

# REASONS FOR CHRISTMAS, OUR SIN

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By Pastor Stan  
Matthew 1:19-21

**PASTOR STAN WEESE**

**SERMON SERIES: THE REASONS FOR THE SEASON**

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INTRO.

-- All of us are familiar with the slogan "Jesus Is the Reason for the Season," which is intended to remind people that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth. While the statement is true, it is incomplete. There are actually multiple reasons for Christmas - multiple reasons for Jesus' birth. To really understand why "Jesus is the reason for the season" you need to understand why Jesus' birth was necessary.

So, what I want us to do each Sunday during this advent season that starts today is to look at one of the reasons for the Christmas season - one of the reasons for Jesus' coming to earth, born as a baby in Bethlehem.

-- We begin today with the reason revealed by God in the angel's appearance to explain Mary's pregnancy to Joseph.

Cf., Matthew 1:19-21

## I. The Angel's Announcement (Matthew 1:19-21)

### A. The Angel's Reassurance for Joseph

-- When Joseph discovered that his fiancée, Mary, was expecting, he assumed, of course, that she had been unfaithful to him and that another man had fathered the child. Not wanting to make a spectacle by shaming Mary publicly, Joseph decided to end their betrothal as quietly as possible.

-- God intervened by sending an angel to appear to Joseph in a dream and to disclose to Joseph the true nature of Mary's pregnancy. The message that the angel announced to Joseph was one that Joseph had quite literally never dreamed of until that night.

### B. The Angel's Revelation about the Baby

-- After reassuring Joseph that Mary's pregnancy was not the result of Mary's unfaithfulness but of God's supernatural working, the angel revealed to Joseph vital information about the baby.

#### 1. The Baby's Identity

-- The angel instructed Joseph to name the baby "Jesus," the Greek version of the Hebrew name "Joshua," which means "Yahweh saves." The name points to Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah.

#### 2. The Baby's Purpose

-- And the angel made clear the reason that this child will be born.  
v. 21b, "for he will save his people from their sins."

##### a. "His People"

-- When the angel used the expression "his people," Joseph would have naturally understood that to mean the Jewish people. But we know that "his people" is much more inclusive than that. "His people" refers not to Israel but to the Church, not to those who were born Jews but to those who are born again by receiving and believing in Jesus.

##### b. "Will Save&hellip;from Their Sin"

-- The reason that this baby will be born is that He would become the Savior, the One who would "save his people from their sin."

-- The first-century Jews were expecting a Messiah, but they were not expecting the One that God sent. They were expecting a Messiah who would save them from the Rome; they were not expecting a Messiah who would save them from their sins. Yet, that's exactly what the angel said would be the Messiah's mission. The central reason for Jesus' birth was to save us from sin and its consequences. Indeed, Jesus would repeatedly reaffirm this as His mission.

**Matthew 20:28** the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

**Matthew 26:28** this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

-- What the angel announced to Joseph was that God was fulfilling the promise made immediately following mankind's first sin in the Garden.

## II. Adam's Sin & God's Promise (Genesis 3)

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### A. Adam & Eve's Disobedience

1. The story of Adam and Eve's disobedience is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible. You remember that after He created Adam and Eve, God placed them in the perfect, idyllic setting of the Garden of Eden where they were surrounded by a wide variety of beautiful fruit-bearing trees. The trees were God's gift to the couple bearing His image. They could eat as freely as they desired from and all of the trees, with just one exception - the tree in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Concerning that tree God said:

**Genesis 2:16b-17** From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

2. Stated positively, so long as he obeyed God, Adam would enjoy life and fellowship with God. This was what theologians have termed the Covenant of Works. In a covenant God enters into a relationship with people by imposing requirements and by making certain promises for fulfilling those requirements. The requirement in the Covenant of Works was for Adam to refrain from eating the forbidden tree. The promise was continued life in the Garden for obedience. The promise was conditioned on Adam's obedience, Adam's works.

3. But one day Satan came in the form of a serpent to tempt and entice Eve to eat of that forbidden tree. He called God's warning a lie, telling Eve that eating from the tree would not cause her to die but would instead liberate her and raise her to a higher level of consciousness in which she would like God, knowing what is good and evil for herself.

Deceived, Eve took from the fruit of the forbidden tree and ate it and then gave it to Adam, who also ate it. When God came to the Garden, Adam and Eve were for the first time in their lives afraid of Him and attempted to hide from Him. God called them out and asked if they had disobeyed and eaten from the forbidden tree. God then proceeded to pronounce judgment on each of them, starting with the serpent, who, of course, was Satan.

