

Eden's Garden to Bethlehem's Stable

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Don't you like Christmas?

Yes. I mean, I do. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That's funny. We were at the associational Christmas party last night!

The entertainment. He was really quite good, very talented man who plays the trumpet and many other variations of the trumpet and did some secular Christmas music as well as sacred.

And he was playing one very favorite, I don't remember what it was, but a very favorite holiday secular kind of song.

And after he was done, I heard an amen from one side of the room. I don't know how to just... No, it wasn't Wes. Wes wasn't there. Now, if the guy had said hallelujah, I really would have chuckled.

[1:04] I think. Anyway. I want you to take your Bibles tonight, first of all. And this is kind of a jumping off place. I don't always do that when I'm preaching. This is decidedly...

Well, I don't know if I call it a topical message, but thematic for sure. I read Walter Kaiser several years ago.

He's written a number of books. He may not be a name familiar to you, but he wrote a book on preaching, and he said that a preacher can preach a topical sermon once every five years, but then he needs to repent.

But I will do that occasionally, and even in the course of expository preaching through a book of the Bible, you can stop one place in the text and really delve into maybe even a word in the text and preach a decidedly topical message, but at least in the whole of the exposition of the book, it still will work all right.

But thematic preaching is all right and just carry a particular theme all the way through the Bible.

And I've done that a number of times. And, you know, to maybe capture the progressive revelation, some of the doctrines that, well, many of the great doctrines of the faith have been progressively unfolded for us throughout the Old Testament on into the New.

[2:39] And it's just really neat, I think, sometimes to look at those. And the one we're going to be looking at tonight has everything to do with Christmas. And just by way of introduction, and I do have some notes there for you that you can fill in the blank and give you some opportunities to do that.

But by way of introduction, I want to start with this text in Hebrews 1 and the first two verses. And it's a familiar passage, not one that is normally used to reference Christmas, and yet it has everything to do with the real meanings and significance of what happened a little over 2,000 years ago there in that little stable in Bethlehem.

But the Bible says, God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 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, who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

So I begin with that passage as kind of the jumping off place. And I would suggest to you on the front end that that is a very appropriate verse. Certainly, not just for the meaning, the true meaning of Christmas, because it certainly goes beyond the birth of Christ and includes also the death of Christ.

But all that must come together. We don't isolate the events of the Gospel or the events unfolded for us in the Gospels from the birth of Christ to His life and ministry and His death and His resurrection.

[4:36] All those must come together. And that's one of the problems I think we have this time of the year because we are so fond of the birth of Christ and the story of His birth that we fail to understand or fail to keep close quarters with the whole story of Christ, which is the story of redemption.

And that's what Christmas is about. Jesus came and He lived and then He died and it's all a part of God's redemptive plan that really was revealed to us at the very beginning of the Bible. And as the writer of Hebrews highlights for us, God spoke in many different ways all throughout the Old Testament unfolding the details, gradually unfolding the details of His plan to redeem His people.

And so in that sense, it's all His story. Not just history, His story. And it all needs to come into play when we consider Christmas and celebrate Christmas.

And Christmas is, as the song goes, the most wonderful time of the year. I mean, that's not a new old secular song. Wonderful time. And it is, isn't it? And it's celebrated so many different ways.

[6:03] Isn't it? And maybe we would kind of be chagrined by that if we really start thinking about it. How many different ways people celebrate this holiday and there are many different religious ways, aren't there?

What we would call, quote, religious ways of celebrating this season. There is the Christian way, obviously. And there is, you know, some who prefer to celebrate it as winter solstice, whatever that means.

And there's Hanukkah, of course. Very religious celebration this time of year. Not really attached in any shape or form to the birth of Christ, obviously, because they don't believe He's come yet.

Then there's also Kwanzaa. Now, we don't hear much about that around here, but in Memphis, I'm telling you, it was a big time way of celebrating Christmas called Kwanzaa.

