

Miracle of Christmas

Christmas! What a wonderful time of the year! It is a time of trees and lights, decorations, glitter and music. It is a time for fun, family, holiday foods, and festivities. It is a time when we enjoy a variety of foods. One of my favorites is eggnog. Eggnog is wonderful as are the yams and turkey and oh so many other food dishes. Some of you are nodding your heads and indicating you also enjoy the Christmas season. Ninety-six percent of Americans celebrate Christmas. But how much do they really understand about Christmas? What does it really mean to them?

Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

I think many people know that. It is about a baby who was born over 2,000 years ago. The birth was the culmination of a myriad of prophecies. But today we will focus on two astonishing miracles. The first miracle was prophesied about 6,000 years before it

actually occurred. On this miracle the four gospels hang. If this miracle had not occurred, your Bible would be empty or pointless.

PROPHECY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH. I would like to slowly introduce the prophecy and the miracle, little by little. It is found in Genesis 1:26. It is a very familiar passage. Verse 26 tells us,

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and

over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Genesis 1:26 (NASB)

This verse tells us that after God had made light, the land, the stars, the sun, vegetation, land animals, sea animals, then in verse 26 God said, "Let us make man in our image."

He made humans! He gave us intellect, emotion, and will. God also made our forebears, Adam and Eve, without sin. These were really incredible individuals. Adam was probably the most handsome man that there ever was, and Eve was

undoubtedly the most beautiful, gorgeous lady you could have ever seen. Some have even said they were probably the most intelligent persons who have ever lived on earth. These folks were perfect individuals. Genesis also tells us they lived in a garden. The



garden of Eden is described in Genesis 2:4-5a,

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, . . .

Genesis 2:4-5 (NASB)

If we read down to verse 8, we read,

The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden;

and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Genesis 2:8 (NASB)

God made His own garden. Some of the prophets refer to this as God's garden, the garden of God, or the garden of the Lord. Imagine, Adam is in the garden of God, the garden of the Lord. How incredible that garden must have been! Just imagine the gorgeous flowers! Just imagine the magnificent trees that must have been there and the pristine, clean, crystal-pure water that ran through the streams. At that time none of the animals were extinct. There were animals that now no longer exist. But Adam saw all of them. Think about the fruits, vegetables, and the herbs they had to eat. At that time Adam and Eve were vegetarians. The Garden of Eden, God's garden, or the garden of the Lord, was one unbelievable place. Maybe Tolkien was right. Perhaps the animals were able to talk back in those days. We have no idea. We do not know what really transpired before Adam and Eve sinned and caused the earth to fall into corruption and futility.

When we come to verse 15-17, we find that God gave them a simple command. Verse 15 says,

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. Genesis 2:15.

I do not know exactly what Adam had to do, because there would not have been any weeds, no thorns or thistles, no insects, disease, or fungus. Verses 16-17 tell us what God commanded them to do,

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "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." Genesis 2:16-17 (NASB)

God's command was very simple. They could eat from any tree in the garden, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they could not eat. We know the rest of the story. Eve was formed in the latter part of chapter 2.

Sin Becomes A Reality. When we come to chapter 3, things take a sour turn. Verse 1 says,

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden . . . Genesis 3:1-3a (NASB)

That is an interesting description. It tells us that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in the middle of the garden. It was the centerpiece. It must have been an exquisitely beautiful tree.

. . . God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" Genesis 3:3b (NASB)

Notice the last word "die." We know what happened next. After the serpent (Satan) tempted Eve, she ate from the tree. Verse 6:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened . . . Genesis 3:6-7 (NASB)

Notice what happened. Their eyes were not opened until Adam ate. He had to eat before the Fall occurred, before sin entered the world. He was the one who had to eat—not her. 1 Timothy 2:14 says that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not deceived. He was the one who willfully, disobediently, brought sin into the world. He was the one who caused the problems that we have. Adam and Eve did not grow up in a bad home. They did not grow up in an economically depressed area. Their parents were not bad to them. They were not disciplined poorly. None of these bad things happened to them! They lived in an unbelievable place. They were just created. They had no parents or any other people

to lead them astray. The Garden of Eden was a wonderful, perfect environment. Yet they sinned. We sin not because of our environment. We sin because we are sinners. We do evil because every one of us is evil on the inside.

God Seeks Adam and Eve. I just love the way God responded. Verse 8:

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8 (NASB)

This tells us that the Lord God came walking in the garden, and in verses 9-10:

Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." Genesis 3:9-10 (NASB)

This is really unbelievable. Think about this with me. God came walking along and He does not say, "Hey, Adam, I know that you have sinned. Come, let us talk about what you have done." God does not do anything like that. God does not condemn them. Instead, He calls out to them. He asks, "Where are you, Adam?" Adam replied, "I heard you walking in the garden." Not too long ago somebody asked me, "Was this really God? Did God actually walk through the garden? What does this mean? Or is this just a figurative statement?" I believe this is a theophany of Christ. A theophany is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ, God the Son. The angel of the Lord came walking through the garden. Adam's response was very interesting. He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden." How would Adam know that God was walking through the garden, unless this had occurred before? This tells us that they were used to spending time with God in the garden. They had a relationship with the living God. I could not help but realize they were really comfortable with God. I think we can become too comfortable with God and think, "He will forgive." We become too comfortable with God, take His presence for

granted and then sin. Apparently they became too comfortable and sinned.

God asked, "Where are you?" And Adam answered, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself." Verses 11-12:

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Genesis 3:11-12 (NASB)

Many pastors and teachers get carried away with this verse. But I am amazed by Adam's honesty. He told the truth. Sure, he blamed Eve, but he was honest.

