

Luke 1:1
Those Things Which Have Been Fulfilled Among Us
December 20, 2020

*“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who have been since the world began,
71 That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
74 To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.
76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,
77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people
By the remission of their sins,
78 Through the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

The world is filled with fanciful stories about events which may or may not have actually occurred at all. Or, if they did happen, how much embellishment has been added on to what really happened? It’s almost impossible to look back on the Iliad and not question what is recorded there by Homer.

The date of the events of the Iliad goes back to the 9th century BC. However, the earliest existing manuscript is from around 400-415 BC. That is a gap of about 450 years. And more, there are only 1900 known ancient copies. And yet, it is taught in colleges around the world as an authoritative narrative of historical events.

When we hear of the Gallic Wars of Julius Caesar, we assume we are hearing exacting history of events which were minutely recorded and detailed for us. But the events that occurred were in the years 58-44 BC. And yet, the earliest manuscripts that we possess are from the 9th – yes the 9th – century AD. That is a gap of 900 years. From this period, there are about 250 copies.

Despite this extremely limited number of documents, which are close to a thousand years after the events occurred, we teach what is contained in them as if it is reliable history.

But from the same scholarly sources that teach these events as literal history, come cries of “unreliable” when they speak of the events of Scripture. And yet, of the Greek New Testament manuscripts concerning events which took place from the turn of the millennium until about AD70, the earliest known manuscript – the John Rylands fragment – dates to early or middle second century AD. That is within a few short years after the death of the Apostle John.

Further, it was found outside of Israel, meaning what it says had to be taken there at an earlier date. That first known document is then followed by almost 6000 Greek manuscripts. Also, there are over 18000 non-Greek manuscripts dating as far back as 30 to 300 years after the events they record.

Thirty years is within one lifetime of the events that are recorded. If one is to accept Homer’s Iliad or the Gallic Wars of Julius Caesar as authoritative, how much more should the writings of Scripture be held as accurate and reliable! Additionally, because of the immense body of available manuscripts, errors between manuscripts can be easily identified.

What we possess in the New Testament is reliable, it is sure, and it is trustworthy. But what we possess in the New, speaks in the same sure manner concerning the Old...

Text Verse: "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed." Luke 1:1-4

Luke is a historical figure. We don't just possess his writings which make a claim that somewhat parallels the other synoptic gospels. Rather, he is referred to by Paul in the book of Colossians as his companion. He is also written about outside of Scripture as well.

As far as Luke's writings, the events he mentions, the places they occur, and the details that he includes in his writings are so accurately recorded, that what he says can be used today to identify specific locations by their surrounding characteristics. His writings are meticulous in the extreme because he was a meticulous man.

When Luke refers to those things which have been fulfilled among us, it is because they were written about, in advance, and then what occurred was seen to have come to pass. This is what Zechariah was speaking of when he spoke of the holy prophets who have been since the world began.

Luke obtained the eyewitness testimony of the people that saw these things, and then he lines up what they saw with what Scripture prophesied about. Thus, we have an unbroken succession of events which seamlessly tie the two testaments into one grand story of an Individual who was prophesied would come to save the world.

Such marvelous things encompass what we now call "the Christmas story" and they are to be found in God's superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again. And may God speak to us through His word, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Problem to be Resolved

To understand the Christmas story, and why it is important for each of us, we must be schooled on why the coming of Christ was needed in the first place. Without that, we have just another story of a conquering hero. We find them in the movies all the time:

A nation is in subjection to another nation, the people long to be freed from their overlords, a champion rises up from among them and casts off the shackles of oppression, and the hero's life is recorded as an example of bravery and courage. William Wallace, or Braveheart, immediately comes to mind.

Unlike William Wallace, however, the Hero of Scripture didn't just arise out of the stream of time and suddenly break onto the scene without any foreknowledge of His coming. Rather, His coming was eagerly anticipated since the very beginning of man's time on earth. And not only was He anticipated, He was promised. And not only was He promised, His coming was prophesied – in detail.

The first time this was so was right at the beginning. There is God, there is His creation, and in that creation is the central focus of what is created – man. Everything else is centered on this one being which is set apart from all the other beings in Scripture.

We know about angels, but they aren't the focus of the narrative. They are mentioned in relation to the narrative about man, not the other way around.