I'm not going to take the time to explain what that is because I'm not sure what it is. And that was invented by a guy in prison. And it was invented. You won't find it.

[7:16] You can't go back very far. I mean, you can't go back very far in history before there is no Kwanzaa. So it was something that came kind of late. But there are people who celebrate this season not as Christmas, but as Kwanzaa.

So it's not Merry Christmas, it's Happy Kwanzaa, that kind of thing. Well, you can study Kwanzaa on your own. And then there are other ways. I'm not sure if this is the way it's pronounced. Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights.

And I'm sure I've botched how that's pronounced. And then, of course, there are a host of secular ways to celebrate Christmas. In fact, there's probably not a soul in this room that does not participate in some way, in many ways, with kind of the secular side, like Santa Claus and reindeer and, you know, that kind of thing.

There are a lot of ways that people celebrate this season, participate in those celebrations, and I would say that ironically, maybe even ironic is not a strong enough word, Christmas has become something other than the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Not just an addition to it. It used to be that we had additions to the celebration of this season, but it is becoming more and more a subtraction rather than, you know, something that other things have been added to.

[8:58] So really, Christmas has done that. It's gone from addition to subtraction. But I would remind you that it is a Christian celebration.

And though there will be many who would argue that that's all right for you, and if you want to celebrate it your way, that's fine with me, and I'll celebrate it my way this season, and you attach your meaning to Christmas, and I'll attach my own meaning, and, you know, by the way, what makes you think that Christmas has to be just Christian?

Yeah, you might not have had anybody argue with you on those points, but there are many who feel that way. I mean, what makes you think? I mean, you Christians down there, you know, you think you've got a corner on Christmas, and that your way is the only right way?

Right? But the fact is, today, Christmas has become anything but Christian.

Right? Yeah. It really has. You just drive around your neighborhood. Now, if you drive around my neighborhood, you'll see a little nativity out in the front yard. So far, I haven't seen any other nativities.

[10:23] Maybe I haven't been everywhere. I haven't been over to your house. All right. I'm sure there are some, but it is an oddity. Would you agree?

To be driving around the community. Now, maybe it's not as bad here in Bartlesville. I don't know. I haven't driven all around the town yet.

But most places, it's an oddity to find a Christian theme in the yard decorations. And so it's become anything but Christian.

And, you know, we now have public displays of Christmas that really seem to, or attempt to, try to accommodate everybody's faith, accommodate everybody's beliefs or particular desires.

Actually, it seems that there is the desire to accommodate everybody's belief but the Christian. Isn't that right? I mean, there's the menorah for Hanukkah, brightly colored displays for Kwanzaa, and, you know, Christmas trees, of course, and Santa Clauses and reindeers.

[11:43] And I guess for many, that represents the Christian aspect of Christmas. That is in their minds. And now I'm just kind of throwing all this out, and then I'm going to tell you, all that, that's ridiculous.

When you begin to think about it, because Christmas is, I'm going to be very dogmatic here, and suggest to you that Christmas is exclusively a Christian holiday.

Do you agree with that? Hear, hear. I know I'd get some kind of response. And the thing is, we don't need to apologize for that. And yet, we're kind of called upon and even feel the pressure to be somewhat apologetic about it.

But we don't have to apologize about it. And we don't have to stop talking about that. Christmas is Christian, or it is nothing at all. Let me say that again.

Hear, hear. I wasn't trying to get it. But that's all right. Well, I appreciate it. Christmas is Christian, or it is nothing at all.

[13:01] And that's not just the way we believe it. That's just what it is. I mean, just logically speaking. That's what it is. And the significance of Christmas dates back all the way back to the beginning of time itself.

And beyond that, in reality. And I'll ask you, what other form of celebration this time of the year can claim that? Not Santa Claus and Christmas trees, as old as that might be.

Those things started at some point. In fact, it was kind of popularized by the story, Twas the Night Before Christmas, and that was written back in 1890, 1823.

