

THE DRAMA OF CHRISTMAS

THE PLOT

On October 30, 1938, the Mercury Theater of Orsen Wells, broadcast a radio play, "[The War of the Worlds](#)."

The play was about Martians invading planet earth. It included fictional news reports describing the invasion.

Many of the radio listeners who tuned in after the play began, thought the reports were real, and that an alien invasion had actually begun. A nationwide scare and panic ensued. In many big cities, hysteria was evident in the streets. The event became infamous.

No one thought it could happen again, but it did...

In September 1996 a television newscaster broke into normal programming with footage of an alien space craft hovering over New York City. A White House press conference on the invasion followed.

The supposed news report was actually an advertisement for the Spanish release of the film "[Independence Day](#)"... Yet hundreds of alarmed and panicked people swamped the station's switchboards.

Twice, bogus reports of an extraterrestrial invasion have created fear and widespread panic among very gullible human beings... *Isn't it ironic that the one real alien invasion of planet earth was barely noticed?*

On that first Christmas an other-worldly being visited our planet. The one true God, Creator of heaven and earth,

landed on the third rock! Immanuel touched down in a village called "*Bethlehem.*" God was with us!

But outside of a few cows, sheep, and shepherds no one else that night was aware the invasion had taken place. Light from another world shined in our darkness.

God's Christmas drama has a plot popular among movies and TV programs today - **an alien invasion.**

Think of all the dramas that have carried on this theme: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Men in Black, Mars Attacks, First Contact, The X-Files, Battle Los Angeles, Aliens, The Thing From Another World, etc...*

I have a friend who teaches preschoolers.

One 4th of July she wanted to explain the meaning of the holiday to her class. She asked, "*Boys and girls, can anyone tell me from whom did we gain our independence?*" One little boy shouted, "*the aliens.*"

When kids today think of Independence Day they think of invasions from outer space, rather than the country's birthday. *Yet, this was the plot God had in mind when He developed His Christmas drama.*

The Christmas story **IS** all about an alien invasion...

The world we live in belongs to God. It was created by God. But with what we've *done to it* - with the wicked, and corrupt, and rebellious society we've *created on it* - God no longer feels at home here.

The holy, righteous God is now an alien to our fallen planet. And I'm sure when God looks down on the world we've

defiled - the moral and spiritual mess that's resulted - He barely recognizes it as His former garden paradise. *Yes, on that first Christmas when God came to earth it was indeed an **alien** invasion!*

If God had put me in charge of writing and directing the Christmas drama I'm afraid it would've resembled "[The War of the Worlds](#)" or "[Independence Day](#)."

I would've had God approaching the earth in a colossal spacecraft. He would hover over the world's capitols with His ray guns pointed at the heads of the Heads of State. Loud speakers would shake the earth with a loud warning to repent... "[Asta la vista, baby!](#)"

We could title it, "[Star Wars: The Really Last Jedi!](#)"

And when God caught the first glimpse of my rough draft He would've fired me on the spot.... **That's not at all what He wanted in a Christmas drama!**

Yes, God dreamed up an alien invasion, but not like the Hollywood variety. He inserted a strange, unexpected - never before imagined twist into the plot.

The invasion God planned was unique and novel...

Rather than wipe out human race, God joined us. Rather than condemn humankind, He identified with us. Rather than destroy the world, He died to save it. Rather than end us, He's given us a new beginning...

After repeated attempts at inventing the first flying-machine Orville and Wilbur Wright finally succeeded.

On December 17, 1903, on the sand dunes outside Kitty Hawk, North Carolina they did what no man had done before - they flew through the sky in a heavier-than-air vehicle. It was one of history's turning points.

Their feat that day would totally revolutionize travel.

Excited about their history-making breakthrough the Wright brothers telegraphed their family back home. Their telegram read, "Success, four flights Thursday morning all against 21 mile wind. Started from level, with engine power alone. Average speed through air 31 miles. Longest 57 seconds. Home for Christmas."

Katherine Wright, Orville and Wilbur's sister was so excited about their news - and so proud of her brothers she raced to the local newspaper expecting the editor to do back flips over receiving the scoop of the century.

After reading the telegram, his only words were, "How nice, your brothers will be home for Christmas!"

The visionless man had missed the point. He had failed to see the monumental implications of their invention, and had focused instead on trivialities.

And this describes the world's reaction that first Christmas. Ken Gire puts it, "with barely a ripple of notice, God stepped into the warm lake of humanity..."

It wasn't just that a baby was born in a stable in a crowded Bethlehem, and placed in a manger. *No, God did the unthinkable - **an alien invasion occurred!***

Yet instead of confetti, and a red carpet, and keys to the city, and a limousine ride - all God got when He entered the world

was a face full of blood and water, and a spank on the bottom. A baby was born, but at the time few clues were evident of the baby's true identity.

An invasion had began, but in a very usual manner...

Think of the ramifications...

The Creator and Sustainer of the Universe - the One who insures the sun rises, and the planets stay in their orbits - the One who holds together the nucleus of every atom, and keeps the physical world from unraveling like a cheap sweater... became dependent on a young mother's milk. Imagine, "the Son of the Most High God umbilically tied to a lowly Jewish girl."

