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Christmas

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Christmas Meditation

Suppose that Christ had not been born
That far away Judean morn.

Suppose that God, whose mighty hand
Created worlds, had never planned

A way for man to be redeemed.
Suppose the Wise Men only dreamed

That guiding star whose light still glows
Down through the centuries. Suppose

Christ never walked here in men's sight,
Our blessed way, and truth, and light.

Suppose he'd counted all the cost,
And never cared that we were lost.

And never died for you and me.
Nor shed his blood on Calvary

Upon a shameful cross. Suppose
That having died he never rose.

And there was none with power to save
Our souls from darkness and the grave!

As far as pitious heathen know,
These things that I've "supposed"—are so!

—Martha Snell Nicholson.

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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

—Isaiah 9:6
WHAT MAKES CHRISTMAS

It was not the angels' singing
  Gave the Christmas thought,
Not the precious gold and incense
  By the wise men brought;

Not the shining star that led them
  On their unknown way;
'Twas the Christ within the manger
  Made the Christmas Day.

So 'tis not the tree and presents
  Make OUR Christmas Day,
'Tis not what we get that counts,
  But — what we give away.

'Tis the joy of loving service
  Makes the glad hours bright,
Thinking first of others' pleasures,
  Self put out of sight.

We need never mourn that Christmas
  Comes but once a year,
Since the blessedness of giving
  Brings the Christmas cheer.

If we keep the Christmas spirit
  In our hearts alway,
Through the whole year we can make it
  Christmas every day.

—Annie Johnson Flint.

CHRISTMAS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible is a marvelous and amazing Book. God wants all men to believe and to receive its message. For this reason He has given "many infallible proofs" of its divine inspiration. One of these evidences is that of the unity of the Bible. The Bible is one in its purpose — to reveal God and His gracious redemptive plan for the world; it is one in its plan — to unveil Christ, the great Redeemer. The oneness of the Bible indicates its Penman — the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20-21). The only possible answer to the Bible's amazing unity is the fact that it has really only one Author who clearly sees the beginning from the end and who has woven the plot from Genesis to Revelation without a single contradiction or inconsistency!

CHRIST THE THEME OF THE BIBLE

Those who know their Bible are not surprised when we announce that we are going to study "Christmas in the Old Testament". They understand that Christ is the theme of the Bible, that He is found everywhere in the Bible, that the Bible is as full of Christ as the ocean is full of water!

On that eventful first Easter Sunday our Risen Lord appeared unrecognized to two of His disciples (Luke 24:13-35). They were terribly depressed in spirit and broken of heart because all their hopes were shattered at the apparent failure of Christ to rise from the dead. It is true that they had heard rumors of the resurrection, but they did not believe. To these disciples the Saviour said, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (vv. 25-27). He began with the books of Moses, moved on through the prophets, and the indication is that He used the entire Old Testament to show the disciples the inevitability of the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead.
In the same passage (Luke 24) there is clear evidence that Jesus Christ is the theme of the entire Scriptures. Again, it is the first Easter, now evening. Jesus appears at the hiding-place of the disciples and convinces them of the resurrection (vv. 33-43). While they gazed at Him in wonder and awe He spoke: “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (vv. 44-45). Here He specifically mentioned each part of the Old Testament according to the Hebrew plan of division — the exact books of the Old Testament contained in our Bibles today! And He tells us that He is the theme of every section!

The Key to the Scripture, then, is our Lord Jesus Christ, and no one can possibly understand the Bible until he can recognize Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God and only Saviour of the world. Let us employ this sacred Key to unlock several Old Testament Scriptures having to do with the first advent of Christ — Christmas in the Old Testament!

THE IMPACT OF THE ADVENT

Before we study a number of Old Testament texts concerning the coming of Christ into the world in His first Advent, it might be well for us to refresh our thinking as to the meaning of that memorable event. In the first place, the advent was the fulfillment of the very Scriptures we shall be studying. This means that the Bible is the Word of God! God must be the Author of an account written many centuries before a predicted event took place and that, in its fulfillment, was literally and exactly and minutely so!