We know about the stars, but the location of the stars is mentioned in reference to the earth, not the other way around. And on the earth, the life which is created is spoken of in general terms, with the exception of man. All other life is prepared in advance of man, showing that man is the purpose for that other life to exist – meaning in relation to man, not the other way around.

When the man was created, it was as if he was an expected guest. The preparations were ready, the home was fit for his coming, and then he was brought into his home. But being brought into a home means that there is a home to be brought into. And a home doesn't prepare itself. Likewise, man didn't create himself. Rather, there is an Authority over these things who determined how they should be.

Because there is One in authority, it is His call as to how things should be. With all of the attentioned-focus on man, there should have been a great attention directed to the One who created the man, and there should have been an obedience to Him – if for no other reason than that He did the creating, much less that He did it with such care.

But it is hard to know what abundance, beauty, and delight are without knowing what lack, ugliness, and unhappiness is. Without knowing the latter, we cannot really appreciate the former. For those of us who feel well today, it's just a state that we accept. But for those of us who have just gotten over feeling really crummy, feeling well is pretty great.

We appreciate God's gift of feeling well much more when we have the knowledge of the opposite fresh on our minds. The man lacked this, and so when he heard the first recorded words that were ever spoken to him, he couldn't appreciate them –

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Genesis 2:15-17

First, he couldn't appreciate what it meant to be commanded. Law was given, but what is law anyway? Without knowing the purpose or the consequences of law, there is no reference by which to appreciate the command. And simply being told what the consequences are, without knowing what they mean, doesn't give us any more understanding of them than before we heard them.

The man was alive, but that was a state he became without ever having been dead or having seen the state of death in another. Therefore, the words “you shall surely die” had no understood meaning because there was no reference to understand them. “I wasn't alive before, but I have no idea what that was like.”

It is said in Hebrews that “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” The man hadn't heard this, but even if he had – “Oh, okay.” With a shrug, he would simply go on without any idea at all of what that meant.

And more, the Lord could have heaped up a thousand commands and said, “You are to do these things,” and it would have made no difference than the giving of that one command. Without an understanding of right and wrong, or the resulting punishment, lack which resulted from it, and so on, a right determination about obedience could not be made.

But, despite this being true, it does not excuse his disobedience. The man didn't create himself, and he did not place himself into the home that was prepared for him. He was under an obligation which should have been understood, if he just took the time to contemplate the matter.

Chapter 2 of Genesis sees the man given implicit authority over the animals because it was granted to him to name them. But it also reveals, through that fact, that he had intelligence. To give a name implies that he was able to form a name in order to give it.

After that was done, the Lord God – the Creator – then gave the man a woman to be his own. In the naming of her *ishah*, or “woman,” there is an understanding that he is an *ish*, or a man. And this implies that there was language instilled in him to form these names, and the other names that he had given to the animals. He didn't form the language. Rather it existed before he did.

Because this is so, he was both given the rational ability to think concepts through, and to develop new ideas which form what is logical and what is illogical. In other words, he was without excuse if he was to disobey the command of the Lord, even if he didn't understand the consequences of the command.

However, thinking logically is hard work, and understanding theology, if it is proper theology, is as well. The man lived in a land of delight, his needs were cared for, and he apparently didn't need to think on such things.

The chapter ends with the words, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” They had no idea of what it meant to be ashamed, and so they were not ashamed. It was a sinless world; a world without death.

Of course, the world where we now live is not a sinless world, and it is not a world free from death. Quite the opposite is true. Things changed, and that was because of a single incident of deception. The man did the one – the only – thing that he was told to not do. He ate of the fruit.

The very next words of the record show us that a great change immediately took place –

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” Genesis 3:7

A knowledge they previously lacked now belonged to them. They were unashamed, and suddenly they were ashamed. To correct the matter, they covered themselves. But the record is specific. They didn’t just use leaves to do so. They used *teenah*, or fig leaves.

From this point on, the fig takes on a particular meaning in Scripture based on what is seen here. The fig signifies a spiritual connection to God, or the lack of it. This is seen, for example, in the words of Jesus in Mark 11 –

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’” Mark 11:12-14

Jesus was making a theological point concerning the place where He had left the day before, and where He immediately returned to the next day – the temple. Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree was a parable of the ending of the temple rites and the law as God’s means of restoration with Him. The spiritual connection of the law was to be severed.

He was taking us back to Eden. The man and the woman had tried to make a spiritual reconnection through the leaves of the fig to what they had lost, but it was too late. God rejected that, He cursed the serpent, the woman, and the man. Death entered the world through the act, and then came the judgment.