The Invincible became vulnerable... The Ancient of Days became a child of time... The Infinite became an infant - the Boss became a babe - God became a man. His name, "*Immanuel*" literally means *God with us*.

I'm sure even Joseph and Mary weren't entirely sure of what had happened. I like Max Lucado's description, "Mary didn't know whether to give Him milk or give Him praise, but she gave Him both since He was, as near as she could figure, hungry and holy... Joseph didn't know whether to call Him Junior or Father. But in the end he called Him Jesus, since that's what the angel had said and since He didn't have the faintest idea what to name a God he could cradle in his arms."

God could've invaded earth in a spacecraft with laser beams blasting - *but He chose a stable, a manger, a peasant, a human birth* to communicate vital truths...

Understand, **a plot helps to carry the story's message.** *How* God came to earth. *How* this alien invasion took place is almost as important as the fact it did. **The way God came answers the why He came!**

Once, a missionary to an African tribe made an tremendous impact on his village. The practical help he offered, along with the truth he spoke, led the natives to become Christians... As Christmas time approached he explained to these new believers how God's gift to man should inspire us to give gifts to one another.

That Christmas morning, one of the villagers presented the missionary with a magnificent seashell.

When the missionary asked where he'd found the shell, the man told him of having traveled many miles through deep, snake-infested jungles to a particular bay where these unique shells could be found.

The missionary hugged, and thanked his friend, **"I'll treasure this gift for the rest of my life, but you didn't have to go such a far distance, and brave such dangerous elements to get a gift for me."** That's when the native's eyes lit up! He explained to the missionary in his broken English, **"Long walk - part of gift."**

And this is also true of God's Christmas gift to mankind... **the long walk was part of the gift.**

That God descended *such a far distance* - from His throne in heaven to a rock-hewn manger on earth...

And *risk such danger*... an unsupervised delivery - an un-sanitized manger - the unbridled jealousies of a wicked King Herod. This was *all part of the gift!*

The *way God came* explains the *why God came*.

He came out of **love...**

He came to **learn...**

He came to **lift...**

JB Phillips writes a fictional tale that speaks of God's **love**. Two angels had taken a tour of the universe. After whipping through galaxies, fleeting across vast expanses of space, marveling at their Boss's creation... *the two companions slow down.*

Phillips writes of their conversation...

"As the two of them drew near to the star which we call our sun and to its circling planets, the senior angel pointed to a small and rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis... It looked as dull as a dirty tennis ball to the little angel, whose mind was filled with the size and glory of what he'd seen."

'I want you to watch that one,' said the senior angel, pointing with his finger. *'Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me,'* said the little angel. *'What's so special about that one?'* His senior angel said, "that's the famed planet, what angels call, the visited planet."

The little angel replied, *'Do you mean that our great and glorious Prince went down in Person to that fifth-rate little ball? Why should He do a thing like that?'*

His face wrinkled in disgust. *'Do you mean to tell me that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures on that floating ball?'*

The senior angel, in a stern voice, rebuked him, “I do, and I don't think He would like you to call them 'creeping, crawling creatures' in that tone of voice. For as strange as it seems to us, **He loves them.** He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like Him.’

JB Phillips concludes his fictional story in an interesting way, “The little angel looked blank. Such a thought was almost beyond his comprehension.”

The Bible tells us, “**For God so LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son.**” The Christmas drama is an alien invasion, alright, but it's not an invasion of *mass destruction*. It's an invasion of *massive love*.

Who would've thought God's response to the rebel planet would be love... God didn't come with ray guns blasting, but with angels singing. He didn't send Jesus to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. God sent Jesus to show us His love.

The angels' appearance to the shepherds is as close as the Christmas drama gets to an Independence Day type scene. The vulnerable shepherds, armed with mere staffs and slingshots, possibly just kids - feel a breeze - dust kicks up around their feet - before them the skies peel back, revealing a pulsating glow... they behold a mighty angel decked out in full cosmic armor.

Luke 2:9 describes the event, “**And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.**”

They were as scared as if they'd seen a spacecraft hovering over the nation's capitol in Washington DC.

But the angel told them, **“Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”** The alien communication is, *don't be afraid!* God is on a mission of love! This invasion is about *good tidings of great joy!*

The Christmas plot teaches us that Jesus came out of **love** - but also that **He came to learn.** God became a man to become acquainted with the plight of all men.

God knew of our dilemma, for He knows all things. But that wasn't enough for God. He wanted to feel and empathize with our circumstances from our vantage point. God desired to experience our troubles up-close.

Hebrews 4:15 conveys a truth that no theologian fully grasps, **“For we do not have a High Priest (that is, Jesus) who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”** Jesus became a *man* to understand the human dilemma. The God who knows no bounds took on our limitations. He felt firsthand the dynamic of our pain.

One day little Sarah got too close to the flames of a fire her dad had burning in the backyard. Her pants caught on fire. The flames scorched both her legs.

