

Christmas 2023

“The Story of Christmas-Part 2”

The Story Continues With A Prophecy

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

12/10/23

Find this weeks' sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

Last week, in honor of the Christmas season, we started a four-part series which I've entitled *“The Story of Christmas”*. As I said to begin this series, when we think of the story of Christmas, we tend to think of it as presented in the gospels—but actually the Christmas story began four thousand years earlier in the Garden of Eden.

Why do I believe this? I believe it because that's where the first sin happened, that's where man fell—and that's where the story of redemption begins.

You need to understand that the story of Christmas is really the story of *redemption*—or at least part of it.

The story of redemption begins with a promise—a promise from God in Genesis 3:15 that someday He would send a Redeemer, a Savior to save us from our sin and give us eternal life. That's why I entitled the first message of this series simply—*“The Story Begins with a Promise”*.

That brings us this morning to the second message in our Story of Christmas series—*“The Story Continues with a Prophecy”*.

The story of Christmas is the story of Jesus' First Coming to the earth.

When we talk about the prophecies surrounding Jesus' First Coming—you need to understand that there are over 300 of them—for example:

- **Isaiah 53** tells us He would lead a hard life, that He would be a Man acquainted with grief and suffering.
- **Psalms 41:9** says that someone close to Him, a dear and trusted friend would betray Him.
- **Zechariah 11:11-13** tells us how much He would be betrayed for—30 pieces of silver and that His betrayer would throw the money down in the Temple and that it would be used to buy a potter's field.
- **Isaiah 50 & 52** foretell of the savage beating He would receive at the hands of His captors—the vicious scourging and the ripping out of His beard.
- **Psalms 22** describes more vividly and graphically than the N.T. the way He would die—crucifixion, which was prophesied 500 years before crucifixion was invented by the Persians and roughly 900 years before the Romans began to use it as a form of execution.
- **Psalms 16** and other passages speak of His resurrection.

There are many other prophecies that give us a detailed look into Messiah's life and earthly ministry—as I said over 300 that deal with Jesus' first coming alone.

Now let me stop here and say that skeptics believe that Jesus simply read the prophecies in the Scriptures concerning the Messiah and then went about trying to fulfill them so He could claim to be the Messiah. He could do that with some of the prophecies—but with most of them that would be extremely difficult—like getting Judas to betray Him for exactly 30 pieces of silver or getting the Romans to cast lots for His cloak.

With others—it would be absolutely impossible (like rising from the dead!).

But putting the resurrection aside for a moment—Jesus fulfilled 3 prophecies by just being born—He didn't do anything!

- **2 Samuel 7** tells us that Messiah would be a descendant of King David which would eliminate every other family on the face of the earth—as the old saying goes “*you can pick your friends but not your family.*”
- **Micah 5:2** tells us He would be born in Bethlehem in the region (county) of Ephrathah (there was another Bethlehem up in Galilee)—which eliminates every other place in the world.

In Jesus' day this Bethlehem was a small town which meant the number of baby boys born there was very small and therefore the odds against Messiah being born in such a small town were astronomical!

- **Daniel 9:24-27** tells us that Messiah would be born sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (which took place in 70 AD)—that eliminates every other time in the history of the world which greatly increases the odds against the timing of Messiah's birth.

Now before we go any further, let's ask ourselves why one quarter of God's Word is prophecy?

What is the purpose of prophecy? It's two-fold:

1. To prove that the God of the Bible is the one and only true God knowing the end from the beginning

But also prophecy is God's stamp of authenticity upon His Word—

Isaiah 46:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, ¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times *things* that are not *yet done*...

2. To keep hope in God's promises alive in every generation

We see this especially with regard to the story of Christmas—the story of Jesus' first coming.

After God gave the initial promise in Genesis 3:15 that He would someday send a Savior Who would save us from the power of sin and death—He then kept affirming that promise down through the centuries with various prophecies.

These prophecies served to “*stoke the fires of hope*” so that the fire would never go out and that every generation would never forget what God had promised so that hope would stay alive until the promise could be fulfilled.

Now this morning I'd like to focus on just one of Jesus' First Coming prophecies—the one that I think is the most important of them all. I say that it's the most important prophecy of all of His First Coming prophecies because—without the reality of this prophecy mankind couldn't be saved.