### B. God's Prophetic Promise (Gen. 3:15)

-- God's judgment on Satan included an intriguing prophetic promise, the first prophecy about the coming of Christ. Look at Genesis 3:15.

**Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

#### 1. The "Protevangelium"

-- Theologians and Bible scholars often refer to this verse as the "protevangelium," a Latin expression meaning "first gospel." In other words, this verse is the first declaration of the gospel - the good news that God is setting in motion a plan to accomplish the redemption, salvation and restoration of His fallen creation. Indeed, you could make an argument that the rest of the Bible is an elaboration of this one verse. The great 19<sup>th</sup> century English preacher Charles Simeon called this verse "the sum and summary of the whole Bible."

#### 2. A Prophecy of Conflict and Victory

##### a. Conflict

-- God's words to Satan foretell an ongoing conflict. The word "enmity" means a bitter division marked by hatred and hostility. God says that this conflict will start immediately, between Eve and Satan, but it won't end there - it will continue on between their "offspring," or literally "seed." The seed of Satan are those unbelievers who oppose the work of God throughout human history.

But what about Eve's seed? Notice that God refers to Eve's seed as "he," singular, referring to a particular person. As we continue on throughout the Bible, we learn that He is the promised Messiah, the one chosen and anointed by God to save us from sin's condemnation and power and ultimately from its very presence.

-- Actually, the way this passage is stated is unique. Nowhere else in the Bible is there a reference to a woman's seed. Everywhere else it's a man's seed. In fact, seed is even used as an euphemism for male semen.

In Hebrew genealogy descent is recorded through the male line. So, it's surprising and significant that here God talks not about Adam's seed (as would be expected) but Eve's. The reason is that Christ's human birth will not occur in the usual manner. He will be born of a virgin. Jesus had only one biological parent, His mother, Mary, who was a virgin and whose conception was through the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 1:34-35** "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"  
<sup>35</sup>The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over shadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

#### b. Victory

-- But the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is not only about conflict but more importantly about victory.

**v. 15b** "he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

-- In the conflict with Christ, Satan is described as "striking" (some versions read "bruising") Christ's heel - likely a reference to Satan's assaults through those who opposed Jesus throughout His ministry and through the sufferings inflicted on Jesus in His Passion, the painful beatings and agonies of the Cross.

But it's Christ alone who will deliver the decisive wound - who will crush the head of the serpent. Ironically, even as Satan was striking and bruising the heel of Christ on the Cross, in that same act Christ was crushing the head of the serpent and delivering the deathblow to Satan

### III. Paul's Explanation (Romans 5:12, 15-17)

-- Paul makes an important commentary and explanation of this story in the fifth chapter of Romans.

**Romans 5:12, 15-17 (NLT)** When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned... <sup>15</sup>But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. <sup>16</sup>And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. <sup>17</sup>For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

#### A. Our First Representative: Adam

-- What Paul is telling us here is that humanity has had two representatives - Adam and the promised "seed" (Christ Jesus). Adam was our representative in the Garden. He was a perfect representative in a perfect environment. There's not one of us who would have acted differently - and most of us would have probably and disobeyed sooner than Adam did. Since Adam was our representative when he sinned, the consequences of that sin affected not only Adam but all of those he represented - all of his descendants, every human being, each and every one of us.

The consequences of Adam's sin, of Adam's failure to fulfill the Covenant of Works, is "death" physical death, yes, but even worse, spiritual death, separation from God and condemnation as objects of His holy wrath.

## B. Our Second Representative: The Promised Seed (Christ)

-- With the first covenant, the Covenant of Works, broken it was necessary for God to establish another and different covenant, a Covenant of Grace, wherein humans would be delivered from the penalty of spiritual and physical death that they had incurred because of Adam's sin.

-- This Covenant of Grace would be based on the work of a second representative provided by God, the woman's seed, Christ the Messiah, the Son of God come in human flesh to do what the first representative, Adam, had failed to do - to obey God the Father fully and completely. Christ did exactly that and then gave His perfect life and suffered the judgment for our sins in His death for us on the Cross.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)** For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:22 (NLT)** Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life

## CONCLUSION

Adam's representation brought us sin and death; but Christ, our perfect representative, graciously grants forgiveness, restoration, and eternal life to all trust in Him.