

July 1, 2007 by Steve Brandon



Not Our Ways: The Manner of the Messiah

Galatians 4:4-5

1. He came at God's time (verse 4a).
2. He lived in God's way (verse 4b).
3. He died for God's purpose (verse 5).

An article posted this past April in *The Washington Post*. Portions of this article read as follows, ...

He emerged from the Metro at the L'Enfant Plaza station and positioned himself against a wall beside a trash basket. By most measures, he was nondescript: a youngish white man in jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. From a small case, he removed a violin. Placing the open case at his feet, he shrewdly threw in a few dollars and pocket change as seed money, swiveled it to face pedestrian traffic, and began to play. It was 7:51 a.m. on Friday, January 12, [2007] the middle of the morning rush hour. In the next 43 minutes, as the violinist performed six classical pieces, 1,097 people passed by. Almost all of them were on the way to work. ...

Each passerby had a quick choice to make, one familiar to commuters in any urban area where the occasional street performer is part of the cityscape: Do you stop and listen? Do you hurry past with a blend of guilt and irritation, ... annoyed by the unbidden demand on your time and your wallet? Do you throw in a buck, just to be polite? Does your decision change if he's really bad? What if he's really good? Do you have time for beauty? Shouldn't you? On that Friday in January, those private questions would be answered in an unusually public way.

No one knew it, but the fiddler standing against a bare wall outside the Metro in an indoor arcade at the top of the escalators was one of the finest classical musicians in the world, playing some of the most elegant music ever written on one of the most valuable violins ever made. His performance was arranged by *The Washington Post* as an experiment in context, perception, and priorities as well as an unblinking assessment of public taste: In a banal setting at an inconvenient time, would beauty transcend?

A onetime child prodigy, at 39 Joshua Bell has arrived as an internationally acclaimed virtuoso. Three days before he appeared at the Metro station, Bell had filled the house at Boston's stately Symphony Hall, where merely pretty good seats went for \$100. Two weeks later, at the Music Center at Strathmore, in North Bethesda, he would play to a standing-room-only audience so respectful of his artistry that they stifled their coughs until the silence between movements. But on that Friday in January, Joshua Bell was just another mendicant, competing for the attention of busy people on their way to work.

He did not play popular tunes whose familiarity alone might have drawn interest. That was not the test. These were masterpieces that have endured for centuries on their brilliance alone, soaring music befitting the grandeur of cathedrals and concert halls. ...

Bell decided to begin with "Chaconne" from Johann Sebastian Bach's Partita No. 2 in D Minor. Bell calls it "not just one of the greatest pieces of music ever written, but one of the greatest achievements of any man in history. It's a spiritually powerful piece, emotionally powerful, structurally perfect. Plus, it was written for a solo violin." ...

Bell always performs on the same instrument, and he ruled out using another for this gig. Called the Gibson ex Huberman, it was handcrafted in 1713 by Antonio Stradivari during the Italian master's "golden period," toward the end of his career, when he had access to the finest spruce, maple and willow, and when his technique had been refined to perfection. "Our knowledge of acoustics is still incomplete," Bell said, "but he, he just . . . knew." Bell bought it a few years ago. He had to sell his own Strad and borrow much of the rest. The price tag was reported to be about \$3.5 million. ...

He'd clearly meant it when he promised not to cheap out this performance: He played with acrobatic enthusiasm, his body leaning into the music and arching on tiptoes at the high notes. The sound was nearly symphonic, carrying to all parts of the homely arcade as the pedestrian traffic filed past. ...

[Furthermore], the acoustics proved surprisingly kind. Though the arcade is of utilitarian design, a buffer between the Metro escalator and the outdoors, it somehow caught the sound and bounced it back round and resonant. The violin is an instrument that is said to be much like the human voice, and in this musician's masterly hands, it sobbed and laughed and sang -- ecstatic, sorrowful, importuning, adoring, flirtatious, castigating, playful, romancing, merry, triumphal, sumptuous. So, what do you think happened?

