

Christmas Eve Message

Ford Family Christmas Eve Party 2011

By Cameron Ford

Please bear with me for few minutes while I share some thoughts I've had recently relating to Christ and why we make such a big deal about his birth. I've even memorized some scriptures for the occasion.

I'm going to start with some nerdy engineering statistics. Scientists currently estimate that in the universe there are between 300 Sextillion stars and 1 Septillion stars. 300 Sextillion is a 3 followed by 22 zeros and 1 Septillion is a 1 followed by 24 zeroes. To give you an idea of how big this is, remember that a million is a 1 followed by only 6 zeros. Most of us have heard of a million dollars. That is a lot of money. If you had that much money you would be doing pretty good. If you counted one time per second without stopping to eat or sleep it would take you almost 12 days to count to 1 million. To count to 1 Septillion you would need to count 1 time per second for 1 billion years, and then do that 30 million times. Isn't that mind boggling? As president Uchtdorf said in general conference "One group of scientists estimates that this is 10 times greater than all the grains of sand on the world's beaches and deserts."

And this staggering number is just the stars we can see and estimate based on our observatories. And yet we know from scripture that this estimate is way too low. When God the Father was talking with Moses, he said: "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten." From this we learn not only about God's endless creations, but also that it was actually Jesus that created them.

Another scripture also emphasizes this. During the 3 days of darkness on the American continent after the death of Christ, the people heard a voice from the heavens say: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are."

Later when he appeared to them he said: "Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world."

So given all that we know about Christ, I think that it is incredible that the great creator of our unbelievably enormous universe was born into mortality in a stable among farm animals. That he was born a frail and helpless baby just like all of us are. I think it is incredible to think that a being like that actually walked upon the same earth that we do, and that he subjected himself to the same pains and suffering that we go through, and much much more.

But this kind of a story is almost beyond belief. No wonder many people think Christians to be incredibly simple minded to believe such a story. And yet in my mind there really is not a middle ground. Either Christianity is a myth or a hoax, or it is true. If we believe it to be a myth or a hoax, then its teachings can

be listened to, smiled at, but ultimately it has no real impact on our lives. But if it is true, then I believe that accepting his call to follow him is worth every inconvenience and every sacrifice.

In Conference a general Authority quoted the author C. S. Lewis. C. S. Lewis said: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. . . . You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worseBut let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

But I really do understand how people can shake their heads in unbelief at the claims of Christ. When you stand back and look at it, it does sound like a lot of nonsense. It sounds beyond belief. And I personally would not believe it, except that He appeared to a 14 year old boy in a grove of trees, another one of those stories that is beyond belief. Except that he left proof in this case. He caused that young boy to translate an ancient book of scripture. The very title page explains its purpose: "To the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD." The more and more that I read that book, the more and more I stand in awe at its depth and complexity. It is impossible that a book like that could come into existence in the circumstances that it did and not be true. I know it is true. I know it is true. There are many things that I don't know and don't understand. But this is one thing that I do know: The Book of Mormon is true. And that knowledge changed the course of my life when I was 21 years old and it has continued to influence the course of my life for the past 20 years. The knowledge that it has given me has become the anchor of my life. It is precious to me beyond my words to describe. Because of it, I know that God exists, that His son is real, and that the account of his life is not myth, but is reality.

There is a picture above my mantle at home that I have come to love. It depicts Christ walking upon the water. I love to look at it every day before I leave the house because it reminds me of just who he really is: "The master of ocean and earth and skies", the God of all creation.

On this night that we as a family celebrate the eve of his birth, I just wanted to testify of his reality and of my knowledge of him. And on a personal level, I know that he is very interested in the welfare of us as individuals and as a family. I do so in his sacred name, Jesus Christ. Amen.