

Eden's Garden to Bethlehem

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[0:00] Well, I want you to take your Bibles tonight and not open to the book of Romans.

Don't tell Jonathan that I changed it. I think he's about used to it. In fact, he even anticipates it, I think. We'll get back to Romans after Christmas is over, but I want to take the next several Sunday nights, as many as we have before Christmas, and preach on Christmas topics.

And tonight, kind of a broad sweep throughout the Old Testament all the way up to the New Testament and kind of a message we could entitle, From Genesis to Bethlehem, or From Eden's Garden to Bethlehem's Stable.

And we'll just take that all the way through the Bible. But I am going to use a couple of verses to get us started, and that is Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.

Hebrews 1, 1 and 2. This is a good introductory verse of Scripture, though I don't do that very often.

[1:25] I don't normally take a Scripture and use it as a starting point. I really prefer to stay there with that text.

But this is what we're going to do tonight, more of a topical kind of message, which is really a thematic message throughout the Old Testament and on into the New. This is what Hebrews says. See, Tom's not here. Paul wrote in the book of Hebrews. I shared with Tom, by the way, we kind of have kind of a joke about that, I guess you've noticed.

But anyway, I told Tom that when I was in Ukraine, the Ukrainians, they believe Paul wrote Hebrews. And so I was at home there.

Okay. Here's what Hebrews 1, 1 and 2 says. God, who at various times and in various ways, what did he do?

[2:31] He spoke. Spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets. All right. So in various times, sundry times throughout history, many different ways he spoke.

And has in these last days spoken to us by his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.

That's a good place to begin. Good kind of introductory verse for what I want to do here tonight.

Now, I think you would agree with me on this.

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year. It's one of my favorite. Well, I guess I would say my favorite holiday in an emotional sense. You know, I think Easter is the prime holiday.

But Christmas is a wonderful, wonderful holiday, wonderful time of the year. And we enjoy celebrating it. I know you do. And I do. And we celebrate in many different ways.

[3:38] In fact, our culture celebrates Christmas in many, many different ways. And there are many different religious ways to celebrate Christmas. Right?

I mean, there are in our country. Not just around the world, but right here in America. Kind of this melting pot of cultures and nationalities and so forth. Right here in the United States, there are many religious ways to celebrate this season.

There's Christmas. Right? Or the Christian way. Excuse me. I misspoke. The Christian way of celebrating Christmas. Right?

Right. Okay. With me. There is winter solstice. That's another way that some people celebrate this time of the year.

There's Hanukkah. Our Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah this time of the year. There is, maybe this is not very familiar to you, but Kwanzaa. How many of you have heard of Kwanzaa?

[4:34] Right? A lot of you have heard of that. And so there are those who celebrate this time of the year under that heading. Kwanzaa. And there are many others.

In fact, I jotted down one. Diwali. I'm not sure if that's how it's pronounced. Maybe if I pronounced it right, you'd know it. That, by the way, is the Hindu festival of lights.

So that's something that Hindus, I guess, celebrate this time of the year. So there are many different religious ways that people celebrate this season.

And don't get alarmed. I'm going to get very specific here in just a minute and make some pretty bold statements. But you'd have to admit, in our culture, there are many ways that people celebrate this season.

Some of the ways they celebrate intersect with all the other various religious ways. I mean, even those who celebrate Kwanzaa also like the traditional Santa Claus and gift-giving Christmas trees and so forth.

[5:38] So there are a lot of intersections there. But the religious ways, there are a number of them in America. And there are a host of secular ways, of course.

I've already mentioned a couple of those. And right off, we would know what those are. Secular ways that people celebrate this season. There's Santa Claus and elves and, you know, and Christmas trees.

And, you know, there's Rudolph and all of those. There's that way. Kind of secular. We call those secular ways that people celebrate this season.

Now, ironically, I don't know if that's the right word. Maybe I should say sadly. Christmas has become something other than a celebration of the birth of Christ.

