

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

December 22, 2017

The Christmas Story

The Christmas story did not begin in the manger. It actually began, well ...in the beginning. After making all the majestic things we call the universe, God decided to do something even more astounding. He decided to make another creation in his own image.

The bible says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ...And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. "

We do not know how long the man and woman, Adam and Eve, lived in the garden. We only know how this paradise was lost to them. There was a creature called "the serpent" who began to question Eve about what God had commanded concerning the forbidden tree. Later, this serpent would come to be known to us as Satan, Lucifer, or the devil.

Eve told the Serpent what God had said to Adam. *"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."* "You will not die!" the Serpent said. God knows that if you eat it *"then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."*

Eve believed the Serpent, ate the forbidden fruit and gave some to Adam her husband. Immediately they knew something was wrong. A change took place in both Adam and Eve and for the first time ever they were ashamed. They tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves, but the nature of this nakedness could not be covered up. As God had warned, they had died when they ate the forbidden fruit. This death was more real to them than a physical death because it was death to their spirit. The life of God had departed. These whom God had made in his own image now bore the nature of the serpent in their heart. They were sinners. This was their nakedness. This was their shame.

God came to visit the man and woman he had made, but they hid from his presence. As God revealed to them the consequences of their actions he turned to the Serpent and said: *“Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* Genesis 3:14-15. In these words, we find the first promise of *“the Christ”* who would come and what his mission would be. He would be born of a woman and he would bring vengeance upon the Serpent, but in bruising the Serpent’s head, this *“seed of the woman”* would also be wounded.

Adam and Eve learned through much heartbreak how devastating their rebellion had been. They lost fellowship with God and were banished from the paradise he created for them.

Their firstborn son murdered their second son, and they lived long enough to see the entire earth filled with iniquity in every form, and knew it was all due to their own disobedience.

Thousands of years passed, yet the depravity of man only grew worse. Wars, murder, perversion and every evil thing filled the earth. Most people forgot about the promise God had made of the *“seed of the woman”* who would come to bruise the head of the serpent and thereby destroy his works. | John 3:8. But God did not forget. One day He gave a promise through a prophet named Isaiah: *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* Isaiah 7:14. It was no great thing that a son would be born, but it was humanly impossible that one would be born to a woman who was a virgin. Still even more astounding was that his name would be called *“Immanuel,”* because Immanuel means *“God with us”!*

Then Isaiah prophesied something even more amazing. He said *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”* Isaiah 9:6-7. Surely this meant that the promised *“seed of the woman”* would now come and bruise the Serpent’s head.

Yet *“Immanuel”* did not come and the head of the Serpent was not bruised. Wars increased,

Israel and Jerusalem were destroyed, and most of the people were carried away as captives to a foreign land. As the years of captivity drew to an end, a man named Daniel sought the Lord for understanding. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Daniel "The Christ" would most certainly come. When he came he would *"make and end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness,"* but ...it would still be almost 500 years until his appearing. Daniel 9:24-25. Though disappointed that it would be so long before he came, at least now they knew the very year that Messiah, the Christ, the seed of the woman, would appear.

The centuries that followed were very harsh years and there was much war and oppression. Added to this, it seemed that God was silent and ceased to speak to his people. Had God forgotten his promise?

One day, as the appointed time drew close, God again sent the angel Gabriel to carry a message. This time it was to a young lady, a virgin, named Mary. He said, *"Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. ... Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* Mary knew the human impossibility of what she had been told, so she asked the angel *"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"* Gabriel responded, *"The Holy Ghost shall come upon*

thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

In the following year, Mary gave birth to her first child, who was the Son of God. The angel had instructed them saying, *"you shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* Matthew 1:21. The "seed of the woman," the Messiah, the Christ, had finally come. Thirty years later, in the exact year Gabriel had told Daniel of, God introduced his Son to Israel, saying, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* Three and a half years later, upon a cross, he would bruise the head of the Serpent, and *"save his people from their sins."* This is the Christmas story!