In the second place, the first Advent of Christ is an occasion of tremendous joy. Rightly did the angel say, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). The content of those “tidings” is given in the angel’s next statement: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.” The season of the year in which we are even now living is one of the happiest periods of the year — why? because we think of His coming into the world to be our Saviour.

The first Advent of Christ drew from men their spontaneous worship and adoration (Matt. 2:10-12). Dear friend, your contemplation of our Lord’s coming into the world will surely produce this same response and you will find His Name in praise often upon your lips.

Once again, the Advent was a divisive event. The coming of Christ into the stream of human history split that history into two parts — B. C. and A. D. — before Christ and after Christ. Every time you write a date or glance at a calendar you are indicating the fact that the advent of Christ was the turning point of time.

Christ is also the divider of men. In fact, He is the great divider of mankind. He confronts every man and demands a decision. He questions every soul, “Whom do ye say that I am? What think ye of Christ; whose Son is He?” There is no middle ground. There is no fence to straddle. Either you are for Him or against Him. If you are not for Him you are not and cannot be neutral — you are against Him (Matt. 12:30). Christ did come into the world. You must decide who He is and take your stand.

CHRISTMAS IN GENESIS

Regarding the greatest miracle of all, Christ Himself, the Old Testament has much to say. I want us to think together of several of the passages in the Old Testament which speak of Him in His first advent. One such text is Genesis 3:15. This verse is the initial signpost of the Old Testament pointing toward that first Christmas Day. Note the wording: “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.”

You are no doubt familiar with the setting of this verse: Satan had just been successful in beguiling Eve; she had eaten of the prohibited fruit and had influenced her husband to do the same. This may seem a very harmless act, but in it was deliberate rebellion against God, and the seed of death for all mankind (Rom. 5:12). The punishment of the Almighty upon these actors in the world’s first anarchy is described in Gen. 3:14-19. Part of the curse was pronounced upon Satan the instigator of the uprising against God. Our text tells us that the seed of the woman would be in mortal conflict with the seed of the serpent. While the seed of the woman would ultimately inflict a mortal wound, in the process of the struggle He Himself would not emerge unscathed.

The seed of the serpent is the unholy seed, the vast host of unregenerate and unbelieving men, ultimately to produce the “man of sin”, the Antichrist, Satan’s counterfeit Christ and abortive candidate for world dominion. The seed of the woman is the holy seed, the people of God, and prophetically, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the virgin-born Son of God and great Victor over the devil.

**The Problem of the Fall**

One of the questions frequently asked of Bible teachers is this: “God surely knew that Adam and Eve would fall and bring ruin into the world. Why, then, did He proceed with His plan to create and thus deliberately introduce untold tragedy and sorrow and suffering into the world?” This is a good question and one for which there is a reply. In the first place, the greatest good is the revelation of God so that men may love and serve Him. God could not be revealed as Grace were it not for the Fall; He could not be revealed as Love if it were not for the receiving of sinners through Christ; He could not be revealed as Justice if there were no sin to judge and punish.

The record of the creation and prohibition of man in Genesis is beautifully descriptive of the dignity of human nature. God made man in His own image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) thus constituting man the highest creature. Part of man’s dignity consisted in his right and ability of free choice. God gave man the privilege of prohibition as an indication of his exalted nature and as an opportunity to express his love and appreciation to his Creator by volitionally choosing right and eschewing wrong.

In the third place, surely God would never have created at all in view of the Fall if He had not already decreed to save a mighty host of the fallen through the sacrifice of His Son and thus preserve for eternity a worthy trophy of His love and grace. The fact of creation presupposes an act of redemption. Before the curse God prepared the Cross.

Now, in Gen. 3:15 I want us to see three things: the conflict, the cross, the crown.

**Christmas Means Conflict**

This first promise of Christmas in the Old Testament is wonderfully full of prophetic truth. It speaks of conflict. God said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” This conflict has worked itself out in every realm of the believer’s experience.