God Promises A Savior. In verse 13 God speaks to Eve.

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" Genesis 3:13a (NASB)

God did not rebuke Adam for blaming Eve. Instead, God asked Eve a question.

And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Genesis 3:13b (NASB)

Eve told the truth too! Obviously she blamed Satan and did not take responsibility. At least Adam and Eve were honest. I believe they knew that God would know. There was no reason to attempt to deceive God. God already knew the truth.

Verse 14:

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life. . . Genesis 3:14 (NASB)

Initially the serpent was probably a very beautiful animal, and then as a result of God's judgment on him, he became a snake. That was his punishment. Verse 15:

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."
Genesis 3:15 (NASB)

The word for "enmity" in this verse is an interesting Hebrew word *eba*. The Hebrew word actually refers to "a state of hostility," or "a state of hatred." It has the idea of war between Satan and the woman, between her seed and Satan's seed. "Your seed" refers to Satan and all unbelievers (John 8:44) and her seed as a reference to Christ.

God was talking to Satan, and told him that the seed of the woman would bruise him on the head. The woman's seed is a male since it is in the male gender. The statement "He is going to bruise you [Satan] on the head" is a prophecy of a future miracle. Why is it a miracle? Because *her seed* implies that there would be no husband involved. This is a virgin birth. This is a miraculous conception - a miracle! This prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ was prophesied at least 6,000 years before it actually occurred. This is called the protoevangelium, or the first gospel about the coming Savior to be named Jesus the Christ.

Satan Will Be Defeated. The word "bruised" in the statement "And you shall bruise him on the heel" comes from a Hebrew word *sup* which is better translated as "to crush" or "attack," like a battle, like a war between soldiers—attack. That is, Satan will attack Christ but Christ will defeat Satan.

What God told Satan here is that Jesus Christ would ultimately win the battle. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that Christ rendered Satan powerless. Satan had the power of death, but Jesus Christ rendered Satan powerless. It was a blow to Satan's head. Romans 16:20 tells us that Satan soon will be crushed. That is a prophecy of the future. Hebrews 2:14 refers to when Christ died on the cross. Roman 16:20 is about the future. That is described even further in Rev-

elation 12:9. Ultimately, in Revelation 20:2 Satan will be bound in the abyss. Genesis 3:15 is the first prophecy dealing with the virgin birth.

The Virgin Birth - Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah 7:14 is the next prophecy about the virgin birth. It says,

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 (NASB)

The word Immanuel means "God with us." Some people have said that the word "virgin" in this verse really does not mean virgin. It really means "young woman." Critics say, "This is not a prophecy about a virgin birth. It is just about a young woman giving birth." But that is not correct. The Hebrew word for "virgin" is *alma*. When this passage was translated into the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, the authors, who were closer to the ancient Hebrew than we are today, translated that into the Greek word that means "virgin." This means *alma* refers to a virgin birth. It is very clear that is what *alma* means.

What is also very interesting is that this verse promises that this would be a "sign." A sign reveals something significant will happen. Is it significant if we say that a married woman had a baby? If we take the word "virgin" to mean that it is a young woman, or a married woman, then how is that a sign? The answer is that is not significant at all. But if an unmarried woman, who is a virgin, gives birth to a child, then that is a sign—a significant sign.

The Virgin Birth - Matthew 1:23. Matthew 1:23 echoes the prophecy of Isaiah. It says,

BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." Matthew 1:23 (NASB)

What is Christmas about? Christmas is about One who was born of a virgin. Christmas is about One who was the sinless, spotless, Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Importance of the Virgin Birth. What would happen if Jesus was not born of a virgin? Let us just assume for a minute that Jesus was not born of a virgin. What would that mean for us today? First of all, that would mean that Jesus was not the spotless, sinless Lamb of God. Second, if He was not sinless, that would mean we are not born again and our sins are not forgiven.

Why? The answer is that a sinless, spotless sacrifice had to die for your sins and my sins so that we could be forgiven. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He was . . .

... without sin. Hebrews 4:15 (NASB)

Jesus had to be without sin. If Jesus was not virgin born, then Joseph would have been His father, Mary His mother, and He would have had a sin nature, because our sin nature is inherited from our parents. Jesus had to be sinless so that He could take away the sin of the world.

CONCLUSION. God the Father did not ask Adam or Eve to do any penance. He did not ask them to do anything at all. I believe He may have told them more than what is revealed in scripture. I believe Adam and Eve knew about the Messiah, knew about the coming Savior, knew He would be virgin born, and die for their sins and ours. Jesus had to be virgin born.

The early Church fathers attest to the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin. Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) in his writings, said Jesus was virgin born. The Apostles' Creed echoes this truth. We read,

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

A more contemporary writer, David Cloud states,

The entire Gospel stands and falls on the truth of the virgin birth.

If Jesus was not virgin born, then we are wasting our time as Christians. We are wasting our time celebrating Christmas. But the truth is: Jesus Christ was virgin born so that

He could die for your sin and my sin, the sins of the whole world, and the sins of everyone who has gone before us, including Adam and Eve.

Let me share with you the lyrics to a wonderful Christmas carol titled, "There's a Song In the Air" about Jesus. It says,

There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer and a Baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!
There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth,
For the virgin's sweet Boy is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!
In the light of that star lie the ages imperaled;
And that song from afar has swept over the world.
Every hearth is aflame, and the beautiful sing
In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King!
We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song
That comes down through the night from the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in His cradle our Savior and King!

- Josiah G. Holland

I trust Jesus Christ is your Savior. He is not just a baby in a manger. He is not just a good man. He was virgin born. He is our Savior. He is the King. He is our God. Jesus' virgin birth is the miracle of Christmas.