I mean, this whole idea of Santa Claus, at least the way we see him now, that had a beginning point. And, you know, this idea of celebrating winter solstice, or Kwanzaa, and it doesn't go back very far, as we've already mentioned.

Hanukkah goes back a long way, but that doesn't have anything to do with Christmas. It just has to do with events during the intertestamental period, a Jewish significant festival.

[14:20] And so, the meaning and significance of Christmas, again, I would say to you, can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden. And that's what we're going to do here tonight, is trace it all the way back there.

And that, you know, so we trace, and really what we're tracing is not some celebration per se, or some formula for celebration, or some prescribed way of celebrating a certain event or holiday.

What we're doing, when we trace the origin of Christmas, we're tracing God's plan of redemption, His promise of redemption. Promise of a Redeemer to come one day. The Messiah.

And that's what we're tracing, because that's what we're celebrating this time of the year, is the coming of Christ. Our Redeemer. And so, therefore, we can trace it all the way back regarding clear written revelation, we can go all the way back to the book of Genesis.

In fact, specifically, we can go back to chapter 3, and we'll get to that here in just a moment.

Because that's where it began. The promise of redemption, that finds, or found, its fulfillment in a little baby boy that was born to a virgin whose first cradle was in a stable, a crude stable in Bethlehem, who ultimately became the Savior of all who would believe in Him.

[15:53] And so, and I would add this, and I think I put this in your notes, and I think this is a good thing to think about. What will be the benefit of tracing this promise through the Bible?

It'll do several things. In the first place, it will draw us closer, or should draw us closer to a sovereign, loving God whose plan has always been to redeem us through the precious blood of His Son Jesus.

It'll draw us closer to Him. And it will also remove, it should embolden us to remove all need to apologize for the way we believe and celebrate Christmas.

Because we don't need to apologize for that. And also, thirdly, it will stir up, or should stir up within us, a renewed reason to proclaim the truth of Christmas to an unbelieving world.

And we have such a tremendous opportunity this time of year that we really, quite frankly, miss out on. Because we seem to want to hide, hide the Christian aspect of Christmas because we think people don't want to hear that.

[17:07] Alright, now, so let's do that. let's see, I may skip a few things here. Here. Alright, so, His coming, the coming of Christ, which is what we celebrate this time of year, is crucial in all of history.

If you understand what Paul, I believe Paul wrote Hebrews, what he's saying here is crucial. The coming of Christ is crucial to all of history. And Christmas is all about His coming.

And the coming was promised before the beginning of time. And so, our story begins in the Garden of Eden and it begins in those tragic moments after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden.

And paradise then, because that's what it was, perfect paradise was violated by the entrance of sin and in a sense, Satan won the day in a sense.

at least he thought he did. And so, from that moment when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, from that moment on, sin spread to all of creation corrupting everything that it touched.

[18:34] And so, what would God do about that? Would He just destroy Adam and Eve? I mean, they did this dastardly thing to His perfect creation.

Would He destroy them? And along with them, all of planet earth and then start all over again?

Well, you know He didn't do that because we're still here today. And we know the story from Scripture that He did not just simply snuff out Adam and Eve because they did this terrible thing.

And instead He did something else. and He revealed something to them that is very significant for us today. And here's where the story of Christmas begins.

Where God was determined, you know, predetermined, To do something, He would not let Satan win the battle for planet earth.

And so, the rest of the Old Testament is in a sense, and on into the New, is in a sense a progressive unfolding. of God's plan to undo what Adam and Eve had done in the garden.

[19:41] And with the coming of Christ, He's bringing that, He brought that to fulfillment. And so, God made a promise. Alright, so let's trace it then. And I've given you, I don't remember now how many.

I think there's more than six. How about nine? And we'll move through these pretty quickly. I've got plenty of time. No problem. First of all, here it is.

First revealed, and it's going to be progressively revealed to us throughout the Old Testament.

Number one, the Redeemer will come as a member of the human race.