For many people. Even some who would call themselves Christians. That the birth of Christ, the celebration of his birth, is not what Christmas is about for most.

[6:41] Well, I think it's safe to say. Most in our country today. And so in that sense, I think Christmas over the years, especially in our culture, Christmas has gone from addition to subtraction.

Addition in the sense that there have been many other ways to celebrate Christmas added to this holiday over the years. Many ways. And I've just mentioned a few.

Subtraction in the sense that there has been, for many, one major subtraction. The Christian way to celebrate this holiday.

Now, is the Christian celebration of Christmas just one of many ways people participate in this holiday? You might say yes to that based on how I opened this tonight.

Is it just one of many ways? You know, and some would have us say, some would argue that one is no better than the other. It's no worse than any other.

[7:47] You know, I celebrated my way. You celebrated your way. You attach your meaning to Christmas and I'll hold to mine. And what, you know, they'll say, what makes you think that Christian or Christmas has to be Christian?

There are those who would object in just that way. You know, you're not very tolerant, you Christians. What makes you think that your way is the only way to celebrate it?

Now, the fact is that by and large, that's an erroneous argument because Christmas has become anything but Christian. And so, therefore, it's awfully difficult for we Christians to come off as very dogmatic because even we celebrate Christmas in many other ways other than the Christian way.

Oh, yes, we do. We do. How ridiculous, though, when you think about it. To have this kind of argument or to have these kinds of claims that, you know, there are many ways to celebrate Christmas and my way is no better than your way, your way no better than mine.

How ridiculous. Because, listen, Christmas is singularly a Christian holiday. It is.

[9:17] And we don't have to apologize about that. We don't have to try to, you know, explain that or hide that. We don't have to stop talking about that. Christmas is Christian or it is nothing else.

I mean, that's just the best truth. That's not just the way we believe. That's what it is. I mean, there's no denying that. Historically, factually, in terms of its origin, the reason for its existence, it is Christian or it is nothing at all.

Nothing else. So we don't have to apologize that. And I say that because the meaning and the significance of Christmas dates back to the beginning of history itself.

So it's much larger than, in that sense, much larger than just the event that took place there in Bethlehem and the birth of the little baby Jesus.

Its origin goes all the way back to the beginning and really beyond that into eternity. Now, I would ask you, what other form of celebration this time of year can claim that?

[10:33] Santa Claus? Santa Claus has been around quite a while. Different traditions, you know, in various cultures and nations. Been around a long time, but it hasn't been around since the

beginning of time.

Winter solstice?

In fact, it's made up. Just been made up. Has no history at all. No real origin at all. So it can't claim that.

Now, Hanukkah? Been around a long time. Started back during the intertestamental period, between the Old and the New Testament. And so it's not, though it's old, it's not as old as the story of the birth of Christ.

The real meaning of Christmas goes all the way back to the beginning of time. Indeed, all the way back to the Garden of Eden. And so that's what I want us to see tonight.

[11:58] And I want to trace through the Bible the promise of God that finds its fulfillment at Bethlehem. Actually, not just there, but the beginning of its fulfillment with the birth of Christ.

And then continuing on through the life of Christ and His death and burial and resurrection. And so we can trace it all the way back. And bring it forward to the one who was born of a virgin, whose cradle was, you know, a feeding trough there in Bethlehem somewhere.

Who ultimately, of course, became the Savior of all who believe. All who will believe. And so the tracing, this promise through the Bible, I would suggest to you on the front end, should do at least three things.

First of all, it should draw you closer to a sovereign, loving God whose plan has always been to redeem us through the precious blood of His Son, Jesus.

Second, it should remove all need to apologize for the way we celebrate Christmas.

[13:09] To apologize for putting a nativity in your front yard. And third, it should stir up within us a kind of renewed reason to proclaim the truth of Christmas to an unbelieving world.

To proclaim in various ways, the way we celebrate Christmas, the way we speak of it. The form of our celebration.