There is first of all conflict in the soul. The words of Gen. 3:15 imply that there had begun with the Fall a terrific struggle between right and wrong, between truth and error, between light and darkness. There is not a believer in the world who has not experienced this truth. Study Romans 7 and see how the Apostle Paul became aware of the conflict. Through the new birth Paul had become aware of sin. He saw sin as something exceedingly sinful. He learned to hate sin. His soul became sensitive to everything that displeased God and for the first time in his life
he saw himself as God saw him. The picture was not lovely (cf. v. 18). Paul had a battle on his hands (cf. vv. 23-24). Thank God he won the victory, as every humble believer wins it, through the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 25).

There is also the conflict of the believer with the world. This antagonism is evident wherever the child of God lives in full obedience to the Word of God. It is impossible to live for Christ and not come into open conflict with the world. This is part of the meaning of our text. Every young Christian and every new Christian needs to be made aware of this truth. If he does not know that the battle line has been drawn, he may become disillusioned and despondent when he finally comes to the realization that the world is not sympathetic to Christ and the Gospel. Let the believer read John 15:18-25; James 4:4, and 1 John 2:15-17.

CHRISTMAS MEANS THE CROSS

It may seem strange to anticipate the Cross in connection with Christmas, but this must be done. The climax of the conflict suggested by Gen. 3:15 came at Calvary. Christ came into the world for the express purpose of dying (John 1:29; I Peter 1:19-20). He became the "seed" of the woman (the Virgin Mary) in order that He might become the Saviour of men. The cradle means nothing without the Cross.

Will you note how carefully the Holy Spirit protects the virgin birth of Christ by referring to the "seed" of the woman! God did not say the seed of Adam, or the seed of Man, but the seed of the woman. The Bible is fully consistent in this as in every other matter. The Bible guards the virgin birth of Christ because upon this truth hinges Christ's redemptive work. His virgin birth enabled Him to have a true humanity yet uncontaminated with human sin (II Cor. 5:21; Hebrews 7:26).

If the Lord Jesus had been born exactly as every man is born, He would have needed a Saviour, too. But He was born of the Virgin, conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit and brought forth by her without sin. This blessed Sinless Christ then went to Calvary, the spotless substitute for sinners, the only one qualified to assume man's guilt and sin and to provide an acceptable sacrifice. Thus by faith in Him and His finished work all who believe are freely forgiven, justified for ever, and enter into peace with God (Rom. 3:21-31; 5:1; 8:31-39; Gal. 3:10-13).

Thus the Cradle and the Cross must both loom large before the eyes of us all. We dare not think of the one without the other. The Cradle and the Cross both speak of the failure of man. The first Adam failed in obedience and in devotion as the representative man; the Lord Jesus as the "last Adam" (I Cor. 15:45-49) perfectly fulfilled the will of God from His heart, and stands as the victorious Representative of God's elect (Romans 5:12-21).

The Cradle and the Cross speak of the plan and purpose of God in salvation. The very first promise in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15) include both the virgin birth and the vicarious suffering. With regard to the suffering notice that, although it is intense, yet it is not fatal — it is a heel-wound. He died, yes, but He rose again! He suffered the pains of death, it is true — but they were pains of travail and through them He has brought many sons into glory (Isa. 53:11; Heb. 2:10). We do not, dare not, and cannot minimize the sufferings of the Saviour (Isa. 53; Psalm 22). But He came "through the valley of the shadow of death" and is now exalted with a "name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9-11).

CHRISTMAS MEANS THE CROWN

The wonderful text that we have been studying (Gen. 3:15) speaks forcibly of the conflict and of the cross, but it also speaks of the crown. The Holy Spirit through Moses writes: "... it (the seed of the woman — Christ) shall bruise thy head..." This means that although the ser-
pent’s attack on Christ will result in a “heel-wound”, the Saviour’s attack on Satan will result in a “head-wound”! At Calvary Christ was wounded and at Calvary Satan was slain. The devil was put to death at Calvary, rendered helpless as far as the elect of God are concerned (John 10:28-29), and prophetically Calvary speaks of the coming judgment of Satan with his ultimate consignment to the eternal flames of hell (Rev. 19-20).

