

The Miracle Promised

Isaiah 7:14

INTRODUCTION: Today I want to begin to tell you a story. It has rightly been called "The Greatest Story Ever Told." It is the story of Christmas, but the story is longer than you are accustomed to hearing. In fact it will take me five weeks to tell you this story, and even then, I will not have time to tell it all. For you see

I. THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS BEGAN BEFORE TIME ITSELF.

I find it difficult to even think about what happened before time began, but Scripture clearly tells us that things did happen, very important things, and things that have a lot to do with the story of Christmas.

Before anything else existed, there was God. Only God. One eternal God, existing in three Persons: Father, Son, Spirit.

There was nothing else: no universe, no matter, no energy and therefore no light. Even time had not begun to tick its seconds away.

Yet before time began, God was busy, not busy in the sense of hurried or pressured. God is never rushed or stressed. But He was busy in the sense that He was doing many things in preparation for the world He was about to create and the people He would put in it.

A couple of weeks ago I briefly mentioned one of the things God did in this pre-time period. God established wisdom. All of the wisdom you and I need to be able to navigate life and not get wrecked upon its reefs, God settled. Before time began, God determined that after time had been set upon its journey to race toward eternity, that He would reveal this wisdom to men and have them record it in a book.

Other things God established before the universe and time were created included the Divine Trinity's plan for the world and the universe surrounding it, in which the man and woman God would create would live. God is good, all the time, and even before time, God was good. So God planned a good world and a good universe in which everything functioned in perfect harmony, and all for the benefit of the people He would put upon the planet earth, the people who would be the objects of His love and care.

Only in recent times have men begun to discover how very precisely all of the pieces that make up the universe, the placement of every part, the design of every system, the interaction of the basic particles God created to put it all together, how precisely fine-tuned each one is for the benefit of man living in the universe God designed. We lay men can observe this by hearing the scientists describe to us such as

- The precision of the strength of gravity. Scientists tell us the gravity that keeps an atmosphere around the earth so we have air to breathe is incredibly precise in its strength. If the strength of gravity increased by only one part out of ten thousand billion, billion, billion, one part in 10^{28} , the earth would be reduced to a rock only forty feet in diameter.
- Scientists, and many of them not Christians, are still discovering these things which God fixed before time began so that the universe would be good and right for mankind. Just two years ago, a new study titled, "Antropic considerations in nuclear physics," was published by German scholar Ulf-G Meißner, chair in theoretical nuclear physics at the Helmholtz Institute, University of Bonn, and published in the Beijing-based journal *Science Bulletin* (previously titled *Chinese Science Bulletin*). I think you can tell by the titles that we are not talking about Christian sources here. Professor Ulf-G Meißner, in explaining his new groundbreaking study, states: the Universe we live in is characterized by certain parameters that take specific values that appear to be remarkably fine-tuned to make life possible.

Now, understand that I only diverge from this story, so that you understand that this is a true story, the details of which are verified as fully as anything can possibly be verified.

- This story of Christmas is very, very real.
- It is very, very true.
- And it affects every single one of our lives,
 - those of us who already believe
 - and those who are yet to believe.

So, back to God and His planning of the universe He is going to create to be a good place for the people He is going to make and put in it. But God not only designed the universe and the earth to be a good, good home for people, He designed the people themselves. The psalmist observed this saying,

Psalm 139:14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well.

And it is that marvelous design that makes your body function so well.

- It is why you can walk and run without conscious thought of the control of all the muscles to make that happen.
- It is why you can talk without purposely controlling your jaw, and throat, and tongue.

- It is why your finger heals itself when you cut it, and why you recover from a wide variety of illnesses and injuries.

Each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made.

But for the sake of our understanding the Christmas story, the one most important thing God planned before time and creation were initiated, was that He planned to make man after the likeness of God Himself. In the image of the Triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, both man and woman were designed.

We could think about a multitude of things that means for us, good things, for God was and is and ever shall be a perfectly good God. But for the sake of the Christmas story, I want us to remember and think about one aspect of our being created in the image of God.

It was the divine purpose of our Creator that the first man Adam, and the first woman Eve, and all their descendants after them, of which we in this room are some, that we who are made in the image of God should be able to make choices as God Himself makes choices. So God designed mankind to have a free will, the freedom to choose right or wrong, freedom to obey the God who loved them and made them, or the freedom to disobey the One True and Living God and rebel against His plans and purposes.

And God, being God, knew absolutely everything, including the things in the future that would happen once He called space, matter, energy, and time all into existence. He knew that the very first man and woman, when given a choice to obey or disobey would eventually disobey. They would sin against the Holy God who made them. They would break the relationship they were given at their creation, and they would be separated from Him.

Friend, understand this. For while you may have never been asked to ponder this truth while sitting before a log fire with a Christmas tree in the corner, I want you to see that what I am telling you is really at the heart of the Christmas story. It is in fact the whole reason for Christmas.

God, knowing even before man and woman were created, that they would be willing to abandon their lives in a garden of absolute perfection and provision in order to do things their own way, had to deal with the reality of their choice. He had to deal with the fact that the people He was creating so that He could love them for eternity, would choose to separate themselves from Him in their rebellion and sin.

And God did not just know this about Adam and Eve, God knew this about Mike Claunch. God knew, long before God permitted my mother to conceive and give birth to a son she and my dad would call Mike, God knew that I would be selfish, that I would lie, steal, hate, lust, and covet. And before you have time to be aghast that God knew such things about me, let me assure you, He knew the same about every one of you.

Therefore, the decision facing the Holy Trinity before time began was not just about the sin and rebellion of Adam and Eve, but about the sin and separation of every person ever to be born on the face of the earth.