It should then stir that up in us. To consider the way we celebrate this season as a point of evangelism.

All right, so let's look at the text again in Hebrews. Let me read it one more time. God, who at various times and various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days, and we're in those last days, spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

You can say this about maybe the outline of the Bible. The Old Testament says that Jesus is coming. You find that all throughout the Old Testament.

[14:33] The Gospels say He's here. The book of Acts says He has come. And the epistles, the New Testament letters, say He is Lord.

And Revelation says what? He's coming back. He's coming again. And so you can say that history is His story. Everything in the Bible either leads up to His coming or explains the meaning of His coming or it promises that He's coming again.

That's a pretty good synopsis of the theme of the Bible. The theme that runs throughout the Bible. And so then His coming is crucial to all of history, right?

It's crucial. And Christmas is all about His coming. And so if that is true, then we ought to celebrate it in that way. His coming.

And it was a coming promised from the very beginning of time. The story begins in the Garden of Eden in those tragic few moments right after Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of that forbidden fruit.

[15:53] Sin entered the world and spread out across this earth. Corrupting everything it touched. Paradise was violated by this entrance of sin.

Satan had won, albeit for a time. God's plan had been foiled, or so it seemed. And Adam and Eve, our first parents, had fallen from grace, or so they thought.

Now, what would God do about it? Would He destroy Adam and Eve and also planet earth and start all over?

No. He didn't do that. And here is where then salvation begins. The story begins. God's plan begins to unfold.

God is determined in Himself to do something and He would not let Satan win the battle for planet earth and His creation. And so the rest of the Old Testament is a progressive unfolding or progressive revelation of God's plan to undo what Adam and Eve had done in the Garden.

[17:06] And God made a promise to them. Way back there in the beginning. Made a promise to them. They're in the Garden of Eden. And that promise can be traced from there all the way through the Old Testament, all the way up to Bethlehem and beyond.

And so let's trace it. Here's number one. First, the promise will be fulfilled through a member of the human race.

That's how it all begins. This is how the promise is first articulated to us. That there's a need for a deliverer and that deliverer will come.

And it will be fulfilled through a member of the human race. And that's it. The promise is the deliverer or the Messiah. And that deliverer will be a man.

Genesis 3.15 You can jot these down and look at them some other time. But here's what the Bible says. And I will put enmity between you and the woman.

[18:03] This, of course, is God speaking to whom? The serpent. Listen, I will put enmity between you and the woman.

The woman being Eve. And between her seed and your seed and her seed. He shall bruise or crush.

Bruise your head, excuse me. And you shall bruise. But literally it's the word bruise beyond repair. Crush is the better word. Crush. Excuse me.

I've got it all back. Backward. He, that is the seed of the woman, will crush your head, Satan. And you shall bruise, really crush, bruise his heel.

Well, I'm just getting this all wrong. I should have just looked it up. Do you know what I'm trying to say? All right. The point of it is not crush or bruise or what the point is and who's going to do what.

[19:11] Other than to say that for certain the prophecy is that the seed of the woman who will be Christ one day will absolutely crush Satan's head. Crush his power.

And so here's the promise first given in Genesis 3.15. The deliverer will come. He will come and he will be of the seed of a woman, which, by the way, is a very unusual way of putting it.

Because the seed is usually of the man. But here's the seed of the woman. And what does that speak to? Of course, the virgin birth. But we're jumping way ahead. But this is a prophecy concerning the coming of the deliverer.

And he will be the seed of a woman. And so this will not be some angelic being or some supernatural creature. This will be a man. A real man.

And he will enter the human race the normal way, biologically speaking, other than the fact that he's going to be virgin born. But he's still going to be birth, going to develop in the womb and be birth in the normal way.

[20:15] He's going to enter the world, enter the human race in the normal way, be born of a woman. And he will do battle with Satan. This is what the prophecy is saying. And Satan will strike a blow, certainly.