Listen, where the Messiah would be born, how much money He would be betrayed for and whether or not the Roman soldiers cast lots for His cloak—are all important pieces of information that help us to identify the true Messiah—important to His identity, but not critical to His mission.

But this one prophecy is absolutely vital to the success of Messiah's mission—and in fact, it's the one prophecy that is at the very heart of the Christmas story. That's because it's the one implied in the *promise* that we studied last week—the promise that started the whole story of Christmas in the first place.

Genesis 3:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.

¹⁵ **And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."**

Right here in Genesis 3:15 we have the first place in Scripture where the gospel is alluded to. In verse 15 God promises that the woman's **Seed** (Messiah) would someday crush the **Serpent's head** (Devil)—a mortal wound spelling absolute defeat—but first Satan would *bruise* the Messiah's heel.

This is a reference to the suffering and physical death that Jesus would endure on the cross, but which would not result in His ultimate defeat—because (as the gospels tell us) three days later He rose from the dead victorious as He conquered over sin, Satan, and death itself!

❖ The fact that He is called the *woman's Seed* is a vital piece of prophetic information!

Every first-year biology student knows that the *seed* in conception comes from the man not the woman—the woman provides the *egg* that the man's seed fertilizes.

For centuries Christian theologians have taught that the "**Seed of the woman**" is a clear reference to the fact that this *Deliverer* (Messiah) would be virgin born.

➤ *Are we reading too much into this?*

Well, many centuries later God repeated this important prophecy in a less 'veiled' and more direct and clear way—and it is upon *this* prophecy that we want to focus the rest of our attention this morning—

Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Much controversy has swirled around this prophecy of "**the virgin**" giving birth. Liberal theologians, who deny the virgin birth, are quick to point out that the Hebrew word translated '**virgin**' is *almah*. They say the word *almah*, strictly speaking, means '*a young woman of marriageable age*' and therefore doesn't *have* to mean 'a virgin'.

However, the word *almah* is never used in the Old Testament to speak of a *married* woman—only a young single woman. So, this leaves only two options—the *almah* prophesied about in Isaiah 7:14 must either be:

a. A young woman who conceived a child out of wedlock.

OR

b. A virgin.

The fact that Isaiah uses the definite article “**the**” (“*the virgin*” not “*a virgin*”) indicates that this woman and this conception would be something *unique*—and therefore would be a clear sign that God was at work! The birth of a child to a young *unmarried* woman is so common it could hardly be a “**sign**” of anything!

Furthermore, the word *almah* always indicates a *virgin* in every other place it’s used in the Old Testament. In fact, Martin Luther offered a hundred guilders (roughly \$50) to anyone who could show any other place in the Old Testament where the word *almah* is translated “*young woman*” rather than “virgin.”

No one took him up on his offer because his critics knew he was right!

Finally, for evangelical Christians, all controversy is put to rest by Matthew, who under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when he quoted from Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:23) chose the Greek word *parthenos* which no one disputes always refers to a virgin.

➤ The question is—*why would this Deliverer need to be virgin born?*

It’s because the Bible teaches that sin (the sin nature and therefore the curse) is passed down from the father to the children not from the *mother* to the children—“*In Adam all die*” (1 Corinthians 15:22)—not in Eve all die.

If Messiah would have had an earthly father, he would have inherited a sin nature from him (passed down from Adam) and therefore couldn’t have died for sinners since he himself would have also been a sinner.

Therefore, this Redeemer couldn’t have been a mere mortal man—a *man yes*—but not a fallen man having an earthly father, which means—**He would have to be virgin born!** The only possibility for that would be if the Seed of this Messiah could be supernaturally implanted in the womb of a virgin by God Himself—

Luke 1:26–35, 37 (NKJV)

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name *was* Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!” ²⁹ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” ³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God...*” ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Matthew 1:18–25 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and

not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:²³ "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*" which is translated, "God with us."²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife,²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Jesus was no mere man.

He was and is the Son of God—
God in human flesh—
fully God and fully Man.

The fact that Jesus was fully God and fully man is what theologians have called the '*Hypostatic union*' used to describe the union of Christ's humanity and divinity into one single Person.

Mary was Messiah Jesus' mother and God the Father was His Father and as such He was the 'God-Man'—the only Man ever born without sin and therefore the only One who could have died for sinners.