Leonard Slatkin, music director of the National Symphony Orchestra, was asked the same question. What did he think

would occur, hypothetically, if one of the world's great violinists had performed incognito before a traveling rush-hour audience of 1,000-odd people? "Let's assume," Slatkin said, "that he is not recognized and just taken for granted as a street musician . . . Still, I don't think that if he's really good, he's going to go unnoticed. He'd get a larger audience in Europe . . . but, okay, out of 1,000 people, my guess is there might be 35 or 40 who will recognize the quality for what it is. Maybe 75 to 100 will stop and spend some time listening." So, a crowd would gather? "Oh, yes." And how much will he make? "About \$150."

[So what do you think happened?]

Three minutes went by before something happened. Sixty-three people had already passed when, finally, there was a breakthrough of sorts. A middle-age man altered his gait for a split second, turning his head to notice that there seemed to be some guy playing music. Yes, the man kept walking, but it was something. A half-minute later, Bell got his first donation. A woman threw in a buck and scooted off. It was not until six minutes into the performance that someone actually stood against a wall, and listened.

Things never got much better. In the three-quarters of an hour that Joshua Bell played, seven people stopped what they were doing to hang around and take in the performance, at least for a minute. Twenty-seven gave money, most of them on the run -- for a total of \$32 and change. That leaves the 1,090 people who hurried by, oblivious, many only three feet away, few even turning to look. This is a far cry from the man who often earns as much as \$1,000 per minute in his performances in the orchestra hall.

No, Mr. Slatkin, there was never a crowd, not even for a second. [\[1\]](#)

As we hear of these things, we know that something is very wrong about this. First of all, a grand master violinist shouldn't be relegated to playing in a subway station as a typical street vendor. His place is before kings! Proverbs 22:29 states, "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men." Something else is dreadfully wrong about this as well. We ought to be able to recognize a violin talent when we hear it. A thousand people walked by Joshua Bell that day, oblivious to the talent that was before them. Only seven people stopped to listen for as long as a minute? This is a great illustration of the way that Jesus came to earth.

Jesus was great in every respect. He was great in power. He was able to calm the storm (Matt. 8:23-27). He was able to feed thousands (Matt. 14:13-21). He was able to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11).

Jesus was great in love. Nobody loved like Jesus loved. He loved His disciples "to the end" (John 13:1). He had a reputation for being a friend of sinners, because He had compassion for those who needed a Savior. He cried over the rebellious and unrepentant Jerusalem (Matt. 23).

Jesus had unbelievable healing power. He cleansed the lepers (Luke 17:11-19). He gave sight to the blind (Matt. 20:29-34). He restored withered hands (Matt. 12:9-14). The lame walked because of Jesus. He cured fevers and epileptics. There was not a disease that He could not cure.

Jesus was unsurpassed in spiritual insight. Even as a boy, Jesus confounded the wisdom of the religious leaders in Jerusalem (Luke 2:46-47). When He finished preaching, the response of the people was one of amazement, for He taught them "as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). When confronted by the religious experts, who sought to trap Him in His words, Jesus silenced them, so that no one would dare to ask Him another question (Matt. 22:46).

Jesus was superior to the demonic world in every way. He cast out the legion of angels with a word. He said, "Go" and thousands of demons left the Gerasene demoniac (Matt. 8:28-34). Mary Magdalene, was indwelt by seven spirits, but Jesus cast them out, and she became one of his most faithful supporters (Luke 8:2). Jesus overcame the strongest temptations that Satan could muster against Him (Matt. 4:1-11).

Jesus could do what nobody else could do. He could walk on water (Matthew 14:22-33). He could heal the woman, who sought medical advice for 12 years from the best doctors in the land, but was unable to be healed (Luke 8:43-56). He could cause a fig tree to wither up by simply speaking to it (Matt. 21:18-19).

Jesus predicted the future with great accuracy. Time after time after time, He told His disciples exactly what was going to take place in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and three days later He will rise again" (Mark 10:33-34). Every single one of these predictions happened just as He had said. This is not to mention the fact that all His predictions concerning the political demise of Jerusalem occurred in A. D. 70.

