

The Prophecies Around Christ Genesis 3:15 and others

Welcome to December and with it the flurry of activity around Christmas. As I have done in the past, I will be focusing on Christmas each Sunday of the month. Admittedly, I have to say that the month is challenging to prepare messages on passages we hear this time of year, but I am compelled to preach on Christmas because of the special event that it is. I have heard of some pastors who choose not to preach any Christmas message. While it's a challenge, I do love this time of year and the hymns that go along with the season. While some may argue that Easter is the most important day for Christianity, there is good reason why Christmas or the first coming of Christ may be more important because without the birth of Christ into our world, there would be no Easter.

There are mixed emotions and beliefs around the celebration of Christmas. An article in Crosswalk relates the following: *“Christmas is the annual Christian festival celebrating Christ’s birth, held on December 25 in the Western Church. The traditional date of December 25 goes back as far as A.D. 273. Two pagan festivals honoring the sun were also celebrated on that day and it is possible that December 25 was chosen to counteract the influence of paganism. To this day some people feel uncomfortable with Christmas because they think it is somehow tainted by the pagan festivals held on that day. But Christians have long believed that the gospel not only transcends culture, it also transforms it. In A.D. 320 one theologian answered this criticism by noting, ‘We hold this day holy, not like the pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of Him who made it.’”*

So, while it may be a challenge to preach on the same passages year after year, I am choosing to because at the end of the day, I love the Christ of Christmas and want to reflect on why He came. In His own words Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

Here's a snapshot of the path we'll be taking in this series and I hope you will join me each week on this journey together.

Today our topic will be the prophecies around Christ.

Next Sunday will be the people before Christ in which we will look at some of the people in His family tree from the accounts of Matthew and Luke. The third Sunday we will consider the purpose for Christ.

Christmas eve I want to talk on the peace through Christ.

Christmas day we will center on the praise about Christ.

Of course, the Bible is the focus of our journey. Christmas, or I should say, the birth of Christ is a point of separation or demarcation. The Old Testament pointed to the birth of Christ. The birth of Christ is what separates the two Testaments. The birth of Christ is what separates B.C. and A.D. No other person or birth in all of human history has or will impact mankind like that of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the story of God's work in human history and woven throughout is the thread of Jesus Christ - the Old Testament prophecies along with the symbolism of the sacrificial system point forward to the coming Christ. The gospels lay out His life and ministry taking us to the purpose of His coming and the events around the crucifixion and resurrection.

From the opening verse, the work of God in human history is evident revealing the sovereignty of God. The fall exposes our need of a Savior. Even Israel's own history reveals two important truths. The first is the historical incarnation of the Son of God and the second is their history of man's inability to save himself through any effort of his own doing.

The gospels give us a glimpse at the life of Christ, His story on earth while the rest of the New Testament teaches us how to live daily in the light of what Christ has done for us. Throughout the Bible we are brought face to face with the reality of what we are saved to and what we are saved from. We are saved to an eternal home in heaven and we are saved from an eternal home in hell. One place is the destiny of salvation, the other is the destiny of condemnation.

God could offer mankind no other way of salvation

than for His Son and it could only be done by His entering our world as one of us. He could not save man by being God alone, He also had to be human. He didn't give up one to become the other, but as the God-man He took on Himself our sin to save us. The Old Testament is filled with many prophecies that relate to what we call His first advent, or His first coming. It was that time when God, who is outside of time, stepped into time to become like us. Paul refers to it in **Galatians 4:4** as the fullness of time that had come when God sent His Son to redeem us so that we could be given full rights as His children.

Pinning down the exact number of Old Testament prophecies related to Christ is a bit like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall. Scholar J. Barton Payne has compiled 574 Old Testament verses that in one way or another point to Christ. Alfred Edersheim has identified 456 passages that refer to the Messiah. Scholars indicate that Jesus fulfilled 300 prophecies throughout His earthly ministry.

This morning I would like us to consider three promises regarding the prophecies around Christ. First, let's consider the very first prophecy about Christ, the promise of a redeemer.

I. THE PROMISE OF A REDEEMER – **Genesis 3:15**

In **Genesis 3** we find God speaking to Adam, Eve, and the serpent that had deceived Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. For each of their role in the demise of mankind, God issued a curse on them. He spoke first to the serpent and cursed it above all the other creatures He had created. The snake has long served as a symbol of evil for its craftiness in being used by Satan to lull Eve into sin. Prophets in the Old Testament refer to the wicked as snakes and Jesus likened the Pharisees to vipers when He condemned them for their hypocrisies. Snakes have always been associated with evil.