The “heel-wound” of Christ was healed three short days and nights after it was inflicted. The Cross of Christ became a signpost pointing to the empty tomb. Forty days after the Resurrection the Saviour returned to Glory (Acts 1:9-11). There He was set at God’s right hand in the heavenly places, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” How wonderful that in the Providence of God His children know the meaning of Christmas and praise Him now, gratefully, volitionally, and lovingly. This is the true Christmas spirit.

CHRISTMAS IN ISAIAH

Let us turn from Genesis and take up the book of Isaiah for a moment or two. We have previously mentioned the marvelous harmony of the prophetic word. Here in Isaiah 7:14 is another indication of this truth, where we meet the virgin-born Son of God once more.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH IN ISAIAH

In Isaiah 7:14 the emphasis is on the virgin birth: “The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” We are all familiar with the recent error committed by the translators of the new Revised Standard Version of the Bible with regard to this verse. Although it is true that the Hebrew word used in Isaiah might, under different circumstances be translated “a young woman”, yet, in this statement in Isaiah 7:14, only one translation is permissible, and that is “virgin”! Now, the reason we make this statement so emphatically is because the Holy Spirit, the divine author of the Bible, gives His own interpretation of the Isaiah 7:14 passage in Matt. 1:22-23, and here He uses the word “virgin”. Matthew tells us that the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is the direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14.

WHY MEN OPPOSE THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Oftentimes the question is written in to us at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, “Can a person be a Christian and not believe in the virgin birth of Christ?” The answer to this question is “No”. I have talked with leaders of the church who have told me that they think the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ to be unimportant! Dear friends, I say this with conviction — no man can claim the name of Christian and deny the virgin birth!

A denial of the virgin birth of Christ runs directly counter to the very clearest teaching of the Word of God. It is surely inconsistent for any person who claims to accept the Bible as the Word of God to refuse to accept the witness of Matthew and of Luke with regard to the virgin birth. God’s acceptance of man is conditioned by man’s
acceptance of God's Word. The Bible gives us God's full revelation on the subject of salvation. Part of this revelation is the fact of the virgin birth of Christ. Anyone who reads Matt. 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38 cannot come to any other conclusion than that both of these writers are stating in the clearest possible terms the virgin birth of Christ. The only escape by those who deny this fact is to say that these portions of the Bible are not genuine and not inspired!

But why should anyone want to deny the teaching of the Bible regarding the virgin birth? One reason is because some men have difficulty with the supernatural — they feel that they cannot accept the miraculous. They feel that somehow God has limited Himself to His own laws, apparently not even contemplating the fact that they may not know all there is to know about God's laws and how He operates in His own universe! Once let a man admit the fact of God and the miraculous becomes not only possible but expected. If God made the universe out of nothing surely every miracle in the Bible is consistent with His nature!

Again, some men deny the virgin birth of Christ because this event, if true, is evidence of the divine nature of Christ, and it thus militates against the unity of God: in other words, it is a proof of the Trinitarian concept of God taught by the Bible. Now, this doctrine is repugnant to some on logical and philosophical grounds. To the Christian, however, any fact of revelation is acceptable even though it may not seem to be reasonable. The Christian is humble enough to admit that even though he cannot fathom some things revealed in the Word of God he can believe them. That the Bible teaches the Trinity is without question. The one God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit — a trinity in unity. We may one day understand this mystery. Until then we rest confidently in the revelation of Scripture, and rejoice in each of the Blessed Three, gratefully acknowledging the part each has in the redemptive process.

Yet others deny the doctrine of the virgin birth because this doctrine teaches that God became man and assumed a true human body. Men instinctively feel that if the Incarnation is true then God intends to perpetuate the body and that the sins of the body will be punishable in the body. The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ corroborates this fear, and keeps ever before the sinner's eyes his coming judgment for the sins of the flesh (Acts 17:30-32).