His righteous zeal knew no bounds. Jesus could cast out all of the money changers from the temple by Himself (John 2:13-17). Jesus wrestled in prayer like none other, spending entire nights in prayer (Luke 6:12), praying with such passion that His forehead sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:39-46). He cursed the hypocrisy of the externalistic Pharisees by standing up to them in spite of their great power and authority (Matthew 23).

Jesus had a faith that was greater than any other in the land. When His disciples failed to cast the demon out of the man's son, Jesus did, telling His disciples that they couldn't because of the littleness of their faith (Matthew 17:19). "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). When experiencing the tragedy of facing the wrath of God upon the cross, He said, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus was more powerful than death. He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:21-34). He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11). He, Himself was raised from the dead (Luke 24).

The reason why Jesus was able to do all of these things is because He was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). And so, after all these things, how was He received?—He wasn't. He was rejected. He was crucified as a criminal!

In this way, Jesus was like Joshua Bell, the great violinist, who was practically ignored in the public plaza. He displayed great talent before undiscerning people. For all intents and purposes, He was rejected.

The title of my message is "The Manner of the Messiah." This is part of the topical sermon series I have entitled "Not Our Ways." In the preceding three parts of this series I have covered various ways in which God has created and established this world in ways that are different from ours. I have displayed how God created a world in which evil played a crucial role in His plan. I have displayed how God imputes both sin and righteousness to others. I have displayed how God helps people, not angels.

All of these ways have come from a sermon preached by Edward Payson in the 1800's, entitled, "God's Ways Above Men's." The fourth way in which Payson shares that God's ways are different than ours comes in the manner in which the Messiah came. Payson writes, ...

In devising a way of salvation, and in providing a Savior, God's thoughts and ways are very different from ours, and far, very far, above them. We should have thought, that if God intended to save sinners, he would bring them to repentance and save them at once; or at least, after suffering them to endure for a season, the bitter consequences of their own folly and disobedience. We never should have thought of providing for them a Redeemer; still less should we have thought of proposing, that God's only Son, the Creator and Preserver of all things, should undertake this office; and least of all should we have expected, that he would for this purpose think it necessary to become man.

If we had been informed that this was necessary, and it had been left for us to fix the time and manner of his appearing, we should have concluded that he ought to come soon after the fall; to be born of illustrious parents; to make his appearance on earth in all the splendor, pomp and glory imaginable; to overcome all opposition by a display of irresistible power; to ride through the world in triumph, conquering and to conquer. Such were the expectations of the Jews; and such most probably would have been ours. But never should we have thought of his being born of a virgin in abject circumstances; born in a stable, cradled in a manger, living for many years as a humble artificer; wandering, despised and rejected of men, without a place to lay his head, and finally arraigned, tried, condemned and crucified as a vile malefactor, that he might thus expiate our sins, and by his death, give life to the world.

Had we been forewarned of these things, we should have considered them as too foolish, incredible and absurd to obtain the smallest credit; and instead of thinking them cunningly devised, should have thought them very clumsily contrived fables, unworthy of the least notice or regard. And thus in fact they have appeared, and do still appear, to the wise men of this world; for says the apostle, the cross of Christ is foolishness to them that perish. When the self-righteous Jews and vain-glorious Gentiles were told that one who had been crucified as a malefactor, was the Son of God, the Creator of the world, the only Savior of men, that his blood cleanses from all sin, and that without an interest in his merits they must perish forever—they could find no language sufficiently strong to express their contempt and indignation; and the aid of the stake, the rack, and the cross, was called in to express what language could not.

