

What Child is This
Luke 2:1-14

Genesis 3:1-15

Revelation 5

Responsive Psalm 33:1-9

This morning, being that this week is the celebrated day of the Birth of Jesus, I thought that we would have a Christmas message this week. But, my goal this morning is to bring a message this morning in such a way that it isn't so much the traditional idea Christmas message, instead of focusing on the story of the birth of Jesus as is typical this time of year, I want to focus instead on the man, Jesus himself, and what his birth truly meant for mankind. As we know, and as scripture tells us, that God is sovereign over all things, and that all things work for his good pleasure, even the persecution that we have seen of Paul, and that he has been warning Timothy of, has worked to spread the gospel throughout the world.

And that persecution has come from the message that Paul has been teaching, a message of grace, and mercy, and of salvation apart from the law. Teaching that it is not the law and traditions of the Jews that are pre-eminant, but rather that Christ himself is the culmination of all that which came before, he is the culmination of the prophets, and of the law, it is in him that we find forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation before God. There is no act of man which could accomplish such, but it is merely the love and mercy of Jesus Christ who bore the punishment of our sins so that we may be the sons and daughters of the most high God. And here, at this time of the year we take this moment to celebrate his birth, his coming in the flesh, his becoming like us, so that he may be the perfect sacrifice for us.

So turn with me this morning to Luke chapter 2, and I want to read this account of the birth of Jesus this morning, which I know is something that we are all very familiar with, and have heard countless times throughout our lives during this time of year, but my goal in reflecting upon these things today is to fight against that familiarity, and hopefully we can see this event in history, the birth of this child, the promised Messiah, with a new set of eyes. Looking this morning beyond the story most of us have heard since we were small children, and looking deeper into the purpose and meaning of his arrival, and the necessity that he would come in the flesh. (read Luke 2:1-14)

Often times we Christians talk of Christ's death as being the culmination, and the fulfillment of all the prophecies, and while yes this is most definitely true, it really is only one part, the birth of Christ is just as important and was prophesied as well and had set forth the exact moment in time that God would bring about the redemption of his people. The Israelite's understood this, they had the writing of the prophets which foretold of his coming, they were awaiting the arrival of the Messiah, and in fact, they still are for they rejected Christ, the one who was promised. They understood that God had promised to send one who would set up his kingdom, and who would establish Israel as a mighty nation. They were looking for a mighty warrior king who would return Israel to its former glory days.

The problem here is that Christ was born to a poor family in a barn with the only fanfare of that being surrounded by shepherds and animals. This was not the noble birth of a king, nor was this the mighty triumphant arrival of a warrior, but a baby who was born, in a manger, one whose birth was marked by the lowest standard likely possible. We have sort of sanitized this idea of Christ's birth, we have made it to be this cute story, .but the reality is that he was born in a barn, surrounded by animals. This is not the most sterile, or desirable environment to bring a child into this world, in fact it would have been quite the opposite. Christ came to us, in the form of a baby, born in one of the lowest, most undesirable, and humbling ways possible. A birth un-noticed by the world, yet celebrated and rejoiced throughout heaven, for through this child will come the redemption of mankind, the peace between God and man which God had promised from the beginning.

So as we can see one of the biggest hurdles for the Jewish leaders, and people was that this was not the Messiah they were waiting for, they were awaiting a mighty king, a warrior who would free them from the bondage of the Roman empire, one who would rise up and establish Israel among the nations as it was in the days of King David, but instead of this expected warrior king, Jesus was born in this barn in Bethlehem, instead of a mighty and fearful warrior king coming in power to trample Rome underfoot, the Messiah came to the world through this unassuming birth of a child, from a virgin, in a barn.

Not only did they reject him as the messiah, they went a step further and saw him as a blasphemer, instead of the fulfillment to all that God had established beforehand, they saw him as a threat to their belief, and affront to God himself, for he claimed to be from God, and to be this Messiah who was foretold, yet since he did not fall into the image of what they were awaiting, not only did they reject him in their anger they had him put to death, the Messiah that they had awaited for, for generations, the seed that would crush the serpents head, the offspring who was promised that would come through Abraham to bring peace between God and man, in their unbelief and rejections, they called him a blasphemer, they sought out how they could silence him, and they ultimately succeeded in having him put to death, and once he was out of the picture, they turned to persecuting his followers.