The spiritual reconnection could not come through their efforts. The fig leaves were insufficient to restore what had been lost. But while standing there, covered in their own unsuitable works, the Lord spoke out words of promise via His curse upon the serpent –

*“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.” Genesis 3:15*

The new master of the realm, the serpent, would be defeated through the Seed of the woman. It is absolutely certain that this is a promise of the coming Messiah. The man and his woman stood there, dead in their sin and destined to die in their bodies. The Lord had just said to the man that he would return to the dust from which he had been taken, but the promise of life, even from their state of death, was made.

We know this because immediately after the pronounced curse upon the man, the very next words say, “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20).

The man, though now spiritually dead, and destined to die – meaning he lived in a body of death, now named the woman he had been given – *Khavah*, or “Life.” Though they stood before the Lord dead, he had believed the promise that the bringer of death would be destroyed. If death was destroyed, life would come.

The naming of the woman “Life” was an act of faith, and in that act, a covering was given –

“Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” Genesis 3:21

Something died in order to cover their shame. Blood was shed, and it was not done so by the man. Rather, it was the Lord who did it, and thus it was an act of grace. Further, it was the Lord who clothed them with this substitutionary animal. There was no active participation on their part. They simply received what the Lord had provided. This is what the text indicates.

In this one chapter, and actually in very few verses of that chapter, and many of them following one directly after the next, the entire basis for the redemption of mankind is given. The theology of what is presented in the Genesis 3 narrative will never be diverted from.

Man fell, man is fallen, man cannot correct the matter, the Lord will intervene, the Lord – through His grace – will accomplish the necessary sacrifice, the Lord will provide the necessary covering for the restoration with that sacrifice, and it will be based on a simple act of faith by the man. Everything in Scripture concerning salvation after this point will be based on that notion, and it will support that typology.

*I shall put enmity between you and the woman
An on-going battle through lengths of ages
Your seed, the unregenerate human
Who against me reviles and rages*

*But there shall come One, a Promised Seed
Who will crush your head for what you have done
Your days are numbered so take you heed
In my mind the battle is already won*

*Jesus is coming to make all things new
This word is faithful and it is true*

*In the cross, a victory you will assume
A victory – yes – but not for you
After His cross and after His tomb
He will arise and make all things new*

*Man's redemption will have been wrought
By the Seed of the woman, My own Son
With His blood He will have bought
The right to man's soul, the victory won*

II. Promises, Covenants, and Dispensations

Despite the pattern of redemption being set in the manner in which we just saw, there are innumerable things which will seem to deviate from it as the story of Scripture unfolds. But such is not the case. Quite often, those things which seem like deviations – such as the Law of Moses – are detailed lessons and learning tools to more fully understand and/or appreciate this simple message of hope.

A Messiah is coming, and He will make all things right again. Eve knew this and the joy of having her first child is highlighted by an implicit belief that she through he – this child named Cain – would be returned to paradise because she believed that he was the promised Messiah.

That proved to be a wrong assumption, and she went into a state of miserable acceptance of that fact with the coming of her second son, Abel. His name, Havel, means “Breath.” It is the vaporous breath that disappears as it is exhaled. Eve was despondent and the name reflects her state.

And, so sad was the plight of this family, so ingrained in them was the death which infected Adam, that these first two recorded births into the stream of human existence turned into a point of not simply waiting for death to come, but actively bringing it about. Cain killed his brother and the miserable state of man apart from God was highlighted by the act.

However, and despite this, a careful recording of the names of certain men born after Adam is made. Due to the length of man's lifespan, and the years between Adam and one of those named men – Noah – there could have been millions, or possibly hundreds of millions (or more) people on the earth by the 1656th year of the world. And yet very few names are recorded during all those years and among all of those humans.

In this, we can see that this limited line, and this particular record, is very important. And it becomes especially so when we read in Genesis 6 that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Genesis 6:5).

This is a world which had gone from its first short dispensation into its second. Man had gone from innocence to conscience. There is no specific direction given to man. There were no divine laws recorded. It was simply a time in which man was given to live as he saw fit, but with the understanding that he was in a very short line of humans from their first father, Adam.

And more to the point, the lifespans of man at that time meant that many alive by the time of the flood were born while Adam was still alive. If anyone wanted to know if the story was true, all they need to do was go ask him or one of his direct sons. They had the information they needed.