Yet this was the way which God thought proper to choose, and all things which appear in the view of men so ridiculous, irrational and absurd, are in his view, infinitely proper, wise and amiable; and display far more wisdom than all the works of creation, wonderful as they are. Surely then, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways and thoughts higher than ours. [\[2\]](#)

The way in which the Messiah came is so different than the way in which we would have thought of bringing a Messiah. I can't begin to touch on all the points that Edward Payson touched upon. We can however look at a few as we come to Galatians 4:4-5.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

1. He came at God's time (verse 4a).

The first thing we read in verse 4 is that God sent forth His Son, "When the fullness of time came." This means that it was no accident that Jesus came when He did. It's no accident that Jesus didn't come before the flood destroyed the entire earth. It's no accident that Jesus didn't come during the days of King David, or during the days of Malachi. It's no accident that Jesus came thousands of years after the fall of man. He came when the time was right. He came right on time. He didn't come a minute early. He didn't come a minute late. Jesus arrived on the earthly scene "when the fullness of time came."

It's not because there wasn't a need until Jesus came. For, since the fall, the need for a redeemer was great. Nor is it because God hadn't promised yet to send a Messiah. Immediately after Adam and Eve fell and brought the human race into sin and despair, God promised that a Messiah would come and deliver us from our mess. After God held court with Adam, Eve, and the Serpent, He turned to Satan and pronounced the judgment against him. He said, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:14-15).

In other words God was saying, "Satan, you have tempted Eve and seduced her into disobey my loving command to stay away from the tree. Because you have done this, I am going to curse you. Not only will you be sentenced to a life of eating dirt, but you will have conflict with the seed of the woman all of your days. Her seed will arise. You will hate him and give him a wound to his foot, which may give him a limp for a few days. But, this seed will arise and crush you on the head. The wound will be so great that you will never recover from it."

That was the curse of God pronounced within hours of the fall of Adam and Eve. And yet, it was thousands of years until that seed actually did arise.

In our ways, we would have thought that a Messiah should come sooner than that. Which of you, when hearing your crying child, doesn't quickly investigate the situation. Now, there may be times when you hear the scream of a child and say, "I know my child. I know that scream. That's not an urgent cry. She's OK." But, if you hear the blood curdling scream such that you have never heard before, which of you doesn't run quickly to the scene to see what exactly is wrong? It's your attitude of care and concern for your children which causes you to attend so quickly to your children in distress.

After the fall, all of mankind was in distress. God knew full well our terrible predicament. In fact, God's the one that caused our difficulties. He brought pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16). He brought dissension in marriage (Gen. 3:16). He cursed the ground, so that work would be wearisome and difficult! He knew that we needed a Savior.

Why didn't He come more quickly? Because, "the fullness of time" had not yet come (Gal. 4:4-5).

We would have thought that He should come sooner than that. I believe that Eve thought that the Messiah would come in her lifetime. When she bore her first child, she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD" (Gen. 4:1). She named him "Cain," which comes from the Hebrew word, *qanah*, which means, "to get, acquire, or obtain." Many commentators have entertained that idea that Eve believed that this was the one the LORD had given to fulfill His promise to defeat Satan, once and for all. And yet, God's ways were not Eve's ways. She would never live to see the Messiah in the flesh.

Likewise many of the prophets who prophesied of the coming of the Messiah would never live to see the Messiah come in the flesh. These prophets looked and anticipated and wanted the Messiah to come. In 1 Peter 1:10-11, we read, "the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." They wrote better than they knew. They were trying to figure out when exactly the Messiah would come as they longed for that time.

Despite their greatest attempts to study and to work hard to find out when it would be that Messiah would come, they couldn't quite figure it out. They couldn't figure it out, because, God's ways are not our ways.

The Messiah came "in the fullness of time" exactly according to schedule. In fact, as we look back on it, we can see how clearly it was stated. In Daniel, chapter 9, the prophesy was made of when the Messiah would come. It would all begin with the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. From that time, there would be 69 weeks of years, or 483 years until the Messiah came. Artaxerxes made a decree in 445 B. C. (Nehemiah 2:1-8). When Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey, it was 483 years after this decree according to the Jewish calendar).

The time was right. The time was perfect. Messiah came just as was prophesied.