Now, that doesn't sound very profound, but it is profound in the way it was revealed there in Genesis. In fact, in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, we have the promise of a Redeemer, a Deliverer, the promise of the Messiah, and that Redeemer will be a man.

In chapter 3, verse 15, the Bible says, I will put enmity between you, who is he speaking to here?

Satan, the serpent, I will put enmity between you and the woman, that's Eve of course, and between your seed and her seed, her offspring, and not seeds, but seed.

[21:11] It's a reference to the Messiah. he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. You're probably familiar with that portion of Scripture, their revelation, and it is a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Deliverer.

And among other things that we could glean from that passage, because it's a tremendous word there, among other things, the one thing we need to note here is that this Redeemer is going to come from Eve, going to be of a woman, going to be of the human race, right?

I mean, that's very clear, her seed. And here's the promise, the Redeemer when he comes will be the seed of a woman, he will not be some angel, that is, he's not going to be some, you know, just strictly supernatural being, though he will be supernatural, but the idea here is that he's going to be a man, going to be a human man, and he will enter the human race by being born of a woman, that's clear from the prophecy, and he will do battle, do battle with Satan, and he's going to win, according to this passage, and we know the rest of the story, and know that he does win.

And Satan will strike a blow against him, but he will not defeat him. And so he, the Redeemer, the Deliverer, will crush Satan and his power. That's the promise, then, first given there at the very

beginning of the Bible.

Now, Christmas has everything to do. What we celebrate, or should be celebrating, what is the only real substance and reality of Christmas, has everything to do with that promise that was given way back there at the beginning of time, back in Genesis chapter 3.

[23 : 20] Let's move on from there. Next, we also know from Scripture as it progressively reveals this truth about the Messiah, the Redeemer.

Next, the Redeemer will come from the Semitic people, S-E-M-I-T-I-C, in case you need some help with that. I just remember my mom, last time she was here, she said, I really enjoyed your study, but I couldn't spell some of the words you had for the blanks.

I appreciate that. I knew you would. In fact, I noticed you were writing it down wrong. Just kidding. Just kidding.

All right, Genesis chapter 9. Where we need to go to there, chapter 9 and verse 26. The Bible says, and he said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem.

And may Canaan, that's the descendant of Ham, be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant.

[24 : 31] Now, you might think, well, what is all that? Let's get this straight in our mind. The Bible, of course, specifically the Old Testament, is the history of God's redeeming work, redeeming purposes.

And so, you have a lot of things that are left out. You know, you have loose ends on some of the genealogies, and, for example, Noah, here he has three sons, Shem, Ham, Japheth.

And at this juncture, when God gives his blessing on Shem, the history from there on is all about Shem.

All about Shem. Because God's plan of redemption is going to be worked through the lineage of Shem. The Semitic people. Do you understand what I'm saying? We get to a point, and then God branches off into another branch.

We begin with Adam, and then we have his son, Seth. And then from Seth, we have Noah, and then from Noah, we have Shem.

[25 : 46] And God's history, redemptive history, is going to unfold for us in Scripture through these particular chosen branches of humanity.

And so that's how we know from that point on that the Messiah, God's Redeemer, is going to come through Shem. Not through Ham.

Canaanites will come from Ham. Not through Japheth, though he's going to enlarge Japheth. I believe that we are the descendants of Japheth.

Unless we have some Jews in here, or some who are descendants of Jews. And he's going to bless them. But God has blessed Shem, the father of the Semitic people.

Alright, so now let's put this straight. We're just kind of following this through Scripture. The Redeemer is going to be a member of the human race. Not going to be some angel that comes to redeem man.

[26 : 48] He's going to be a man. He's going to be a descendant or come from the Semitic people. Of course, that would be the Jews.

Alright? Third, the Redeemer will be a son of Abraham. A son of Abraham. Many years later, after he gave this promise or this blessing in Genesis chapter 9, many years later, God would speak to Abraham.