Would man use that knowledge wisely? No. By the time of Noah, there was no hope and no remedy except to destroy that which had made itself worthless through wickedness. But the careful detailing of that one particular line of Adam is a note of hope in an otherwise dreadful world.

From the tenth in that line, Noah, would come a new world of men with divine commands and a covenant – the Lord would never again destroy the world by flood. But there were expectations levied upon man, and the Lord promised that He would hold man accountable for his actions. Thus, came the dispensation of government.

It is a dispensation which continues to this day in the world at large. God established the nations and the peoples of the world. He gave them their languages and they are to live within those confines.

But during this long-running dispensation, the Lord was still working towards the coming of Messiah. For the nations to have hope, there must be a Hope of the nations. Even if man has forgotten that the promise was made, somewhere – instilled deep within him – is the knowledge that it must be so.

However, to continue the plan without distraction and without manipulation by the nations of the world, the Lord called only one man to continue carrying on this hope. Why would He do this? He has done it because of Genghis Khan, Adolph Hitler, and Joseph Stalin – and because of innumerable others like them. Man looks to man for his hope, and nations look to their leaders for their salvation.

But salvation is of the Lord. That pattern has already been set. And it is not by the works of man but by faith in the Lord. And so, while the nations continued with their own conquests, raising up their own leaders and false messiahs, the Lord called Abraham out of Ur and to a land that He would set before him.

In his calling, he was given a promise, with him was made a covenant, and through him came another dispensation based on the promise. In the Lord's dealings with Abraham, he was given a sign – that of circumcision. But the circumcision came after the promise, not before. The circumcision was only a sign of the covenant. The covenant is one based on Abraham's faith in the promise.

To understand the life of Abraham, and to grasp why the selected stories of his life which are recorded in Scripture are there, is to look into the mind of God. It is to see and understand in picture and typology the continued unfolding of the plan of redemption and the hope of Messiah – meaning the Child of Christmas – that goes back to the fall itself.

The dispensation of promise is a dispensation of looking forward to the Promise. When Abraham was told to take his only son and sacrifice him, it was to make a picture of what God would do. When the wood for the offering was laid upon his son Isaac to carry, it was to make a picture of what Christ would do – carrying the cross ordained by His Father. When a ram was provided by the Lord in place of Isaac, it was given to show us what would come about in our salvation – substitutionary atonement. And, the spot where these things took place was to let us know where Christ would die.

These are only a few details of one short story out of many chapters of stories of the life of Abraham, and each of them – names of people he interacted with, names of places he went to, and on and on – all of his life was used to provide us hints and clues of the Promise that would come from this dispensation of promise.

But the types and pictures didn't stop there. When Abraham was gone, the promises, the covenants, and the dispensation continued with Isaac and with Jacob. Every story, every act, every harvest, and every conflict that is recorded is given to show us what God was doing and how He would do it.

In the life of Jacob is an entire panorama of the story – from Adam to Messiah, and throughout the all of time's set dispensations. And they are all given to show us that it is centered on the Promise – the coming Messiah, the seed of the woman, the Child of Christmas.

This included the family matters of Jacob – the acquisition of his wives, the births and naming of his twelve sons and one named daughter, the ordeals that those children went through and the conflicts they faced, and so on. When Joseph was sold off to slavery in Egypt, it wasn't merely a story of loss for Jacob, but a story of what God would do in Christ.

When Jacob's eldest, Judah, through many various life events finally ended up sleeping with his own daughter in law – without even knowing it was her – it was to give us a typological picture of what God would do through Jesus Christ in the redemption of the world, and the assurance that we possess because of it.

None of these stories is without a reason, and the reason for every one of them is to show us details of what God would do in the sending of Messiah. When Zechariah prophesied concerning God's holy prophets who have been since the world began, it was because men of God had been prophesying both through their writings and through their actions, as directed by God, that there were things which would be fulfilled in this coming Child of Christmas.

In the movement of Jacob and his family to Egypt, pictures are made. In the death and burial of Jacob, pictures are made. In the years of captivity, pictures are made. Time, and the lives of these people, were marching towards an inevitable meeting with Messiah, and each recorded detail is especially given for that one reason.

And then, after many long years in Egypt, the bondage of the people was great. They were under a harsh taskmaster, and they yearned for freedom. When the time was right, He sent them a deliverer.