The problem, was that they missed the entire point of the prophesy's, they missed the gospel story, they hardened their hearts to the signs that were give to them, and in their anger lashed out against the very one who was the fulfillment of the signs and prophesies, instead of worshiping the long awaited Messiah, the sought to kill him. But just as we have seen throughout all of our time spent here in the past few years, in all things God is sovereign, and indeed even this which was meant for evil, even their very rebellion and rejection of Christ was still a part of God's redemptive plan, working through the hearts of evil men God enacted his plan to provide for the true Israel, that is all those who are children of the promise, all of those who believe by faith in the promised Messiah, our savior, our mediator, and our high priest.

So, this morning, I want to go back and look at a few passages in scripture of these prophecies that were foretelling of his birth, but before we do that, let us go to Luke 2 and read verse 1-14, which is the fulfillment of all of these old testament prophecies we are going to be looking at this morning.

First is what we read this morning in Genesis chapter 3:15 God said to the serpent, “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.” The birth of Christ's which we are celebrating today, truly ushered in the defeat of Satan, the seed of the woman will rise up and crush the head of the serpent. The apostle Paul uses this language in the book of Romans when talking to the faithful obedient believers there, he wrote, “ And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” On the cross, the very thing that was meant to remove Jesus from this world, plotted and schemed by all those who hated him, was the very thing that God used to crush Satan, breaking the sinful bonds he had on mankind and preparing the way of redemption for God's people. In acting in his blood a new covenant, one in which as we spoke of last week, where God shall forgive us our sins, and remember them no more. No longer is there a law of condemnation hanging over our head, for Christ has taken it all to himself, for us, so that we may not be merely his servants, but the children of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Satan has no power over those of us who are in Christ, for God has already defeated him And yes, though Satan may bruise your heal in a manner of speaking, though we may fall into sin, there is now now forgiveness found in Christ, and no condemnation held to our account because of Christ's sacrifice.ultimately in the end Christ will destroy him, for Satan is powerless against God, and we, through this child which was born in Bethlehem which we celebrate today, we also have power over Satan, we are not powerless and helpless, for God has given us the holy spirit to assist us in resisting his temptations, convicting us of our sins so that we may be faithful to repent of them, for we are no longer enslaved to sin, for we have been set free from that bondage, our eyes have been opened to see the glories and mercy of God toward us, so that in our hearts we strive to please him...not because of some law as of old, but because we truly, and deeply love him. We have become a new creature, changed by the blood of the redeemer, who is Christ Jesus.

The next old testament prophesy I wanted to look at this morning is that which was given to Abraham, Genesis 12, God says to Abraham, “I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” This blessing given to Abraham is the promised seed, God's promise to Abraham is that through him the Messiah will come, the one in whom will bring redemption to the world, and who will bring peace between God and man, Which is a blessing for all peoples, not just the Jews, but for for every nation, every tongue, every walk of life who believes. For as Paul wrote, those who are of faith, are the children of Abraham, and the heirs of the promises.

Each of these prophecies in the old Testament which foretells of the coming Messiah, gives a bit more information, in Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14, says “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall all his name Emmanuel.” And in the book of Micah, we are told that he will be born in Bethlehem, Chapter 5, says, “ But you Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times.”

All of these prophecies were given hundreds of years before Jesus was born, foretelling of this night spoke of in Luke chapter 2. I think that often times we look at God's redemptive plan in pieces, focusing on each section and in doing so I think we lose a bit of the larger picture. Christ's birth was a fulfillment of a promise not only to Abraham, but all the way back to the days of Adam and Eve, Christ was always coming from the beginning to bring redemption for the curse that was put upon mankind through the sin of Adam. This redemption and reconciliation to God was something that mankind had been waiting for since the fall of Adam and Eve. and when our redeemer did finally arrive it was for the most part, quiet, humble, and unassuming, yet with it, in that humble low birth, was power beyond our understanding. God, the one who created all things, who holds the very universe in the palm of his hand, came to us in the flesh, born of a virgin, to make for himself the necessary mediator between so that we may be reconciled to him, so that we may be redeemed through him.