Bruise his heel. Strike a blow against him, the deliverer, the Messiah. But he will not defeat him. But he, the deliverer, will crush Satan's head.

Not literally crushing his head. But the idea is crush, destroy his power forever. Now that's the promise.

And it's given there at the very beginning. In Genesis chapter 3.15. Now let's move forward.

Second, the deliverer, as God is unfolding this revelation gradually, the deliverer, second of all, will come from the Semitic people.

The Semitic people. Genesis 9.26. And he said, blessed be the Lord. Now, this is Noah speaking, by the way, right after the flood.

[21:22] And he's saying to his sons, and he says, blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem. All right, so he gives preference to Shem. The blessing is to Shem.

And may Canaan, the son of Ham, let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth.

And may he dwell in the tents of Shem. Again, the preference to Shem. And may Canaan be his servant. The preference is to Shem.

All right, so the promise that started with Adam and Eve is now being reissued by Noah, really from God through Noah, to Shem.

Who is Shem? Well, after the flood, you know, the world was repopulated by the sons of Noah. And those sons were Shem, Ham, Japheth.

[22:21] Japheth. We're descendants, if you're European descendants of Japheth. Shem will come through the deliverer will come through Shem.

And Shem is the father of the Semitic people. The Jews. The Jews. All right, so now we've gone on the second step.

Now let's go a third step. The Bible reveals, as it's being progressively unfolded before us, that not only will he be a man, he will come from the Semitic people, but third, he will be a son of Abraham. He will be a son of Abraham. All right, so now many years later, God would speak to Abram. Later, he would change his name to Abraham when he made his covenant with him.

But he spoke to Abram, a descendant of Shem. You can see the promise is coming through Shem. And he speaks to him while he is in Ur of the Chaldees.

[23:24] He's not even a believer in Jehovah, necessarily, at this point. And God would instruct Abram to leave his city and travel to a land that God would later reveal to him.

And Abram, again later named Abraham, obeyed. And that land was what land? The promised land. The promised land.

All right, so God revealed that the deliverer would come through Abraham's descendants. And we know that in Genesis chapter 12, verses 2 and 3.

I will make you a great nation. This is what God said to Abram. A great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you.

And I will curse him who curses you. And in you, as in your descendants, all the families or nations of the earth shall be blessed.

[24:26] There's the promise. The promise of the deliverer, the Messiah, would come through Abraham. Through you, Abraham, your descendants, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

All nations. Not just the Semitics, Semitic people, but all nations. Fourth, the deliverer will be a son of Isaac.

A son of Isaac. Who's Isaac? The son of Abraham. Genesis 22, 18. This is right after Abraham showed his obedience to God.

You remember God said, take Isaac, your son, and sacrifice him. And Abraham was going to do that. And God stops him and so forth. And so here is what God says to Abraham.

He says, in your seed. And that's a reference to Isaac. Because Isaac is right there. He's just spared his life. He was going to sacrifice him and now he's not. He is the son of promise.

[25:27] And so his seed. In your seed. In Isaac. All nations of the earth shall be blessed. That sounds very much like what he said to Abraham. And it is. And so Isaac.

The promise is going to now transfer through Isaac. Isaac. Not Ishmael. And not children that Abraham would have after Isaac.

But Isaac. All the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice. All right. So here's what he's saying.

Abraham had a son in his old age. Again. The son of promise. That was Isaac. And so a promise was given. The promise. Same promise. To Adam and Eve. That was given to Adam and Eve. And then to Noah. And then to Shem. Noah's son. And then to Abraham. And it's now given to Isaac. Isaac. Abraham's son. God has not forgotten his promise.

[26:26] He's not forgotten it. His plan to redeem his beloved are. You know. That are under condemnation. He's not forgotten that. He's not forgotten his oath. And so God is going to send the deliverer.

The redeemer. And crush Satan's head. What happens next? Fifth. Fifth. The deliverer will be the son of Jacob. They wouldn't follow this line.

