

Christmas 2011 Message

A Good Story About the History of the World

Just suppose that there was a personal good God, and within Him were three distinct beings, and they lived in a perfect blessed communion. God created human beings to experience a loving relationship with this Trinity, and God created man in His own image. This began a "drama" with a surprise twist (the fall of mankind), but a happy ending (the kingdom of God). These human beings and the play they would act out would reveal all the attributes of God by the final curtain. God created a wonderful world for those created in His image to dwell in, and have dominion over in His name and by His authority. This created world was full of incredible creatures and plants that were all complex and interdependent. God first created a man, and then a complimentary human being to be his partner and counterpart, the woman. God had previously created a myriad of wonderful spirit beings to be His messengers. Because God created these beings with a free will to love Him and serve Him, they had the power to choose to not serve Him as well. The most beautiful and powerful one, Lucifer, chose to rebel against God and lead one third of the angels in rebellion. The rebellion was also part of God's plan to reveal Himself in eternity as the gracious, loving, and forgiving God. Before the play would be over, all creation would witness both the grace and justice of God through this rebellion, and God's resulting plan of redemption.

The Fall of the Human Race

The rebellion of the angels spilled over into the corresponding enticement to human beings to "know what God knows" and to be like God; and so the human race joined in living independently from God. Therefore God in His eternal wisdom, determined to rig the world in such a way that none of His creatures could find fulfillment, meaning, or purpose in the world apart from their Creator. That which was created in perfection and with meaning and purpose, became fallen and corrupted, and because of the rebellion, EVIL entered into the world. Thus all beings became separated from the very source of their life and being---the eternal self existent God. This began the futility of living on planet earth along with man's greatest enemy, DEATH, which ultimately returned him to dirt.

From this point on, man's basic problem became his STEADFAST DETERMINATION TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT FROM GOD AND STILL MAKE LIFE WORK IN A WORLD RIGGED BY GOD SO THAT IT WILL NOT WORK. At this point it looked hopeless and bleak, but God had a plan formulated around His attributes of love, mercy, and forgiveness. How could God be righteous, holy, and just, but at the same time be loving to a people in rebellion against Him? God determined to defeat death, and reverse death through HIS OWN INTERVENTION. For sin, a man must die in order for justice to be served, but it had to be a man who was perfect and sinless who didn't deserve to die for his own sins. No such man was found in creation, therefore God became man so that a perfect man could make a substitutionary sacrifice of infinite value, sufficient to forgive the sins of the many.

Abraham

God began His redemptive plan by choosing a man named Abram. God gave him many promises, the most important of which was that he would have a descendant who would bless the whole world. Abram believed God even though the descendant had not appeared in his lifetime. Because of Abram's belief, God reckoned it to him as righteousness. In Abram, God revealed to the human race that all who believed God's promises and entrusted their life to Him would be saved. Out of this chosen one, God created a nation through which He would reveal Himself to the world and from which the coming Deliverer, the Christ would be born. Every step of the way, God's adversary tried to thwart God's plan. The adversary raised up Pharaoh in Egypt and then in every era a successive tyrant would try to stamp out God's people to thwart God's plan. The Egyptians couldn't do it, neither could the Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, or Nazis. They are all gone, and Abraham's descendants, Israel are still here.

The Promised One, the Christ

In spite of all attempts to stop God's plan to redeem people, the promised Christ was born into the dark world. At birth, they tried to kill Him, but it was God's plan that the Christ would be born and live a normal, humble life. By experiencing all the

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pain of the human race from child birth, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, He fully experienced all the difficulty, suffering, humiliation, rejection, and even the worst kind of death so that we could have the perfect, merciful, and faithful high priest to be our intercessor to God. He even experienced all the temptations we are subject to so He was able to come to the aid of all of us who are tempted. Mankind was given the perfect high priest who could sympathize with our weaknesses.

As God's prophets predicted, this humble Christ was not recognized by the many, because He had no stately appearance, He led no army, and had no academic degrees. He took a humble common job as a carpenter, and He took a common name, Jesus. At the appointed time of God, the Christ was introduced as the Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice who would take away the sin of the world. God spoke from heaven and said, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased", and the people saw the Spirit of God descend on Him. Over a 3-4 year period, He revealed who He was by teaching the truth from God, doing the works of God, and fulfilling all the prophecies that God's prophets had spoken hundreds of years before. At the end of His ministry, the leaders rejected Him and preferred Caesar as king, and asked that the Christ be crucified. Even His followers betrayed Him and left Him. He was falsely accused, convicted, beaten, and crucified; all because of the love of God poured out in Christ's blood for us who would believe. His enemies believed they had triumphed, yet this was all according to God's plan to redeem mankind. Therefore, on the third day, God raised His Son, the Christ in the resurrection. Death was defeated, sin was overcome, and salvation was accomplished. The resurrection proved all of this. Jesus then gave all of His followers a wonderful stewardship to represent Him on earth as His ambassadors until that day when He would return to set up His kingdom. He did not leave His followers alone, but sent His Holy Spirit to indwell them so they would be enabled to follow and represent Him until then.

God's Holy Spirit inspired Jesus' closest followers to write all that God wanted people to know about God, God's plan, and what He expected us to do until the Christ would return. We call it the New Testament.

Let's Remember and Celebrate

Could this story really happen? It did, and this Christmas we remember and celebrate the birth of the Christ, the son of God who came into the world as a baby according to the plan of God to save us from our sin. In Him, sin was forgiven, death was defeated, and all who would believe look forward to a glorious future in heaven with Him for eternity. Amen.

Merry Christmas

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