The next major figure of the plan was Moses, but though He anticipates Christ, he does so in a different way – not in the promise, but in how the promise is obtained. And it is not in how it is obtained *by* man, but how it is so obtained *for* man.

The Lord, through Moses, delivered Israel out of Egypt, but He brought them to Sinai, not to Canaan. In bringing the people to Sinai, a new dispensation came into focus – that of Law. Everything about their time there was given for this purpose. There was the lawgiver, there were the implements, rites, rituals, and commandments which came through the law. And surely, without understanding the reason for the law, the words bog down in tedium, and the mind is overwhelmed with detail.

The laws are restrictive, and they bind the people with a heavy load. If one law in Eden brought such disaster upon the world, what would come of those who were cast under the long oppressive shadow of this law? And how could life come from such a body of death? The Lord said it was possible, but only through an impossible allowance.

In the middle of the seemingly unending laws of the book of Leviticus, and in a chapter that deals heavily with sexual morality, the Lord said –

*“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”
Leviticus 18:5*

It is a promise, but it is a promise based on law. Thus, it is a promise based on obedience. And because it is based on obedience to law, if an infraction arises, then the promise is nullified.

A person will live in the performance of the Lord's statutes and judgments. Therefore, logically, one will not live in his failure to do them. But this is where the words of Zechariah, which he prophesied at the time of John's birth, become relevant again. He said –

*“And to remember His holy covenant,
73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:” Luke 1:72, 73*

Zechariah does not appeal to the Covenant at Sinai and the Law of Moses. Rather, he appealed to “His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham.” It is what is explained by Paul in Galatians 3 –

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no

effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.
Galatians 3:13-18

What is it that Messiah would do? He would come to fulfill the promise and to keep the covenant to Abraham which was confirmed by God in Christ. In other words, the covenant to Abraham was a covenant of the understanding that Messiah was coming and that He was coming through Abraham.

And so why then did God give the law to Israel? It was to keep Israel as Israel. It was to confirm them as the Lord's people until the coming of Messiah. And how would they know that He had come? First, He would fulfill the many types and pictures which anticipated Him.

Secondly, He would fulfill the prophecies which foretold of Him and of His coming. And thirdly, in Him would be *life*. The law said so –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”
Leviticus 18:5

When One did the things of the law, He would live. The promise stands. But before He would come, the law would work out its purpose fully. The time of the law was the time of the conquest. It was the time of the judges. It was the time of the kings. And it was the time of the prophets continuing their call.

They proclaimed the word of the Lord to the people of Israel, progressively telling them a bit more with each new revelation about the promise of Christmas to come.

He is coming. Messiah is coming. He will be from the tribe of Judah. He will be from the house of David. He will be born in Bethlehem. He would come before the destruction of the second temple, and so – in fact – before that even took place, He would have to be born.

The timing is so precise that it's hard to believe anyone could miss it. He would begin His ministry four hundred and eighty-three years after the decree of Atarxerxes to Nehemiah to restore and rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. If that is when He began His ministry, then He would obviously be born at some point before that.

With all of this information available, it was simply a matter of waiting and watching as history slowly unfolded until that right moment. It came as prophesied. Luke 2 bears witness that Simeon was told he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Likewise, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, an aged woman who stayed constantly at the temple knew He had come, and she announced it to “all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” The matter was not secret outside of the temple, nor was it secret outside of Jerusalem.

Nor was it a secret outside of Israel. Matthew records that wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, having known He had come by the sign of “His star in the East.” Those who were outside of the law and still living under the dispensation of government were aware of His coming.

When they came seeking Him, they went to Herod the king. Herod, in turn, gathered together the chief priests and the scribes and asked them about it. Their answer was that He would be born in Bethlehem. It was written, and they knew – in advance – that it would be so. If they knew this, then they knew what Daniel said as well.

It was Micah, a minor prophet, who had prophesied concerning the birthplace. It was Daniel, a major prophet, who had prophesied of the time of His coming. The timing could not be missed. The end of the four hundred and eighty-three years was not far off at that point.

The Hope of Israel, and – indeed – the hope of the nations had come. Nobody disputed that He was coming, even the Samaritan woman in John 4 anticipated Him. When He passed through her area and stopped to talk to her, she said –

“I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” John 4:25

It wasn't as if one woman in one town of Samaria happened to know this. Rather, the implication from her words is that it was such common knowledge that *even* one woman in one town of Samaria would know it. In other words, everyone anticipated it.