Then his name was Abram. Abram, the descendant of Shem, and he spoke to him while he was in his country, the land of Ur of the Chaldees, and God would instruct Abram to leave his home and travel to a land that God would later show to him, and Abraham obeyed, didn't he?

And that land was the promised land, and we know how that story unfolds. And God revealed that the Redeemer would come through Abraham's descendants.

Genesis chapter 12 and verse 2, I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be blessed.

[28 : 06] This is the promise God gave to Abraham. His covenant promise. He would bless all the nations of all the world through Abraham's descendants.

How is he going to bless them? Bless them through the coming of Messiah, his purposes through Messiah. And the Messiah then, the Redeemer, is going to come from Abraham.

Alright, let's go another step further. Next, the Redeemer will be the son of Isaac. The son of Isaac.

Genesis chapter 22 verse 18. I'm taking for granted that many of you know how all these particular personalities and histories connect, and maybe some of you don't, and I think it's just very important for us to see it.

But in Genesis 22 18, the Bible says, in your seed, this is spoken to Abraham, but he's speaking of Abraham's seed, his son, in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.

[29 : 13] Now, who was the seed of Abraham? Isaac. Not Ishmael, who was born of the concubine Hagar.

The promise was not going to be through Ishmael. It was going to be through the seed of Abraham, going to be through Isaac. Alright? He was the son of promise.

Because the promise had been given first to Adam and Eve, then to Noah, then to Shem, Noah's son, then to Abraham, and then would be given once again to Abraham's son, Isaac.

God has a plan. He's got a purpose. He's going to work this out. And it's gradually unfolding for us through these particular personalities chosen by God. Because God's not going to abandon his plan.

Satan thought he had it all worked out, thought he had brought it to a screeching halt. He was able to tempt Eve and Adam, to send in the garden. And he's thinking, that's going to cut it all off.

[30 : 22] And God's not going to be able to do what he wants to do. But God's not forgotten this plan. And he's going to do it. And the Redeemer is going to come. And God's going to send him.

And when he does, he's going to crush Satan's head. And he's going to come through Isaac. Now what happens next? The Redeemer will be the son of Jacob. the son of Jacob.

Isaac had two sons, didn't he? Jacob and Esau. And by Jewish custom, Esau should have received the promise as the firstborn because he came out of the womb first.

But he sold his right to that, didn't he? For a pot of stew. And so would God honor that transaction? I mean, you know, it was acquired by deceit.

Jacob was the deceiver. God going to honor that? Yeah. Yeah, he is. I'm not going to try to explain that. But it's God's plan. God's purpose.

[31 : 30] And he's going to honor that transaction where the birthright passes to Jacob rather than Esau. And the promise passes to Jacob rather than Esau. Even though it was acquired by deceit and trickery of Jacob's heart.

God's going to honor that. And so later, we're kind of jumping ahead here, but in the mysterious vision that Jacob had of the ladder, you know, Jacob's ladder, or stairway, probably more likely was a stairway, translated that way.

But at that experience, God repeats to Jacob the promise that he made to his father before him, Isaac, repeats the promise he gave to Isaac's father, Abraham, who was a descendant of Shem, son of Noah, descendant of Seth, son of Adam, to whom the first promise, or the promise was first given, the promise of the deliverer.

And what did God promise Jacob? Well, let's see that. Genesis 28, 14, also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth, you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east, to the north and the south and you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

There's the same promise given. And it's the promise of Messiah. Let's move another step forward. The Redeemer next will come from the tribe of Judah.

[33 : 05] God's going to start narrowing this down. And although it seems to be broadening, but we need to understand that God's plan was to bring the Messiah, the Redeemer, through the tribe of Judah.

Genesis 49, verse 10, the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the people.

Alright, now, you know from your knowledge of biblical history that Jacob, Isaac's son, Jacob had twelve sons, didn't he?

and which one is going to carry on the promise? Well, by rights, it should have been Reuben, because Reuben was first born.

