of Easter? It is the Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Well, you see when the date of the vernal equinox kept getting pushed back earlier in March and early in February, before long they realized that Easter was going to be celebrated at Christmastime, and even before that.

2. 1582 – Pope Gregory XIII (New style)

So, the second character on the development of our calendar was in 1582. Pope Gregory, his name is important, Pope Gregory XIII developed the new style calendar. He got us back in sync by recognizing that 11-minute difference. And he instituted the calendar we use today which is the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory.

You say, “Well, how did he fix the problem?” Well the first thing he did was to take 10 days off the year 1582. They just dropped it. And then he instituted what’s called the “Century Law” for leap years. Here’s the Century Law for leap years: You may think that a leap year occurs every four years, but it doesn’t. On the century years that end in “00” only those century years divisible by 400 are a leap year. That’s the law he instituted. So? Was 1600 a leap year? Yes it was. Was 1700 a leap year? No. Was 1800 a leap year? No. Was 1900 a leap year? No. Those are divisible by 400. But let me ask you: Is next year, 2000, a leap year? Yes it is. And so that’s how Gregory got the calendar back in sync with the vernal equinox, setting the date of Easter. And so you say, “In 1582 did everybody accept it?” Absolutely not. Only those predominately Catholic countries, like Spain, Italy and France adopted that new style calendar. All the others stuck with the old style calendar.

3. 1752 – England and U.S. adopt new style

So, by the way, determining dates in the 16th and 17th centuries was sometimes very difficult because the third thing that relates to us in our calendar was this: It wasn’t until 1752, just a few years before the American Revolution, that England and the Colonies adopted the new style. And you know how they did it? This is fascinating to me. They had the old style calendar and now they were going to adopt the new calendar, so to get them back in sync, you know what they did in the year 1752? They also just dropped 11 days out of the calendar. In 1752, September 3 was followed by September 14. So, some of you guys who are in high school or college, if you want an interesting term paper, do a term paper entitled “All the Historical Events That Occurred in the U.S. Colonies from September 4, 1752 to September 13, 1752,” then turn in a blank sheet of paper. Those dates do not exist, seriously, in American history, because we adopted this new calendar.

B. Years

So that’s how we arrived at our dates and that’s why December 31 coming up this next week is the last year of this year, because we used a Gregorian calendar. Now that’s months. What about years? Well, I mentioned this a little bit last week, but the two key events in determining the years as we know them.

1. 532 Dionysius calculated AD

In the year 532 A.D. this monk by the name of Dionysius calculated A.D. He calculated the years and titled them A.D., which stands for *anno*, year of, *Domini*, the year of our Lord. That’s why we say 1999 A.D., the year of our Lord.

Now, as I said last week, I really commend Dionysius for trying to do this, but he made two mistakes. First mistake, he did not use a zero. You know why? There’s no zero in the Roman numeral system. So what he said was, the day Jesus was born was year 1 A.D., and so when Jesus was one year old, that was 2 A.D. See? He made that mistake because there is no zero. The second mistake he made as I mentioned last week was he just absolutely miscalculated the exact date because he said this is 1 A.D. And we know without a shadow of a doubt that Herod the Great died at least four years, probably four or five years before when Dionysius said Jesus was born.

Now we also know from the Bible Matthew 2 and a lot of history that Herod the Great was alive when Jesus was born and so folks, as I said last week, Jesus was literally born 4 or 5 B.C. And so you know what? The 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ passed with very little fanfare four or five years ago. That is the absolute truth. Everybody knows that Dionysius made a mistake.

2. 731 Bede introduced B.C.

By the way, he didn't figure B.C.; he just did A.D. That was not done until 731 A.D. another by the name of Bede. He was called the Venerable Bede because he was highly intelligent. He introduced B.C., the concept of "before Christ." You know why they waited so long? Those of you who love to study math and the history of mathematics. There was no concept of negative numbers. They couldn't even conceive of going backwards in numbers until Bede introduced it. Now folks, that's how we got our calendar. It is just the process of man attempting to match months and years, the moon and the sun. Now let me ask you this question: How many of you learned something about the calendar? Let me see your hand. That's good, put your hands down. How many of you learned a lot more than you wanted to know about the calendar? Appreciate that honesty!