But the curse inflicted on the snake in **Genesis 3:15** also came with a promise. It is both a promise to Eve and to all her offspring. Embedded in the curse is a ray of hope for all mankind that all is not utterly

hopeless as a result of the fall and the condemnation placed on humanity for the sin of Adam and Eve.

The curse on the serpent came with a promise that through the offspring of the woman would come one who would crush the head of the serpent, even though the serpent would bruise or strike his heel. Ever since that day in the garden there has been a battle waging between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. Eve initially thought that the promise of this redeemer was in the person of her firstborn son, Cain. But after he murdered his brother Abel, she realized that the promise was not through him, but another. She then had Seth and through him the promise of a redeemer was rekindled. But God was looking well beyond the birth of these male offspring to one yet future. Adam and Eve must have realized that their redemption wouldn't and couldn't come through their own efforts but only through God's provision when He rejected their covering up their sin with leaves and instead sacrificed animals to clothe them, thus showing them that only He can provide forgiveness and salvation.

Eve saw in the promise of the redeemer that even though she was cursed for her role in the fall, that God had forgiven her because it would be through the promise of one of her offspring that redemption would occur. God's words were to her comforting because He would use her to bring the redeemer. Those words not only condemned the serpent, but offered grace and forgiveness to Eve. But while they brought initial comfort to her, she was also shown that this redeemer wouldn't be for just her, but all mankind. Since Adam had willfully sinned where Eve was deceived, the redeemer couldn't come through his offspring. It could only be through Eve.

This verse gives us both the problem of mankind and then the plan for mankind.

A. The Problem For Mankind – v. 15a

The problem is one we already noted and one we know all too well. It is the problem of sin. The moment both Adam and Eve disobeyed God by

taking the forbidden fruit their eyes were opened knowing good and evil. God had warned that if they chose to disobey death would occur. That death is both physical and spiritual. We are all too familiar with the reality of physical death. Its sting is felt by everyone. Spiritual death on the other hand isn't quite as obvious, but even more deadly, if I can use that term, than physical death. Where physical death is the separation of the body from the soul, spiritual death is the separation of the body and soul from God. **Hebrews 9:27** points to the reality of both the physical and spiritual death. **“As it is appointed unto men once to die, after that the judgement.”**

We all have a destiny with physical death, but the writer of Hebrews also indicates that there is a destiny with spiritual death as the result of judgment that will in time come as well. That's a problem for mankind. Everyone without exception is subject to it. But in the middle of the curse, God provided a plan.

B. The Plan For Mankind – v. 15b

Out of pain, there is a promise.
Out of despair, there is hope.
Out of death, there will come a redeemer.

A simple dictionary definition for redeemer is a person who saves someone out of danger or destruction. The Bible says our problem is sin and our penalty is death, eternal separation from God. This promised redeemer would come to rescue us from destruction. God does identify this redeemer in our passage other than to say that he would be from the offspring of the woman and it's important to note that it is not the offspring of the man.

God also stated that this offspring would strike a fatal blow to the head of the serpent. He would defeat the enemy of the woman's offspring. This was fulfilled in Christ or by Christ in His victory over Satan.

I Corinthians 15:54b-57 **“Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the**

victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

If there is any doubt about Jesus being the promised redeemer pointed to in the prophecy of **Genesis 3:15**, here are some Scriptural proofs.

Titus 2:11-14

Romans 8:1-4

John 8:36 **“If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.”**

Matthew 1:21 **“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save [redeem] His people from their sins.”**

There it is. The fulfillment of the prophecy. This one born to Mary, is the promised offspring from Eve who would inflict the final blow to the head of the serpent. This one who would be bundled in strips of cloth, vulnerable to all the evil of the world, was, is the plan for mankind's problem.

God's plan was to send Jesus to take the problem of our sin on Himself. It could only be done by Him entering into our existence and becoming like us, living the perfect life we could never attain, and then dying as the perfect, one-time sacrifice so that we could through faith, have the life He offers to those who believe.

Peter states it this way: **“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.” (I Peter 2:24)**

He is the promised redeemer. As I was giving thought to this point, a song came to mind.

There is a Redeemer –

Jesus, God's own Son;

Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.

Jesus, My Redeemer,

Name above all names;

Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,

Hope for sinners slain.

Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit till the work on earth is done. (Melody Green, Hymn #308) CCLI1292471

With the promise of a redeemer, there follows a promise of a relationship.

II. THE PROMISE OF A RELATIONSHIP – Isaiah 7:14

We were created to be in relationship. To be in a relationship with each other and to be in a relationship with God. Both have been marred by sin. Our relationships with each other is never perfect, even within the context of marriage and family. We need those Biblical mandates to be kind to one another, to love one another, to encourage one another, to forgive one another. There's often envy and jealousy and hatred and unforgiveness and ill will and hurt feelings because of sin.

The first relational problem that occurred in the garden after Adam and Eve sinned was to cast blame on someone else. The broken relationship between them was ultimately cast at God.

“You gave me this woman, it's Your fault, God. If she wasn't around, things would be perfect.”

“You created this serpent, it's Your fault, God. If it hadn't been created, things would be perfect.”

At the core, our relationship problems are because we have a relationship problem with God. That problem began with sin.

Romans 5:10 plainly tells us that we were God's enemies. But both **verse 8 and 10** also explain that while we were still sinners, while we were still enemies, Christ died for us to bring the two back together – God and man were reconciled.

The dictionary defines reconcile this way: to restore to friendship or harmony.

When you get your bank statement in the mail, you take your check book and the statement and compare them and work to make them say the say thing, so they are in harmony.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, He made it possible for us, the enemies of God, to be brought back into harmony with God.

The Greek word means to restore to favor. The

Hebrew word means to atone or cover over. It is taking sin and covering it over by the shed blood of Christ, and restoring the unity that was lost because of sin. Let's be clear that this loss of relationship was not due to anything God did, but solely because of our sin. Christ made it possible for the two to be united again in harmony.

John 14:6 says that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. This verse is as much about salvation as it is about reconciliation. He is the only Way to the Father, the only way to have a relationship with God, the only way to be in harmony with God.

There are many examples in the Old Testament of God offering reconciliation with Israel who had strayed from relationship with their covenant God because of sin. He extends grace and forgiveness.

When we turn to the New Testament, we find that Christ is the means of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:17-21

Left to ourselves, we would never pursue a relationship with God, so God sent His Son to initiate reconciliation with us. He then gave us the responsibility to share with others that reconciliation with God is possible through faith in Christ. His death on the cross made a relationship with God possible again. This reconciliation through Christ came because of a promise that was made in a prophecy given through Isaiah.

Isaiah 7:14 “**Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.**”

In the context, the armies of Aram and Israel had joined forces to march against Judah. When King Ahaz heard that the two armies were approaching, Scripture says the king was shaken. God gave a word to Isaiah for the king to encourage him so that he wouldn't be afraid. Through Isaiah, the Lord gave a sign to bolster the king's confidence so he wouldn't lose heart. The virgin would give birth to a son whose name would be Immanuel. We know that name means “**God with us.**” That name was to

convince King Ahaz that God would be with him against these two united enemies.

Looking at the events leading up to the birth of Jesus, Joseph, who was engaged to Mary considered his options in what to do with her since she was pregnant and he was not the father. The angel Gabriel came with a message from God that Joseph should not be afraid to take Mary as his wife, since what had happened to her was from God. This child was to be given the name Jesus because He would save His people from their sin. The name Jesus means Savior. In other words, He would rescue or redeem people from the trouble of their sin.

Matthew quotes this passage and says that it fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy regarding the virgin birth. Let me add here that the very doctrine of the virgin birth is essential to Christianity. It is a pillar of our faith because if Jesus did not come down to earth to be born of a virgin in sinless human flesh, we have no Savior. Without the virgin birth, He could not atone for sin. The name Immanuel, "**God with us**", first speaks of His earthly presence with us.

A. His Earthly Presence

Think about that for a moment. God with us. Or to put it another way, God came down to us.

Philippians 2 describes how God became man, how Jesus, whose very nature was God, left the splendor of heaven and took on the nature of a man, but not just a man, not a king, not a person of significance, not a religious leader in the sense of being a Pharisee. Instead, it says He became a servant.

Mark 10:45 says the same thing. As a servant, **Luke 19:10** tells us He came to seek and save the lost. We couldn't go to Him, so He came down to be with us. John states it in a different way: "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...**" (**John 1:1, 14**) There He is – God with us, here on earth.

Even though He ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He is still with us in the person of His Holy Spirit promised in **John 14:26 and 15:26**.