To Israel the coming of Christ was a stumbling block, but to God's people a sanctuary. Israel was awaiting a glorious king, a warrior, a mighty ruler, so when the promised Messiah came who was not what they were waiting for, they rejected him. For this one, born of Mary was this king who is mighty, and glorious but not in the way they expected. he was, the true king, the high king, the king of kings. The verse that comes to mind as to why God designed his salvation plan this way, why the Messiah would be born in such a lowly estate, is also for the very reason that he works salvation in those that he does,

1 Corinthians:27 “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things for the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.” It is God's way, God has chosen that his redemptive plan would come in such a way so that no man would believe outside of God first enabling. How absurd it is, that this child born from a virgin no less, in Bethlehem is the promised the Messiah, the one who God foretold would come and crush the head of Satan, and bring salvation to God's people.

This is not for the wise to find, for it is not found through wisdom. Really, If there were any who should have believed it would have been the Israelite's themselves, for they were the ones who had the prophecies, they were the ones told how the Messiah would come, even Herod himself was so afraid that this one born would grow up to destroy Rome that he ordered every first born killed so that this promised king would not arise and take power.

Yet, when the Messiah came, when he was born, in Bethlehem as it was foretold, it was foolishness to them, Christ's birth was a stumbling block to them, not having faith, not being a part of the true Israel of God they were unable to see it. And this was by design, for as I mentioned earlier, God even used their unbelief in his redemptive plan as it was by their rejection of Jesus that he was crucified, and through the laying down of his life, and the shedding of his blood salvation was brought to all peoples. The very rebellion and hatred toward Christ by Israel is the tool that God used to enact his plan.

Jesus quoting the book of Psalms and equating it to himself said, "Have you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, This was the Lords doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders in Israel, they having knowledge of the laws and prophesies which pointed to him, yet they rejected him, the one who God had set as his corner stone to build his holy nation, the true Israel, the offspring of Abraham not by flesh, but by faith, they rejected.

This promised child who was born is the one in whom this salvation was given. It is amazing to me, that the God who created the universe would come and take on flesh, would become one like us, would suffer, and die. This speaks of his love, and his mercy for the reality is God would have been completely justified in the destruction and punishment of this world, for our sin and rebellion against him. Indeed he is not only justified, but would be glorified in such punishment of this wicked world. Yet, as scripture tells us, he loved us, with such a great personal love that sent his son to die to take that punishment for each of us. I know that this is all stuff that we all already know and are aware of, but I think at times we can get bogged down in the traditions, or family obligations especially this time of year and in a sense we can start to lose focus as to what is really being celebrated here.

Having grown up in the church myself, this time of year is always focused on the story of the birth of Christ, and I think rightly so, for there is nothing wrong in such traditions and celebrations, but really, this celebration is so much more then this cute story we all have heard every year. And it is this importance that I am hoping to capture today. This time that we are celebrating this week, is a celebration of the culmination of 1000's of years of prophesy being fulfilled, it is a time that we take to celebrate that God has brought the means of peace between man and himself on the earth, it is the time that we celebrate God's love and faithfulness in keeping those promises that he gave all the way back to Adam and Eve, to provide that peace, and to provide a means of redemption and reconciliation.

And this was his plan from the beginning, this was not a mere reaction to anything as some may say. A friend once told me, that Christ's coming and dying on the cross was because his previous plan of providing righteousness through the law had failed. But just look at scripture, look at what we have read today....it is apparent that is not the case at all! , for as we see the coming of Christ into this world was planned from the beginning, it was foretold and revealed throughout scripture and here what we read Luke 2 and what we are celebrated today is the culmination.

It is no wonder that angels were singing, peace on earth, good will toward men. For this was the time that was spoken of, and the time that was being waiting for, The Messiah has come to enact God's redemptive plan, to bring an end to the enmity brought about by our sin, to bring peace between God and his people. Even Abraham and all those who came before were awaiting this day, just as it is written in chapter 11 of Hebrews in the list of the faithful it said, " These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Even this birth of Jesus, which happened in a barn, with little fan fare except that which we see where the angels appeared to shepherds, was a cataclysmic event that changed the world. The event that all those who died in faith were awaiting, and all those who are of faith hope and trust, The redeemer has come, the time of God's redemptive work has come, and it is this that we celebrate today, that our sovereign holy father has given us his son so that we may be reconciled to him, so that by his blood the wages of our sins are paid in full. For Unto us, a child is born, unto us a savior is given, Joy to the world, for the way of Salvation has been given, and God has provided a way of peace between us and him.