Sarah grew up with ugly scars on her legs that looked like lines running through a jigsaw puzzle.

One day her daddy asked her if she could have one wish what would it be? Sarah replied, “I would want everyone to have legs like mine.” Even more than new legs, the answer to this little girl’s pain was empathy.

She longed to be understood - for someone else to know her feelings, and let her know she would be okay. Here’s a need that bubbles up in every human heart. We all want to be understood. We crave empathy.

Once there was a conservative, well-dressed, prim and proper church situated across the street from a secular university. The church wanted to begin a ministry to college kids, but didn’t know how to start.

One Sunday, a student named Bill, visited the church. Bill had wild, frizzy hair. He owned one pair of dirty jeans, and three T-shirts. That was his wardrobe for four years of college. Rarely did Bill wear shoes...

Imagine the stir barefooted Bill caused at church the Sunday he strolled in ten minutes late. He’d planned to sit in the back, but there were no seats - so he started down the middle aisle, looking for a place to sit down.

The closer he got to the podium the more uncomfortable the crowd became. By the time Bill got to the front row no one was listening to the pastor any more. *Every eye was on Bill...* Unable to find a seat, Bill plopped down on the floor right in front of the pulpit.

Just as Bill sat down a dignified, stately gentleman, in a three-piece suit, started down the aisle after Bill. He was a pillar in the church - the head usher that day.

Everyone knew there was no way this man would put up with a barefoot, scroungy college kid sitting in the floor in front of the sanctuary. As he walked toward Bill the room held its collective breath. Everyone was expecting a confrontation. *Even the pastor paused...*

But when the older gentleman reached Bill - with his creaky knees popping, he knelt down, and took a seat on the sanctuary floor right next to grungy ole Bill.

The man explained later, “I just didn’t want the young fellow to sit alone.” Trust me, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. After the service, the pastor made the comment, “What I preached today no one will ever remember, but what we saw no one will ever forget!”

And that is exactly what happened in the drama we call Christmas. The venerable gentleman - the dignified, glorified God - walked down the aisle, and sat on the floor, next to the grungy college kid - that is **us!**

God didn’t want us to sit alone. He humbled Himself. He became like us, so we would know He understood.

God invaded planet earth in such a surprising way for at least three reasons... to show us love - to learn our predicament - and finally, **to lift us from our sin!**

The nature of the Child’s mission was communicated by His name. The angel told Joseph, “call His name **JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.**”

The Hebrew name “**Jesus**” is “**Yeshua.**” It’s a derivative of the Hebrew name for God, “**Yahweh.**” The name “**Yeshua**” literally means, “**Yahweh is salvation.**”

Don't tell me you've done something Jesus can't forgive! Stop listening to the scoffers and the skeptics.

Don't succumb to the doubts that keep flying through your head. *God says, **your sin is not unpardonable.***

You're not the one exception - the one person Jesus can't forgive and change. Don't let the devil smother you under a blanket of guilt. Here is the Christmas message: **God and Son are in the salvage business.**

Jesus is willing to pick your life out of the scrap heap. He's able to dust it off, and clean it up, and make it new again. Jesus Christ specializes in restoration projects.

There is a famous painting by William Holman Hunt, dated 1873. Hunt titled it, "**The Shadow of Death.**"

Jesus is a young man helping in his father, Joseph's carpenter's shop. It's late afternoon, and Jesus rises after several hours of intense work to stretch his arms.

The sun is sinking in the western sky. Its rays slant through the door and cast a shadow on the wall behind Him. It appears that Jesus is hanging from a cross.

And this was the destiny that hung over His whole life. From birth, Jesus was the man who was born to die - not for Himself, but for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus' long walk from the halls of heaven to the dusty streets of this earth was to position Himself so He could work a permanent solution for our sin.

As a human being Jesus could die for all humans.

Jesus did the heavy-lifting for us all. He lifted our burden of sin to set us free from its penalty and power.

Imagine, a game of backyard football. The opposing team is winning. They're exchanging high-fives. Up by two touchdowns, they think they've sewed up a win.

When up walks, Matt Ryan - the reigning NFL MVP. Matt asks about the score. You tell him, and he decides to join the team that's behind by two touchdowns.

The MVP quarterback is now on your team! Well, *instantly the tied turns... the momentum shifts...*

Your team is now enthusiastic, while your opponent is instantly demoralized. The handwriting is on the wall. No way are a bunch of wannabes defeating Matty Ice.

Well, Christmas means *God has entered our huddle!*

He's joined a team of never-weres and couldn't-bes to lift us up on His ability and lead us to victory *over our sin and despair*. **Christmas is the momentum changer.**

God is now on our side of the ball! He's wearing our colors! Victory for us is now a foregone conclusion.

This Christmas remember - **"long walk, part of gift."** *How* Jesus came to earth, explains *why* He came.

God's Son entered the lowliest door. He stepped into the muck and mire we all have to deal with. And He did it because He wanted ***to love, and to learn, and to lift!***

An alien has invaded - and Jesus wants to make His home in your heart... This Christmas let Jesus join your huddle, and make the difference in your life!