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUARDS THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Many of us have heard it said from time to time that the virgin birth of Christ is not an essential doctrine. The basis for this statement, we are told, is that the Bible does not emphasize the doctrine; in fact, they say, the term is not even used in the Epistles, and none of the Apostles stress the doctrine in their teaching. We cannot accept this as a valid reason. The virgin birth of Christ is taught in the clearest terms in the Gospels and is assumed or alluded to in many places in the New Testament (viz. Phil. 2:5-11).

But even if the entire Bible were silent on the doctrine of the virgin birth with the exception of Matthew and Luke, these two references would be adequate to establish it as a fact. We cannot take up Matt. 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38 in detail in this little booklet. Suffice it to say that the terminology is conclusive. It is the clear intention of the Holy Spirit to explain how Jesus was born: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise . . .” (Matt. 1:18). Before the marriage of Joseph and Mary was consummated, she was found to be pregnant! Joseph knew that he was not the baby's father (v. 19). The angelic messenger put the troubled mind of Joseph at ease by explaining Mary's condition (vv. 20-21). Normal marriage relations were not entered into by Joseph and Mary until after the birth of Jesus in order to safeguard subsequent misunder-
standing on the part of any as to the virgin birth of Christ. The Lukan account is equally lucid and impossible of any other interpretation than that Jesus was Virgin-born.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Not through stubbornness nor tradition do Bible-believing Christians hold the doctrine of the Virgin birth. We accept this teaching, first of all, because it is the truth. The Author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit. He is called Holy because that is His nature. The Holy Spirit cannot lie. Thus His teaching on every subject is the absolute truth. He teaches the Virgin birth of Christ, therefore every Christian believes this doctrine, for he will not be guilty of charging the blessed Holy Spirit with error or deception.

In the second place, the truth of the Virgin birth of Christ is bound inseparably with the very nature of Christ. Was Christ born as every man is born? If so He too needed a Saviour for men are by nature “the children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). All have sinned and “come short of the Glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), — all, that is, but the Lord Jesus. His humanity was protected from the sin of Adamic nature, from inherited depravity and corruption, by the Virgin birth (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26).

The implications of denial of the Virgin birth should be considered. If the Lord Jesus was not virgin born and Joseph was not His father, then a terrible blot is indelibly affixed to Mary’s name, and she becomes an impure woman. All that we read about Mary in the Gospels militates against any suggestion of unchastity on her part, and surely God would never have chosen an impure woman to be the mother of His Son!

To disbelieve the Virgin birth casts terrible aspersion on our blessed Lord. If He was not born of the virgin, and Joseph was not His father, then He was an illegitimate child! To even think such a thing about the sinless Christ is blasphemy!

The Holy Spirit through Isaiah tells us that the virgin-born son was to be called “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). Matthew interprets this word to mean “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). The Lord Jesus Christ is God; He is God with us — fully identified with our humanity, and fully identified with our sin by assuming our guilt and paying the price thereof; He is God with us — poor, miserable, lost sinners that we are, the Lord Jesus came to be our Saviour. Study Romans 5:8-11, and Ephesians 2:1-10 in this connection.

Dear friend, the very center and circumference of Christmas is Christ. Do you love Him as your Saviour and your Lord? The heart of Christmas is Christ in the heart. Is He in your heart?
HELP TO

Give the winds
a mighty
VOICE!

Pray THAT GOD WILL CONTINUE TO USE THE
BROADCASTS TO BRING SOULS TO CHRIST AND TO
BUILD UP BELIEVERS IN THE ETERNAL TRUTHS OF
HIS WORD.

Tell YOUR FRIENDS TO TUNE IN TO THE BROAD-
CASTS. WRITE FOR A FREE BROCHURE LISTING THE
STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WEST CARRYING
THESE TESTIMONIES FOR CHRIST.

Give REGULARLY MONTH BY MONTH FOR THE
MAINTENANCE OF THE PROGRAMS OVER YOUR
LOCAL STATION. ONE DOLLAR WILL TAKE THE
GOSPEL TO MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND PEOPLE,
MANY OF WHOM WOULD NOT ATTEND CHURCH
SERVICES.

"Little is much ... when God is in it!"