All the way through the Old Testament. The deliverer will come. As a son of Jacob. Isaac. Had two sons. Who were they?

Jacob and Esau. Well Esau and Jacob. Esau came first. Jacob came very quickly after. And of course by Jewish custom.

Esau should have received the promise. Because he was what? First born. First born. But he sold that right. Didn't he?

[27:27] For a pot of stew. Bowl of stew. Now would God honor that transaction between Jacob and Esau? Yes. Even though it was brought about by deceit.

And in trickery on Jacob's part. But God honored that. God's plan all along by the way. And later in a mysterious vision of the ladder.

You know that Jacob had. This stairway to heaven. God repeats to Jacob the promise. That he made to his father before him. Isaac. And to his grandfather before him. Abraham. Who was a descendant of Shem. A son of Noah. A descendant of Seth. A son of Adam. Who was first given the promise. See how God is gradually moving this along. Throughout the generations. And what was the promise to Jacob? Genesis 28.14. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth.

[28 : 27] You shall spread abroad. To the west and the east. And to the north and the south. And in you and in your seed. All the families of the earth shall be blessed. That sounds very familiar doesn't it? Alright.

God's being very selective. He's moving his plan along. Fifth. The deliverer. This Messiah. Will be a son of Jacob.

Jacob. Alright. Now. Isaac had. Two sons. Jacob and Esau. Excuse me.

The deliverer will come. I'm having real trouble tonight. Did I just fly from Ukraine again or something? Sixth.

Sixth. The deliverer will come from the tribe of Judah. Alright. That's where we are. We've already covered Jacob. Alright. Why aren't you listening? The tribe of Judah.

[29 : 25] Judah. Alright. Genesis 49. 10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah. Nor a lawgiver from between his feet. Until Shiloh comes.

Jacob. That's Isaac's son. To whom the promise was reissued. Jacob. Jacob. Had how many sons? Twelve sons.

Twelve. And so which one would God choose to carry on the promise? Well. By rights. It should have been Reuben. His firstborn. But Reuben sinned.

And so he was passed over. And the same happened. And the same was true of Simeon and Levi. The next two in line. And when Jacob came to the fourth son.

Judah. He uttered this amazing prophecy. It's a messianic prophecy. The one I just read from Genesis 49.10.

[30 : 26] This messianic prophecy. A prophecy regarding the deliverer. He said that the scepter. The sign of the. Of regal authority. The scepter. Would rest with Judah.

His fourth son. Until. Until what? Until Shiloh comes. That's a reference to the Messiah.

Shiloh means the one who brings peace. Peace. Isaiah 9.6 and 7. Call. Isaiah calls him the prince of peace.

Micah. 5.5 says. He will be. Their. Peace. Their peace. Alright. Here's the promise. Come. Will come through the tribe.

Of Judah. Now. The prophecy. This prophecy. The promise given to. Judah. This prophecy.

[31 : 24] Was not fulfilled. For many. Many centuries. For. For a long time. After the promise was given. Israel's leaders. Came from other tribes.

Beginning with Moses. Moses. Moses was of the tribe of Levi. Not Judah. And. His successor. Joshua.

Joshua. Was of the tribe of Ephraim. And. Then you get into the. Time of the judges. And to name just a few. Gideon. Gideon. Well known. Gideon. Leader of Israel.

Was. From Manasseh. The tribe of Manasseh. Samson. Notorious Samson. Was of the tribe of Dan. Another. The last of the judges.

Samuel. He was of the tribe of Ephraim. Again. Not Judah. So none of these leaders. Were. Of the tribe of Judah. But they weren't kings. And so along comes the first king.

[32 : 20] Of Israel. His name was Saul. And Saul. Was of the tribe of. Benjamin. I thought I'd catch somebody.

And have somebody say Judah. No. That's pretty mean. Try to catch you. I mean. I've got it in my notes. So I knew I was going to get it right. Although. A little hard to tell.