The Bible says he was passed over because he sinned. And the same was true of Simeon and Levi, who were the next two in line. but when Jacob came to his fourth son, Judah, he uttered here, and I just read it for you, one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible to date.

[34:27] The others have been kind of general, going to bless all the nations of the earth through your seed, but here's an amazing prophecy, it's a messianic prophecy, clearly, a prophecy regarding the Redeemer, and it says here that the scepter, that's the sign of authority, regal, kingly authority, the scepter would rest with Judah.

That's what the prophecy says here, and it would rest with Judah until, until what? Until Shiloh would come. What's that?

Shiloh is a reference to the coming of Messiah. Shiloh is a reference to the Messiah. Shiloh, you might be familiar with the word Shalom. What does Shalom mean?

Peace. Peace. Shiloh is a reference to the one who brings peace. And we have a number of references in Scripture that directly related to Messiah and speak of him as the Prince of Peace. That's Isaiah 9, 6, and 7. the Prince of Peace. Micah 5, 5 says he will be their peace. So Shiloh is a reference to the Messiah. Now, and that's promised to Judah, to the tribe of Judah, that out of Judah the scepter would never be removed from Judah until Shiloh comes.

[35:56] So we know that the Messiah is going to come from Judah, the tribe of Judah, and yet this prophecy was not fulfilled for many, many centuries. It's really rather amazing.

After it was given, Israel's leaders came from other tribes. It started with Moses. Moses was of the tribe of Levi. His successor Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim.

After him, you know, a host of judges, for example, Gideon was of the tribe of Manasseh. Samson was of the tribe of Dan. Samuel from, again, the tribe of Ephraim.

And Israel's first king, who was that? Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin. None of those guys were of the tribe of Judah. So what about this promise?

What about Judah? I mean, the promise of the Redeemer is given to Judah. Well, you might be familiar with the story. Israel's first king, Saul, disobeyed God, and the kingdom was torn from him.

[37:01] And God said, I'm giving it to your neighbor. And God chose a man from the tribe of Judah to be king. And so that leads to the seventh one.

The Redeemer will be a descendant of David. David. In 1 Samuel 16, you see things began to change.

And after rejecting Saul as king, God chooses the youngest son of Jesse, a shepherd boy named David. And he eventually becomes the king of Israel and he will be considered Israel's greatest king because it was in this one man, David, and that one man are bound all the hopes and dreams of the nation of Israel, a nation that was longing for the fulfillment of the ancient promises.

I mean, God has been giving the promise and renewing the promise and renewing the promise and reissuing the promise. I mean, from Adam to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and God keeps giving the promise and so all their hopes suddenly are in this one, in David.

He's of the tribe of Judah and at the peak of David's career, kingly career, God gives an amazing promise to him in 2 Samuel chapter 7 verse 11.

[38:31] 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.

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you who will come from your body and I will establish his kingdom and skip over here to verse 16, and your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you, your throne shall be established forever.

Now that is an amazing prophecy. And of all the prophecies of the coming Messiah, this is the most specific one yet, as you put them all together.

Most specific. And because not only will the deliverer, the redeemer, be from the line of David, he will also rule over David's house and he will reign upon David's throne and more than that, David's house and his kingdom and his throne will last forever.

That's what the prophecy says here. It will last forever. Now, this promise goes beyond all the mere human rulers who followed David.

[39:52] I mean, it could not apply to them. Even the best of them. I mean, there were some real boogers after David. I mean, Israel went through terrible times.

Divided kingdom and all kinds of wicked kings. But even if you pick out the best of them, and you might argue that might be Solomon, and then there was Asa, and Hezekiah, and Josiah, even the best of them could not fulfill this prophecy.

Because their rulership was not forever. And these men were righteous before God, but they could not fulfill the promise that was given originally to Adam and Eve, and carried on throughout the history.

And why could they not do it? Because they were just mere humans. And a mere human could never reign from David's throne forever. mortal men can't do that.