Why do you think God delayed the coming of the Messiah? Much of our reasoning is certainly conjecture. But, we can attempt to reason why.

Perhaps God was waiting to teach us about the need to have a sacrifice in order to forgive sins. If the entire sacrificial system of the law taught us anything, it taught us that sacrifices were needed to find forgiveness with God. "According to the law, one may almost say that all things are cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). After centuries of these symbols, the sacrifice of the Messiah would be clearly understood.

Perhaps God was teaching us of the role of the high priest. For years, those in Israel witnessed the high priest entering within the veil once each year to offer up sacrifices for his own sin first and then for the sins of the people. During that moment, the high priest would pray to God on behalf of the people of Israel. The Israelites would come to understand what role the high priest plays. Then, upon learning that the Messiah is the great high priest, all would make great sense.

Perhaps God was teaching us of the impossibility of law keeping for righteousness. As God gave Israel the law, they never came close to keeping it. Such lessons appear difficult to learn. It seems as if they never quite understood how poorly they had kept the law. And yet, in delaying the Messiah, it must have become clearer and clearer to them that they needed a to deliver them from the bondage of the law.

Perhaps God waited in bringing the Messiah to teach us about the true meaning of a king. After Saul became king, it was David who was the king after God's own heart. And yet, still he didn't rule with perfection. For that matter, neither did Solomon rule very well either. When Israel and Judah experienced their split into two nations, many of those kings failed to be righteous as well. But, when the Messiah came, he would be the perfect king!

We could certainly come up with more reasons why God may have waited in bringing the Messiah. But, ultimately, His ways are unknown to us. His ways are not our ways. The time of the Messiah might not have been as we wished. We would rather have preferred a quick Messiah. However it was in the ways of God. It was the perfect time.

The Messiah (1) came at God's time (verse 4a). Also, ...

2. He lived in God's way (verse 4b).

I get this point from the second half of verse 4, which says, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law."

God decreed that when the Messiah would come, He would come as a fellow human being. That was God's way. He would be born of a woman, like all of us have entered this world. He would live under the Law, as every Israelite was compelled to live. Jesus didn't come to us as an angel. He came to us as a man.

We briefly touched on this last week, when we looked at Hebrews, chapter 2. Verse 14 of that chapter says, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same" (Heb. 2:14). A few verses later, the writer says to the Hebrews, "He had to be made like His brethren in all things" (Heb. 2:17). To save people, God's way is for the Messiah to come and be a person as well, being born like we are, breathing the same air that we breathe, eating the same food that we eat, living under the same restrictions that we have (both physically and morally), and experiencing the same temptations as we experience.

But, in coming as a man, He came as an obscure man. He wasn't the son of wealthy parents. He wasn't the son of wealthy parents. He wasn't the son of influential parents. To be sure, they were godly. The Scriptures say that Joseph was a "righteous man" (Matt. 1:19). We can detect the godliness of Mary as we read the things she said and the prayers she prayed. The parents of Jesus were godly, but they weren't so influential in society.

We would have expected different! We would have expected the Messiah to come as John the Baptist--Son of the high priest! But, this was not God's plan. God planned that the Messiah would be born to insignificant parents in an insignificant little village, called Bethlehem.

But more than merely being a man, the Messiah was far more than that. He was God, come into the flesh. "God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4). One person, the Almighty God, with two natures, divinity and humanity.

About a year ago, the movie Superman has come out. The story, of course, is fictitious. It's pretend. But, Jesus Christ is the true Superman.

Think about other superheroes such as Batman or Spiderman. By nature, Batman and Spiderman are people just like us. In real life, they are real people. Bruce Wayne is a wealthy millionaire. Peter Parker is a photographer for a newspaper. They are normal people. But, each of them rise to a level that none of us have been able to achieve. Batman fought against the most wicked of people, like the Joker and the Riddler. Due to their work, these evil men are placed behind bars, and Gotham city is a safer place as a result. Peter Parker came to be a superhero when he was bitten by a spider, which gave him some uncanny spider-like abilities. But, even being empowered like this to fight the villains, he was still one of us. In this sense, they are our heroes.