The Christmas story that we read every year is the story of God's entrance into the stream of humanity. It is the anticipation of all people to some extent. Some actively hide it. Some purposefully deny it. But all people are aware of the fact that something is wrong, and somehow it will be made right, and that God has told us that it would happen.

Some cultures still have a sense of God's plan, but it is marred and obscured through years, additions, changes, and twistings. But the underlying concepts are there. The only properly transmitted and maintained revelation of it, however, was through Israel.

And the law of Israel was given to keep Israel together. It was a bind which protected them so that His coming would be unmistakable. But that law was not a means to an end for the people of Israel. It was a guard *for* them, and it was to be a tutor *to* them so that when He came they would realize it and receive Him.

In the coming of the Christmas Child was the coming of One who could, in fact, keep that law – that IMPOSSIBLE body of law. "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD." The Man, the Messiah, did the things of the law. He kept His Father's words and commandments, and He prevailed over them.

Because He never sinned under the law, He embodied what the law represented. And because He embodied that, when He died, the law – in Him – ended. It died with Him. Paul says as much –

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Colossians 2:13-15

In that state, meaning as the One to fulfill the law, thus embodying it, God now offers peace to those who come to Him through Christ. The precepts of the law included substitutionary atonement. In other words, the sacrificial system of Israel included the precept that an innocent animal could die in place of a human. The sin of that person was transferred to the animal, the animal was slain, and the sin was forgiven.

However, this was both only a picture of what God would do in Christ, and it was a temporary measure until the coming of Christ. This is certain, because if a person committed the same sin ten minutes later, another animal would be required, demonstrating that the atonement was temporary and ineffective.

Even the annual offering of Israel on the Day of Atonement was temporary. This is because it had to be repeated year after year. This was, then, only a lesson that was intended to lead the people to Christ. His fulfillment of these types and shadows of the law means that His death – which they only anticipated – is the full, final, and forever means of restoration with God.

Apart from Him, no sacrifice, offering, or deed will do. But in Him, every requirement of God is met. The Babe in the manger was sent to perform a mission and to, as Zechariah says, "give the knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins."

The nakedness and shame of Adam is covered over by the Person and work of Christ under the law. The death which man has experienced because of sin is swallowed up in life because of the coming of the Christmas Child. One might say we are saved through the law, but that is only because of Christ's perfect obedience to it which is then imputed to us.

For those in Christ, we now live in the dispensation of grace. And the reality of the hope of Messiah is extended to all. Those who are under the law are given freedom from the law in Messiah. Those who are under government are given a new hope in Christ. Those who awaited the promise to Abraham now have the Promise of God in Jesus.

The simplicity of the gospel message is found wrapped up in a little Child, born to a virgin in a small town in the land of Judah known as Bethlehem – the House of Bread. "I will accomplish the work; I will bring forth salvation; I will send my Son to bring you back to Me. Trust in Him – the Bread of Life – and receive the life which is truly life. Here is My Gift and My Present to the people of the world. His name is JESUS."

Closing Verse: *“And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),
⁶ Indeed He says,
‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Isaiah 49:5, 6*

Next Week – Deuteronomy 10:1-11 *Moses is in the sweet zone, the Lord’s anger is reversed...* (Two Tablets of Stone Like the First) (34th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Zeal of the Lord of Hosts

Unto us a Child is born
A time to rejoice and not to mourn

Unto us a Son is given
The One to lead us from death to a’livin’

And the government will be upon His shoulder
Every eye will see Him; every soul will be His beholder

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom’s realm
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever – He at the helm
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this

And His name will be called Wonderful
The Counselor and Mighty God is He
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, pure and white as wool
Of the increase of His government and peace, no end shall we see

Do not be afraid, for behold
I bring you good tidings of great joy
Which will be to all people, forever told
The wondrous story, the birth of a Boy

For there is born to you this day
In the city of David, a Savior, it is He
Who is Christ the Lord, to whom heaven’s hosts obey
The Messiah has come, and now you may go and see

And this will be the sign to you:
You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes
Lying in a manger, a glorious view
The Christmas Child whom our Heavenly Father bestows

A Child like no other has come to dwell among us
He shall lead us in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake
And His name is called out, His name is JESUS
Come, and of the Heavenly Child partake

He is God’s gift and heaven’s treasure
He is Immanuel – God with us
And He bestows upon us grace without measure
The Christmas Child, our glorious Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...