That's the informational part of the message. Now you know why we're at this date in history, because this is man's calendar.

II. HISTORY WAS DIVIDED BY CHRIST

The second thing I want to talk about is that man developed the calendar but history was divided by Christ. Now that's the key, because throughout all of history, when mankind has been looking for event to determine our historical dating, the one event that stands is this: the coming of Jesus Christ to planet Earth.

Now those of you who study history, you know that there are a lot of secular historians who are no longer wanting to use A.D. and B.C. What do they use? They use the dating 1999 C.E., which stands for Christian Era or Common Era. They don't use B.C., they use B.C.E. before the Christian era or before the Common era. Friend, whatever letters you put at the end of it, the numbering of our dating system in the modern world today is still based upon the reckoning of the birth of Jesus Christ, and you can't escape from it.

Did you know the Greeks, when they had the first Olympiad, they said, "We're always going to date time according to the Greek Olympiad." That didn't last very long. The Romans said, "We're always going to date time from the date of the founding of the city of Rome." That didn't last very long. Even in the French Revolution in the late 1700's the French said, "We're going to have a new world dating system based from the beginning of the French Revolution." That didn't even last two or three years in France.

But still to this day, folks, almost 2,000 years later, every time you write a check and put a date down, every time you look at a calendar, every time you register any date for the day, you are acknowledging that something happened 2,000 years ago that was one of the most significant

events in all of history. And I do believe that when Jesus Christ came to planet Earth, it was the only event worthy to divide the history of mankind. Let me tell you why, three reasons:

1. Jesus Christ – the most significant man of history

He's the most significant man, the most significant individual of history. That's why I'd like for you to look here in Matthew 1:21. The text I directed you to at the beginning of the message. Matthew 1:21 the angel said to Joseph, "She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." When Jesus Christ came into the world, he was the most significant individual to ever walk on the face of this planet. You see, his name was special, that's why the angel said, "You name him Jesus." I'm so glad the angel gave Jesus such a beautiful, simple name. You know, there are some hard names in the Bible. You know one of the sons of Isaiah was named Maher-shalal-hash-baz. I mean, aren't you glad the angel didn't say, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz?" That would be hard for us.

The grandson of Saul in the Old Testament was named Mephibosheth. That's hard to say. I'm so glad he didn't say, "Call his name Mephibosheth." He said, "Call his name Jesus." You know why? The name Jesus is so simple; it's so beautiful. It sounds beautiful whether it's coming from the lips of a three-year-old child singing, "Yes, Jesus loves me." And it sounds beautiful coming from the lips of dying saints on their deathbed, just before they enter into the arms of Jesus as they call out his name, "Jesus." What a beautiful name it is. Say it with me out loud, would you? Jesus! What a beautiful name. The angel said to call his name Jesus because his coming into the world is the most significant event in all of history.

And look what the Bible says about the unique character of Jesus in 1 Timothy 2:5. It says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," now this is what that verse says. There is a God who is holy, sinless. And then there are the rest of us. We're all fallen, sinful human beings. And we cannot relate to God. You know why? Because he is holy and we are sinful. And so the solution was God sent into this world the God-man. Jesus Christ was all God and he was all man.

You see, when we say we believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, that is not some incidental doctrine. It is an essential doctrine to what we believe about the character of Christ, because the father of Jesus was not Joseph of someone else. The father of Jesus was God and God alone. And the mother of Jesus was a woman. And so, literally, flowing through the veins of the body of Jesus Christ was the blood of God, who has no blood, and the blood of man. And because Jesus was God, he could reach up and take the hand of his holy father, and because he was man, he could reach down and take the hand of all of us who are sinful creatures and he could bring us together and he could reconcile us to God. And he's the only one who could do that, because there had never been another God-man. The Bible says "one God and one mediator between God and man. The man Jesus Christ." And that's what Jesus came to do, and that's what makes him different.

The second thing I want you to notice is that

2. Jesus Christ – the most significant mission of history

In other words, what he came to do was the most significant mission of anyone else. And throughout the years, people have done significant things, but none more important than what Jesus did.