But, Batman and Spiderman are different than Superman. By nature, Superman is fundamentally different than us. He came from another planet, Krypton. But, he has descended to help us. When Superman is mixing among society, he looks like a mild mannered reporter. But, he is different in his nature. That's why he is "Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound--Look, up in the sky, 'It's a bird,' 'It's a plane,' 'It's Superman.'"

The Jews didn't think this about their Messiah. They thought that their Messiah would be one of them in every way. They thought that their Messiah would be like Batman, who would rise above the rest of Israel and become the great leader to lead Israel into her glory. They knew that the Messiah would be "the Son of David" (Matt. 22:42). They knew that the Messiah would come from the line of Judah. But, what they didn't realize was that the Messiah would be greater than David at the same time. David would call Him, "Lord" (Matt. 22:44). The only way this happens is if God sends someone to us, who is like us, but not totally like us! That's the point of Galatians 4:4, "God sent forth His Son."

Yes. Jesus is human like us. But, Jesus also has something other-worldly about Him. He is the creator and sustainer of the world, who "dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He was "Immanuel," which means "God with us." The Father sent the Son into the world to save the world. The Son came willingly (Heb. 10:10), saying, "I have come to do Your will." As such, he did what we could never do. He lived a perfect, sinless life. Years before Jesus was born, He was called, "Thy Holy One" (Ps. 16:10). At His conception, Jesus was described as a "holy offspring" (Luke 1:35). Throughout His life, no one ever could lay accusation against Him. In a theological debate with the Jews, He once said, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46), to which no one was able to respond. Though tempted by Satan Himself, He escaped without sinning (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 2:18). Those who knew Jesus best said of Him that "He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

In this sense, Jesus is Superman. Jesus is not Batman or Spiderman, who are mere humans who have risen above the rest of us. No, Jesus is God's Son, of a nature that is different than ours. And yet, He was also like us, as He was "born of a woman, born under the law."

The parallels with Superman continue. When Superman wasn't wearing his tights and cape, he was disguised as a mild-mannered reporter, who wore glasses, and looked a bit fragile and inept. This was the Manner of the Messiah! Though He was the sovereign creator of the universe, He lived a humble life as a Jewish carpenter, turned Rabbi in later years. The Messiah didn't come with great fanfare. He wasn't born of rich and famous parents. His birth was in a smelly barn, in an obscure little village. His appearance wasn't such that He attracted the attention of everybody. "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Is. 53:2).

The Jews anticipated differently. But, this is how God so decreed it. Though he was powerful like Superman, He often appeared as Clark Kent. There were times when people got a glimpse of His glory. But, these times were fleeting enough that people rarely caught on. For instance, when Jesus brought Peter, James and John up upon the mount of transfiguration, the full glory of Jesus was put on display for these disciples to see. But, upon descending the mount, Jesus said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9).

If someone is going to come and be a Savior, we would expect them to come with great pomp and circumstance. Think about the presidential candidates. They stage their rallies with lots of supporters. They enter the stage amidst many cheers. They give politically charged speeches, where everyone claps and cheers for what they are saying. They make promises. They debate others and seek to make them look silly. It's all a political game to create as much support for your candidate as possible. Which of the presidential hopefuls holds back anything that would make themselves look better? None.

All this happens for presidential hopefuls. Now, if we think about the Savior of the world, we might expect that the fanfare would be taken up a notch. We would expect the cheering to be louder. We would expect the glory to be greater. We would expect the confidence to be seen by the entire world! But, the Manner of God's Messiah is a bit different. He lived in humility and obscurity (Phil. 2:5-8). These are God's ways. And His ways are not our ways.

This is the Manner of the Messiah. (1) He came at God's time (verse 4a), not a moment early, and not a moment late. (2) He lived in God's way (verse 4b), veiling His true identity. Finally this morning, ...