Jesus coming down to us to be with us in the flesh, was the very demonstration of God's love for us.
Love was when God became a Man,
Locked in time and space, without rank or place;
Love was God born of Jewish kin;
Just a carpenter with some fishermen.

Love was when Jesus walked in history,
Down where I could see Love that reached to me;
Love was God dying for my sin
And so trapped was I my whole world caved in.

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Those living two thousand years ago experienced, physically speaking, His earthly presence. But there is coming a day when we will experience His eternal presence.

B. His Eternal Presence – John 14:1-6

Imagine for a moment what it is to be wanted that much by God, that He would send His Son to die for you and then want you, who was once an enemy to be with Him – forever. It's unfathomable to me. I can't get my head wrapped around that Immanuel will be among us for eternity.

Revelation 7:9-10

There in the great assembly hall of heaven is the one who came to earth, the one worthy of all praise and honor and glory and power, the Lamb of God, who John the Baptist described as the one who takes away the sins of the world, there He is in our presence or perhaps it is better to say there we are in His presence and it will be for eternity. And we are told it will be eternal. No wonder all will fall down in worship and say amen. God with us. Jesus is the promise of a relationship that is everlasting.

There are other promises we could look at from the Old Testament, but the third promise I want for us to consider around the prophecies of Jesus is the promise of a ruler.

III. THE PROMISE OF A RULER – Isaiah 9:6-7

This passage declares both the humanity and deity of Jesus and speaks to two types of rule. There will be an earthly rule and there will be an eternal rule.

“A child is born and a son is given.”

“Mighty God, Everlasting Father.”

Let's consider first His earthly rule.

A. His Earthly Rule

From Isaiah's perspective in time looking into the future, he pictured the Messiah coming as a child, growing up and then establishing His earthly kingdom. From his viewpoint, he saw only one advent. He didn't realize there would be a considerable gap in time between His birth and His rule. Jeremiah had the same idea.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

What is in view is the Millennial kingdom that Christ would establish in His second coming. He will rule from Jerusalem and Jeremiah describes it as a rule established in righteousness. The world will have 1000 years to see what it looks like when the way the world will be ruled is done so with absolute justice and rightness and fairness. There will be no corruption. No political pandering. No profiteering or greed. No injustice. No war or division. No envy. No strife. Only peace.

This ruler is described as a **“Wonder Counselor.”** The word wonderful literally means with wonder or incomprehensible or beyond understanding. His rule will be exceptional. Even though we may not be able to comprehend His rule, we will marvel at the wisdom of that rule and out His counsel. **Isaiah 28:29** says the same thing: **“All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.”** All of this means that we will be able to trust Him as He reigns on earth. As a wise counselor, we can expect that He will have our best interest at heart as He rules.

This ruler is the **“Mighty God”** speaking of His deity. As God, His rule will be one of power and absolute authority. It's a power that does not lord it over or demand His subjects, but one that serves, yet serves with authority and grace.

He is the **“Everlasting Father”** which literally means father of eternity. Everlasting is in relation to time. He is eternal in His existence. From our

perspective bound by time, He has always existed and always will exist. He was, is, and always will be. Father speaks to the compassion He will exhibit during His reign. This ruler is not the Father, but One who has the same characteristics as the Father because, like the Father, He is also God. As I said, He will rule with a Fatherly compassion.

As the **“Prince of Peace”** He is the one who offers peace with God. It will be a rule on earth marked with a wholeness or well-being to individuals and to society as a whole. During His Millennial reign there will be no war, no riots. It will be marked by peace throughout the world. While there is a physical peace that exists in the world during His reign, there is also a spiritual peace that exists for those who through Him have made peace with God.

As the descendent of King David, He is the rightful heir to the throne, the one David was promised from his lineage who would rule for eternity. This is not only a part of an earthly rule, but one that is an eternal rule as well.

B. His Eternal Rule – II Samuel 7:16

An eternal rule was the promise made to David. **“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever.”**

Hebrews 1:3 finds Jesus seated at the right hand of God, where He has finished His work and now rules there for eternity. And with the angels we will praise and worship Him for eternity.

All these prophecies are wrapped up in the baby Jesus, the Son of David, the Savior, Immanuel. We couldn't get up to Him, so He came down to us. You may recognize this song from the Gaither:

He came down to my level
When I couldn't get up to His
With a strong arm He lifted me up
To show me what livin' is
He'll come down to your level if you'll open up the door
He wants to make your life worth livin'
That's what He came down for