Tonight. But. Anyway. Saul was of the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Benjamin. Not Judah. The very first king of Israel. Not of Judah. So what happened to this promise?

Well. You remember. The story. Don't you? That King Saul. Was disobedient. And so God. Took the kingdom from him. He. Literally. Tore it. From him. And he gave it to another.

God chose. Saul's successor. Of course. From the tribe. Of. Judah. All right. There. There it is. Judah. And who was he? David.

[33:19] David. Of the tribe of Judah. So that leads us to the seventh. Kind of. Step in the progressive revelation. The deliverer will be a descendant of David.

All right. David. In Samuel. One sixteen. Kind of backtrack a little bit here. Things. Began to change. So after God rejected Saul as king. He chose. The youngest son. Of Jesse. Little shepherd boy. Again.

By the name of David. And David. Becomes king. And. Still today. Considered. Israel's greatest king. Greatest king. Now.

At the peak of David's career as king. God made. A promise. To David. Second. Samuel. Seven. Eleven. Second. Samuel. Seven.

[34:13] In verse. Eleven. Since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. And have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also. The Lord tells you that he will make you a house.

A house. A lineage. Verse twelve says. And when your days are fulfilled. And you rest with your fathers. I will set up your seed after you.

That's a reference to Solomon of course. David's son. Who will come from your body. And I will establish his kingdom. But then when you get on down to verse sixteen. Here's what.

The prophecy says. And your house. David. Your house. And your kingdom. Shall be established. Forever. Forever.

Forever. Forever. Before you. Your throne. Shall be established. Forever. Now that's something quite different. This is a promise.

[35:15] And it's very specific. As all these promises go. As we've been following them. As they've been progressively. Being unfolded for us.

This is the most specific yet. Not only will the deliverer. Come from the line of David. But he will also rule over David's kingdom. And he will reign upon David's throne.

And more than that. David's house. His kingdom. And his throne. Will last. Forever. Forever. Eternally. Now.

Folks. This promise. Goes beyond all mere. Human rulers. That would follow David. And there were a number of them. That followed him. And even the best of them.

Like Solomon. And he even had his issues. And. There was Asa. And Hezekiah. And Josiah. To name just a few. And there were just a few.

[36:14] By the way. Good kings. And these kings. Did what was right. In the sight of God. And yet. They could not fulfill. The promise.

First given. To Adam and Eve. Has been re-given. And re-given. And re-given. As God has followed. A stream. Through. Through. A. Descendants.

Of. Of. Adam. And now. He's to David. And these kings. That followed David. Could not fulfill. This promise. This promise. That the kingdom.

Would be forever. How. How could they fulfill that? They couldn't. Because they're just humans. Just. Just. Just mere men. And a mere man. Could never.

Sit on David's throne. Forever. Could. Could never do that. Mortal men. Could never fulfill. This promise. It demands. A ruler. Who will live forever. But what person.

[37:09] Could fulfill that. Qualification. You. You of course know. Obviously. But let's. Continue on here. The promise. Has now.

Become. Very specific. And very. Very exclusive. Right. There's only one person. Who could qualify for this. And especially. As we add. More of the progressive revelation. We find that it becomes. So. Specific. That only one person. Could fulfill it. But this promise. That has moved. From. A member of the human race. To Abraham. To his son Isaac.

To his son Jacob. To his son Judah. And to the tribe of Judah. And eventually. To David. And to his descendants. The descendants of David. Who. Then.

Along the way. Ultimately. Could. Reign forever. On David's throne. Who could this deliverer be. And how will we recognize him. Well that leads. Then. To the eighth.

[38:04] Part of the revelation. He will be born of a virgin. You knew we were going to get there. Many. Years past.

As the people of God. Waited for the deliverer to come. The Messiah to come. And then. In the days. Of King Ahaz. Wicked King Ahaz. God. Once again.