It demands a ruler who will live forever. Right? And what person could fulfill that requirement? Well, you already know.

[40 : 59] But I'm not going to answer that yet, because we're not finished. The promise, you see, has now become very specific, very exclusive, and we have moved from somewhere one who's a mere member of the human race, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, the tribe of Judah, David, and to a descendant of David who will reign on the throne, David's throne forever.

And who could that redeemer be? Where will he come from? And how will he be recognized? Well, that moves us to the next one. The redeemer will be born of a virgin. Bet you didn't know that.

Well, you know, many years pass as the people of God wait for the redeemer to come, and then in the days of King Ahaz, a very wicked king, God once again speaks.

And this time he specifies how the redeemer will enter into the world. This is in Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14, amazing prophecy. Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. And Emmanuel, of course, means God with us. This is a sign given to Ahaz.

[42 : 35] God's we don't have time to go into the history surrounding that. And Isaiah made a great prophecy, a promise from God that he was going to deliver Judah, the kingdom of Judah from the Assyrians.

And Isaiah said, do you want proof of that? Want a sign for that? Just ask whatever you want. I'll give you a sign. I'll give you a sign that he's going to fulfill this promise and deliver you.

And Asa said, I'm not going to ask for any sign. And so Isaiah says, I'll give you one anyway. And here it is, a virgin shall conceive a child. And it was for, obviously for a promise of God's redemption that was not for Ahaz or even God's people at that time.

God did deliver them as he promised. But it was pointing way out into the future. And of course, the idea here is a virgin birth. Now, I wonder what Ahaz thought when he heard that.

In fact, I wonder what Isaiah thought when he gave the prophecy. The Redeemer will be a member of the human race, but he's no ordinary person. He enters the world supernaturally, doesn't he?

[44 : 02] And so therefore, he's fully God, born of a virgin, and at the same time, he's fully man, born of a woman, just like he promised to Eve way back there in the Garden of Eden.

And where will he be born? Well, that leads us to the last one. The Redeemer will be born in Bethlehem. And the prophecy is in Micah 5, verse 2.

But you, Bethlehem, Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting.

That's that last phrase I think important to highlight. The Bible says here from old, of old, some of you might have translation that says antiquity.

The reference is all the way back to Genesis, all the way back to the beginning of history, of antiquity. That's where we've been tracing it, from where we've been tracing it.

[45 : 04] But then when he says from everlasting, he says from antiquity or of old and from everlasting, he's going beyond the beginning in Genesis and going back into eternity.

So the idea here, this explains how this ruler who would sit on David's throne could rule forever. He could rule forever because he is eternal.

He is the eternal Messiah. Now let's put all this together and we'll close this off. When all these prophecies are taken together, we have an amazing portrait of Messiah, really.

puts it all together. He will be a Jew. He will come from the tribe of Judah. He will be a descendant of David. He will be born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin.

We put all that together and then the question is, who could fit that qualification? A whole bunch of people could fit the first qualification to be a Jew.

[46 : 11] quite a number. A lot would, of course, to be a Jew, you'd have to come from the tribe of Judah. A lot could fit that. Fewer still, and yet quite a few, would fit the third qualification, descendant of David.

Very few could fit the fourth qualification, born in Bethlehem. That would really isolate it down quite a bit. And yet, there were probably many born in Bethlehem.

But only one person in history has ever met the fifth qualification, and that is to be born of a virgin.

And of course, his name was Jesus, Jesus of Nazarene.

And when we celebrate Christmas then, that's why I would contend that we don't need to take the nativity away. We don't need to remove the angels and the shepherds and the wise men and the star and the carols that speak of Jesus' birth, because that's what Christmas is.

And we can shout it from the housetops and not apologize for it, because that's what it is. And so that's why I'll go back to one of the first things I said.

[47 : 22] Christmas is Christian, biblical Christianity, or it's not anything at all. And we don't need to apologize for that.

And we don't need to hold back our proclamation of that truth this time of year.

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