Would you look and see why Jesus said in his own words he came to this planet? "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Now underline that word "ransom." He said, "I came to give my life, a ransom, for many. I mean you all know what a ransom is, don't you? Sometimes someone may be kidnapped and because that person who is kidnapped is important to certain people, the kidnappers will send a ransom note saying, "If you will pay a certain price, this individual who is important to you will be returned to you." You can buy them back if you've got enough money to pay the ransom. And isn't it interesting that Jesus in his own words said, "That's one of the reasons I came, to pay a ransom for your soul."

I'm here to tell you Jesus didn't come to teach, although he did some great teaching, that wasn't the purpose of his coming. If he had come to teach; he would have established a university and lived to a ripe old age. He didn't come to heal, although he healed many people. Had Jesus come primarily to heal, he would have established a hospital and lived to be a ripe old age. Jesus didn't come to set up some new ethical moral system. If he had, he would have put on the robes of a judge and established a supreme court and lived to be a ripe old age. He came to die.

A.W. Tozer wrote this about Jesus:

"Jesus is the only man who lived his life backwards. Your life runs from birth to death. But Jesus' lifeline runs from his death to his birth. The only reason there was a Bethlehem is that there might be a Calvary. At Bethlehem, he was surrounded by beasts so at Calvary he might be surrounded by beastly men. At Bethlehem, he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, at Calvary, he was wrapped in his own blood. He was laid in a wooden manger so that one day he would be laid on a wooden cross. He is the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world."

Now think about this with me. Do you know why God who is spirit put on human flesh for 33 years? It was so that he could die, because God can't die. God is spirit. But Jesus came down, the Bible says, and he put on human flesh and he humbled himself and the Bible says he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And did you know, folks, by his death, he was paying our ransom?

Now I've told this story before, but I love it, it's a great preacher's story. In fact, after the last service, one of our orchestra members, a gentleman by the name of Ed Harwell said, "You know what? In 1941 when I heard that story, that's when I gave my life to Jesus." Maybe you haven't heard it. It's a story of a little boy who built a little sailboat in his. He glued the wood together and meticulously painted it. He set the mast and cut out cloth for the sail. When he finished, he was so proud of that little boat he built with his own hands he took it down to the city park and put it in the lake. He didn't even know if it would float. So he was pleased when it did. But not only did it float, the wind from behind him caught that little sail and filled it up and the boat

started sailing right across that little lake. He got so excited watching it. “It works! It works! It sails!” until he realized the boat went out too far for him to go and retrieve it. It kept going right across the lake. So he ran around it as fast as he could to get to the other side and retrieve the boat. When he got there he couldn’t find it. He spent all afternoon looking up and down the banks of that lake to try to find his boat, but he figured it must have sunk. Dejectedly, he went back home.

A couple of days later, he was walking down the street in his neighborhood and happened to look in the window of a store and saw his boat. “For sale \$20.” He ran in there to the owner of the shop and said, “My boat, I see it! I made that boat. It’s mine! It’s mine! Where did you get it?” The shopkeeper says, “A man sold it to me a few days ago, and son, I don’t know if I can believe you or not, but you can have it for \$20.” Well the little boy said, “Well sir, I don’t have \$20, but will you put the boat under the counter and give me some time to try to earn the money?” The shopkeeper agreed and put the boat under the counter.

So the little boy went out and he raked leaves and hauled trash. He turned bottles in for deposit. He did everything he could until he had \$20. Then he went back down to the store. With the \$20 clutched in his hand, he laid it on the counter and the owner of that shop picked the boat up from under the counter and handed it to him. The little boy took the boat and walked outside, looked at it and this is what he said, “You’re mine. You’re twice mine, because I made you and now I bought you back.” And that’s exactly what Jesus Christ did to me, and did to all of you. He looked at me and he said, “David Dykes, you’re mine. You’re twice mine, because I made you and then when you were marred by sin, I paid the ransom for your soul. I bought you back. I redeemed you.” Have you ever heard that word? I’ve been “redeemed?” That means he paid the price for our souls. And so that was the greatest mission of history.