Speaks. And this time. He. He. He. He. He. He. very specific on how the deliverer would enter into the world. Isaiah 7, 14.

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. This is the prophet Isaiah speaking to Ahaz the king. He will give you a sign.

Ahaz had asked for one. So he says you're going to get one. Here's the sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

[39:02] Very clear prophecy. A virgin birth. Here's the sign. A virgin birth. And I wonder what Ahaz thought when he heard that. For that matter, I wonder what Isaiah thought when God inspired him to say it, you know.

The deliverer will be a member of the human race, but he is no ordinary man. He enters the world supernaturally, miraculously.

And so he's fully God, born of a virgin, fully man, born of a woman. And where will he be born?

Number nine, the deliverer will be born in Bethlehem.

And it's revealed in Scripture. I mentioned that passage in Jeremiah where it says that God doesn't do anything unless He reveals His secret to His servants, the prophets.

And God all the way through the Old Testament has been revealing this. And He says in Micah 5.2 that the deliverer will be born in Bethlehem. Very clear prophecy. But you, Bethlehem, Ephrath, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting.

[40:19] Now the last part of that is very significant. From of old. Or the King James, I think, uses the word antiquity. It's a good word. It means all the way back to Genesis.

Genesis. He comes, He's been coming all the way back there in the beginning of time itself. And we've been tracing His steps, haven't we?

All the way through. But then Micah says, from everlasting. From everlasting. So not just back to the Garden of Eden, but even beyond that. In eternity past.

The deliverer then is eternal. He's eternal. And so let's put this together. When all of these prophecies are taken together, we have an amazing kind of description, a portrait of the Messiah. He will be a Jew. Of course, all this we already know, don't we? He will be a Jew. A descendant of Sham in that sense. He will come from the tribe of Judah.

[41:24] He will be a descendant of David. He will be born in Bethlehem. And He will be born of a virgin. Now, who could fit all those qualifications?

Well, a whole bunch of people could fit the first qualification, a Jew. That's not very specific. Still quite a few could fit the second qualification, the tribe of Judah, right?

There were many descendants of the tribe of Judah. Many males, male men who came out of Judah. Fewer still, but still a whole lot of people, would fit the third qualification, descendant of David.

And fewer yet, but still a good many, would fit the fourth qualification, born in Bethlehem. I'm sure there were many, many, many male babies born in Bethlehem over the years.

Many in those years. I mean, listen, Herod had possibly thousands murdered who were born in and around Bethlehem. And so there were quite a few who could fit that qualification, but only one person in all of history has ever met the fifth qualification, virgin born, and His name was Jesus Christ.

[42:37] Jesus of Nazareth. All right, so this is what it all comes down to for us here to know the significance of this, other than just to be able to trace it through the Old Testament, which is important for us.

And we ought to be able to do that. But when we celebrate Christmas, let's not take the nativity out of it. The birth of Christ. And don't take out the angels and the shepherds and the wise men and the star and those carols, some of which we sang earlier in our worship time.

Don't take those carols that speak of Jesus' birth out of it. That's what Christmas is. That's what it is. And we can shout that from the housetops. Why? Because it can be traced all the way back to the beginning of time.

Because when we celebrate Christmas, we don't simply celebrate what happened in Bethlehem. We celebrate God's plan to save mankind. That's what we celebrate.

Which started way back there in the Garden of Eden. Really started in eternity past before the Garden of Eden. But it continues on today and all the way to the end of history.

[43 : 46] Winter solstice doesn't have that. Kwanzaa certainly doesn't have that. Even Hanukkah misses that. All together. And so far from apologizing for it as Christians, we ought to be shouting about it.

From house to house, city to city, nation to nation. Joy to the world, the Lord is come.

We sing that carol. Think of what it says. What it says, we're saying. Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her king.

Oh how. I wish this earth would receive her king. The true king. King of kings. Let every heart prepare him room.

Well, that's the message. Prepare him room and heaven and nature sing. Amen.