How could those separated from God by their choice to sin be forever redeemed to God to live with Him forever?

There was only one way. A substitute was needed – Someone without sin who would pay the penalty for the sin of each and every person who ever lived upon the earth.

It was as if the Trinity spoke in unison:

- **God the Son saying, “I will go to earth, become a man and die, to pay the penalty for their sin.”**
- God the Father saying, “I will accept your death, My Son, as payment for the sins of all who will trust in You as their Lord and Savior.”
- God the Holy Spirit saying, “And I will convict and convince the hearts of people to repent of their sin and trust in the Son. And once they trust You, I will move into their bodies and live transforming them to become sons and daughters of God who are prepared to live with God forever.”

Therefore, from that moment, not that moment in time but **in that moment before time, God the Son was given the title, Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8)**

And so, do you see my friend, that

- the reason for Christmas
- the hope of Christmas
- the promise of the miracle of Christmas

began before time began.

And do you know what this story, so far, says to me?

- It tells me that I’m important to God. But I am important to God not because of any good that I have done or anything I have to offer.
- In fact, it is quite the opposite. I am important to God in spite of the things I’ve done, many of which are not so good and some of which are downright awful.

- Yet I am important enough to God, that before time began, knowing I would disobey, knowing I would rebel, knowing I would do some despicable stuff, He still did not abandon His desire to overcome the separation my sin has caused.
- **From before the beginning of time, I was important to God, because He loved me. That's the only reason.**
- You know what? He loves you too. And because He loves you, you are important to Him.
- You are important enough, that before time began, He made a way for you to be forgiven and to live with Him forever.

But the story of Christmas continues. That is only the beginning that God would plan a way for us to be saved before the beginning of time. Then having done that,

II. GOD BEGAN TO ANNOUNCE THE PROMISE OF CHRISTMAS FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

A. As soon as man sinned, God announced the promise of the coming Savior.

God said to Satan, who tempted the woman and led Eve to sin,

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.

God said in this first prophecy of the coming Savior

- The coming Savior will be *born* – He will become a man.
- He will be born of the *seed of woman* – Most unusual, people were born from the seed of man. It is the male who furnishes the seed, not the female.

The Savior would be born without the seed of man!

- Although Satan would “bruise His heel,” – the death on the cross,
- The coming Savior would crush the head of Satan!

B. Hundreds of years later, God declared the Savior would be a descendant of Abraham and would be a blessing to every family on the face of the earth.

Genesis 12:1–3 Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; ... **And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

By the way, do you know that when Jesus came on that first Christmas Day, He fulfilled this prophecy? Because **Jesus**, through His death and resurrection, **offers forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life to all who will trust in Him**. This offer of salvation through faith in Christ is the blessing given to every family of the earth.

C. But God most clearly declared the promise of the coming Savior through Isaiah.

The Lord said to Isaiah, His prophet

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Now, here I must briefly interrupt the story because there are so many naysayers today who will interrupt the story for us and say of these precious words spoken by God in the eighth century B.C., “Nonsense!”

- They will say, “First, this is a prophecy that in context was given for Ahaz, king of Judah, telling him to quit worrying about invasion from Syria because invasion from the much more powerful Assyria is coming before a young woman could bear a child and him attain an age to know right from wrong.”
- They will say, the Hebrew word “almah,” often translated “virgin” does not necessarily mean “virgin” but often means “young woman,” virgin or not.
- Therefore, the naysayers pronounce with arrogance, “This is not a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ.”

But, my friend, do not lose heart, for they are wrong. They cannot destroy God’s precious Christmas story so easily.

- First, while the context they describe and its meaning to King Ahaz is correct, it is not uncommon at all for the Lord to send dual meanings through His prophecies, with both being correct. Prophecies often have a word from the Lord for the immediate recipients of the prophecy and a second meaning for the future.
- So the question is does this prophecy have a future meaning beyond King Ahaz?
 - How can we tell?
 - Who would know?
 - Why don’t we ask the author? But Isaiah is dead!
 - Why don’t we ask the author who told Isaiah?
 - That’s the Holy Spirit. Remember?

2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

- So, what does the Holy Spirit say about Isaiah 7:14?
- **The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to quote Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23** *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”* which is translated, “God with us.”
- But the context for what Matthew was writing about was not King Ahaz at all.
- It was about the birth of Jesus Christ. Listen to what the Holy Spirit says through Matthew as He leads him to quote Isaiah.

Matthew 1:18–25 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, **before they came together**, she was **found with child of the Holy Spirit**. ... 22 **So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:** 23 *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”* which is translated, “God with us.” 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and **did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son**. And he called His name JESUS.

- And how does the Holy Spirit translate the Hebrew word “almah” when He inspires Matthew who is writing in Greek?
- **The Holy Spirit, who gave the original prophecy to Isaiah, gave Matthew the word “parthenos,” which every time it is used in the New Testament means “virgin,” a woman who has never had a sexual relationship with a man.**

So with the lies of the naysayers exposed, let us return to the story.

For God, Who before time began, determined to send His own beloved Son, declared to Isaiah that the Son of God, the Savior of the World would make His entrance into the human realm in a way no mere man ever had. He would be born of a virgin!

Not only would His birth be miraculous, but God also promised another miracle,

III. GOD SAID THAT THE SAVIOR WOULD BE GOD WHO WOULD COME IN THE FLESH. IMMANUEL – GOD WITH US!

By coming to earth, the Son of God would be born of a woman, a virgin, and thus would become a man.

But the Son of God would not in His coming surrender His deity. He would be God.

Fully man, fully God. He would be God with us!