Now, at this point we need to stop and clear up a false doctrine concerning Jesus' birth that some of the cults have embraced—that when He was conceived in Mary's womb is when He received life (came into existence)—something called the 'Arian Heresy.'

Arias taught that Jesus was a created being—that He was greater than a mere mortal man but less than Almighty God.

One author said—

"The Arian heresy, that Jesus was a created being and not God from all eternity, remained 'buried' in the Church among apostate Christians down through the centuries and was eventually 'resurrected' to become the foundational doctrine of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, also known as Jehovah's Witnesses (among others who have embraced this heresy as well)."

The Bible is clear that Jesus was not a created being but is Almighty God and as such had no beginning and will have no end—in other words He is eternal—

Micah 5:2 (NKJV)

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *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 of old, from everlasting."

Psalms 90:2 (NKJV)

² Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Again, this refutes Arian and Jehovah Witness heresy—that Jesus was a created being who came into existence when he was conceived in Mary's womb.

But the greatest Scripture on the subject is the one we looked when we first started studying John's gospel.

John opened his gospel by telling us that the true Jesus—wasn't a created being—He has eternally existed as the Second Person of the Trinity—

John 1:1-3, 14 (NKJV)

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made...[if Jesus made all things, then He Himself couldn't have been made or created]

¹⁴ **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...**

The Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us speaks of the incarnation which is the climax of the story of Christmas—but not the climax of the story of redemption.

The whole purpose of redemptive history is so that '*paradise lost*' could become '*paradise found (restored)*.' Or in other words—so that fellowship with God that was *lost* in the Garden of Eden through man's sin could be fellowship *restored* forever by the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross for fallen sinners!

You see it was God's desire from the very beginning to have deep personal fellowship with us which started in the Garden—but which sin interrupted by separating us from Him. Restoring this fellowship so that man could once again worship God and enjoy Him for all eternity was always the goal of redemptive history—that God could be our Immanuel (God with us) forever.

In the Old Testament, God called the nation of Israel to be the illustration of this—a people that would in fellowship with Him—a nation He would be with—a nation that would be the recipient of His love, provision, protection and blessings.

Unfortunately, Israel eventually turned its back on Him and got into idolatry and gross immorality—and their sin separated them from Him. (Ezekiel 10)

Sin has always been the problem of broken fellowship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and no matter how much man tried to walk in obedience to the laws of God, he failed—because as Jesus told Peter "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" (Matthew 26:41)

So, God instituted a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33) that basically took fellowship (positional, salvation fellowship) out of man's hands altogether and placed solely upon God.

He did this by sending His Son to die for our sins and give us a new nature once we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior—which broke sin's hold on our lives and made us new creations.

Our relationship with God was restored—we became the people of Almighty God which allowed Him (Jesus) to say to us, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you!*" (Hebrews 13:5)

In other words, He would now and forevermore be our Immanuel—"God with us" in permanent unbroken fellowship! Yet, at this time in human history (in America at least) we are living in dark and troublesome times—politically, morally, and spiritually. As such, many people don't '*feel*' God's presence with them—they feel alone, forsaken, depressed, and hopeless.

➤ *How are we to cope with all the stress, fear and uncertainty for the future?*

➤ *How do we cope?* **By faith!** And by clinging to the God’s promises and prophecies!

God sent Isaiah to His people living in the southern Kingdom of Judah to promise them that He would send Immanuel to be with them and that promise comforted them—but only if they believed it and clung to it.

But listen, what they had to *hope* for—we have seen the fulfillment of! Because for us Immanuel has come—that’s what Christmas celebrates!

Jesus gave us the same promise to hold onto to bring comfort to our hearts in these difficult and troublesome days we’re living in—*“I am with you always—I will never leave you nor forsake you!”* Keep reminding yourself that God is with you—and He will never ever stop being with you if you’ve repented of your sins and received Jesus as your Savior!

Don’t fear, you’re not going through any problem or crisis alone—*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me...”* (Psalm 23:4a)

No matter how black things look, keep reminding yourself that **He is there with you** and that with God—nothing is impossible!

Isn’t that what the angel Gabriel said to Mary when he first announced to her that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah and she said, *“How can this be possible—I’m a virgin?”*

To which Gabriel responded, *“Mary it’s possible because—with God all things are possible!”*

Merry Christmas!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— ***you can experience the richest Christmas of your life!***

Please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).