3. He died for God's purpose (verse 5).

At this point is where we see "The Manner of the Messiah" differs greatly than our way would have been. In verse 5, there is a purpose clearly defined for the coming of Jesus, "so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." The purpose of the Messiah coming was to redeem people.

The Jews were anticipating a political Messiah to save them from Rome. God sent forth His Son as a Spiritual Messiah "to save His people from their sins." Indeed, this is the very meaning of the word, "Jesus." It means "Savior" (Matt. 1:21).

When you read the scope to the Scripture, you see that Jesus accomplished this redemption through His sacrificial death upon the cross. God's plan was for Jesus to die in humility.

The Jews never anticipated this. That's why the cross is a stumbling block for them (1 Cor. 1:23). The Greeks never anticipated this. That's why the cross is foolishness to them (1 Cor. 1:23). The thought of following a crucified Messiah sounds crazy to many. But, for us who believe, this same cross is our power (1 Cor. 1:24), our boast (Gal. 6:14), and our hope (1 Thess. 1:10).

The cross is far different than we would have thought to be the best way, especially in the way that Jesus came to suffer upon the cross. Though our Messiah was entirely sinless, yet, He was crucified as an evil-doer. Over and over throughout the Scriptures, it is clear that Jesus was sinless. Jesus was "hated without a cause" (John 15:25). At the trial of Jesus, it was only because the Sanhedrin sought to obtain false testimony against Him (Matt. 26:59-61), that He was handed over to Pilate. It was only the crowds that finally convinced Pilate to hand Jesus over to be crucified, because he repeatedly told the people, "I find no guilt in Him" (John 18:28) and repeatedly made efforts to release Him (John 19:12), because of His innocence. Yet, even when accused falsely, we are told that Jesus "committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:22-23). When suffering unjustly upon the cross, He had the amazing ability to pray for those who were afflicting Him, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

We would think that a righteous life would bring about great blessings upon Jesus. And indeed, this is the thrust of the Scriptures. When God gave the law, He made it clear: If you obey, you will be blessed, if you disobey, you will be cursed. Throughout the Proverbs, you see the same thing: a righteous life leads to blessing. This is what we would have expected from a perfect Messiah. And yet, the opposite took place. Rather than being received as a king, Jesus was crucified as a criminal.

Let's come back to the illustration that I began with this morning. I told you about Joshua Bell, the violinist. He was ignored in the public plaza by 1,000 people. Now, imagine that when he went and played his violin in the public plaza, he encountered a group of thugs, who beat him up and broke his violin! We would be outraged. He did these people no harm. If anything, his music was a healing balm to their souls. And yet, these thugs took advantage of the poor man. This is what happened to Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ, the incarnate, Son of God came, he had all the credentials. He came to help. He was kind. He was loving. He was helpful. He healed those who were sick. He helped those who were poor. He spoke the truth. He spoke the truth in love. He held the keys to true reform. And yet, people didn't recognize the "Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). Rather than merely ignoring him, like most people did to Joshua Bell in Washington D. C. this past winter, a bunch of thugs rose up and killed their Messiah!

We would never have thought of a plan like this. But, it's God's plan. He sent His Son into the world to die upon a cross to redeem us from our sins. You need simply to believe and trust in Him, and you will be forgiven all your sins. You need to believe and you will receive great blessings. You will become the child of God. That's how verse 5 ends, "that we might receive the adoption as sons."

If you but believe in Him and trust in Him, God will bring you into His family as an adopted child. The implications of this are staggering. You will become just like God's Son. You can call the Heavenly Father, your intimate "daddy" (verse 6). You will inherit everything that the child inherits (verse 7). Believe upon Him whose ways are "not our ways."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on July 1, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Washington Post, Sunday, April 8, 2007, by Gene Weingarten. You can read the entire article at this most interesting link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/04/AR2007040401721.html>. It has videos of the entire event.

[2] Edward Payson, "God's Ways Above Men's." See <http://www.rvbc.cc/ResourceLibrary/PaysonGodsWays/PaysonGodsWays.htm>.