Here’s the third reason that history is divided by Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus Christ – the most significant message of history

Jesus Christ delivered a unique message that was revolutionary in the world and you can find it there in John 3:14-16. And you’ll be familiar with the last verse, but maybe you’ve never tied these first two verses with it. “Just as Moses lifted the snake in the desert,” now that’s a good story in itself, “so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” That means on a cross, “that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” And here’s the next verse, “for God so loved the world,” this is Jesus speaking, “that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

I submit to you that there’s never been a more important message that has ever come from human lips than that message right there. You see, this is what Jesus was saying, are you ready for this? “There is a God. And this God loves you and you can have a personal relationship with this God. And the only way you can come to know this God is through his Son Jesus Christ. And the only way you can come through his Son Jesus Christ is through his death on the cross.” And that’s the Great Message that Jesus shares.

CONCLUSION

Jean Goetz is a great Christian speaker and author. And in one of his books he relates the true story of a man by the name of Max Walsh. Years ago, Max Walsh was staying in a lodge in the Austrian Alps. And on a beautiful winter day with the sky blue, he told the owner of the lodge he was going out for a walk by himself. And the owner told him to be careful. Max Walsh walked out and he was about a mile and a half from the lodge, when suddenly, the weather changed, as it often does in mountainous areas. A tremendous snowstorm descended on that area. He was blinded by the snow and was getting colder by the moment. He stumbled and fell and was lost. He couldn't get his bearings and he was in the snow.

The owner of the lodge saw the blizzard descend; he sent one of his rescue dogs out into the snow. These dogs have been trained to find people who were lost in the snow. And so the owner of the lodge took of the garments from Max Walsh's room and let the dog smell of it and then the dog took off into that blinding snowstorm. And using its keen sense of smell and its keen sense of hearing, he found Max Walsh's body in the snow.

And as the dog had been trained to do, the dog latched on to Max Walsh's jacket with his teeth and began to shake him and pull him through the snow. Max Walsh, who was semi-conscious, awakened and he saw that big dog pulling on him and he panicked and out of fear, he thought it was a wolf. And Max Walsh quickly pulled out his knife and thrust that knife at the dog, incurring a terrible wound. And the dog let go and went back to the lodge, where he fell dead at his master's feet. The owner of the lodge, realizing what probably had happened, followed that trail of blood through the snow until he found Max Walsh, and they took him back to safety.

And years later when Max Walsh became a Christian, he always told that story when he shared his testimony, because he said, “When I realized that I was lost and headed for hell, I realized the only way that I could find life was to follow the trail of blood back to the cross of Jesus, where I found Jesus who died for me.”

The reason we have B.C. and A.D. is because there has never been another individual who was worthy to divide history. He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another small village and worked in a carpenter's shop until he was 30 years old. Then for three years, he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never had a family. He never owned a home. He never went to college. He never visited the big city. In fact, he never traveled more than 200 miles from the place of his birth. He did none of the things that usually are associated with greatness. He had no credentials but his own character. And when he was 33, the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends all deserted him; one of them denied him. He endured the mockery of a trial and then they nailed him to a cross between two thieves. And while he was dying the soldiers gambled for his clothes, which was the only property on earth he owned. And then when he died, they had to lay him in a borrowed grave. But three days later, he rose from the grave and is alive forevermore. Almost 20 centuries have come and gone, and today he stands as the central figure of the human race. All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever set sail, all the of the parliaments that have sat, all of the kings that have ever reigned *put together* have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary man. Jesus Christ, the man who divided history.

OUTLINE

I. THE CALENDAR WAS DEVELOPED BY MAN

A. Months: (How can lunar = solar?)

1. 46 B.C. – Julius Caesar (Old style)
2. 1582 – Pope Gregory XIII (New style)
3. 1752 – England and U.S. adopt new style

B. Years:

1. 532 Dionysius calculated A.D.
2. 731 Bede introduced B.C.

II. HISTORY WAS DIVIDED BY CHRIST

Jesus Christ – The most significant:

1. Man of history

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. *1 Timothy 2:5*

2. Mission of history

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." *Matthew 20:28*

3. Message of history

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." *John 3:14-16*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes