

“The First Promise Of Christmas”
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Mililani Community Church
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Someone has rightly said that history is HIS-STORY - because all of human history revolves around the coming of Jesus Christ into this world. If you doubt that, look at the date on your calendar. His birth was so important that it divided history into two eras B.C. & A.D.

Every time you write the date on a check you are acknowledging that Christ is the central figure of the human race. Don't tell the ACLU that! They have been filing lawsuits all over the country for the past 30 years to remove any public acknowledgement that Christmas is the day we celebrate His birth!

Isn't it interesting that Jesus is the central figure of the human race and yet there are people who would like to rid the world of his memory if they could. There is nothing new about that. Even when he was born there were those who ignored him and rejected him and others who immediately wanted to kill him. Herod the King said, "tell me where he is so that I can go and worship him." But he really wanted to murder him. John 1:11 says, *"He came to his own but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

Pascal the great French scientist and mathematician wrote, "Jesus Christ is the center of everything and the object of everything and he who does not know Him knows nothing of the order of the world and nothing of himself."

This evening I want us to think for a few minutes about the first promise of His coming.

When was the coming of Jesus first announced?

- Some will immediately think of the announcement by the angel to the shepherds on the night of his birth in Luke 2: *"An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be FOR ALL PEOPLE. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you;*

he is Christ the Lord." But that was not the first announcement of His coming!

- Others will think of the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke chapter 1: *"Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end..."* But that was not the first announcement of his birth.
- The first book of the New Testament records the announcement of his birth to Joseph, who was engaged to Mary (Matt. 1:18-21): *"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'" Of course that is not the first announcement of Christ's coming either, because Mary knew before Joseph did.*

But listen to the next two verses in Matthew chapter 1 – verses 22-23: *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel' – which means, "God with us."*

Matthew is quoting the prophet Isaiah who lived around 700 B.C. seven hundred years before the coming of Christ! Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14 says, *"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."* Isaiah the prophet goes on to say in Isaiah 9:14: *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor Mighty God Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end..."*

These prophecies were written seven centuries before Christ's birth. But even these predictions of the virgin birth of Christ were not the first promise of his coming.

Let's go back 2000 years before Christ to the time of Abraham. Listen to the promise God made to Abraham 4000 years ago: *"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all families on earth will be blessed through you."*

When God called Abraham, he promised him: *"all families (or peoples) on earth will be blessed through you."* This was God's promise that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come through Abraham and his descendants. In that wonderful way all families of the earth would be blessed through him!

It is very significant that when the New Testament opens, the very first verse is: *"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ ... the SON OF ABRAHAM."* Abraham had many sons, and they became the Jewish people. But Jesus is THE son of Abraham – the One through whom all families on earth would be blessed.

But even that promise made to Abraham 4000 years ago is not the first promise of His coming!

To discover the first promise of Christ's coming we have to go all the way back to the very beginning of human race – when there were only two human beings living on the earth.

As a background to that promise let's go to the very first verse of the Bible: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* As the climax of His wonderful creation God made man. Genesis 1:27: *"So God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."*

After each of the phases of the creation week we read, *"And God saw that it was good."* Finally, with the creation of man, *"God saw all that he had made and it was VERY good!"* (1:31). It was all VERY GOOD!

But as we look around the world today we know that not everything is good. There is much that is wrong in the world. There is evil in the world today.

What happened to God's marvelous creation and to man?

Genesis chapter 3 gives us the answer. Genesis 3 is the most tragic chapter in the Bible, because it tells the story of the Fall of Man, and how sin entered the human race. Adam and Eve listened to Satan in the Garden of Eden and disobeyed God. Their sin against God in the Garden plunged the whole human race into sin. Romans 5:12 says, *"By one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."*

But right there in that tragic chapter, God made the first promise of a coming savior who would deliver us from the power of sin and Satan. It is found in Genesis 3:15. *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

God is promising in Genesis 3:15 that a Mighty Deliverer will be coming. He will be born as the unique "seed of the woman" to defeat Satan and all that sin has brought into the world.

"He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This means that in this great conflict the Deliverer would suffer and be wounded. Yet Satan would be the ultimate loser. He would have his head crushed.

When I was the chaplain at Hawaii State Prison, I taught the Book of Genesis in a Monday evening Bible class, to a group of enthusiastic inmate brothers in Christ. It took us a whole year to go through this book together.

One of the men in that class made something for me that I have treasured since that time. I have it here with me this evening. It is a little ceramic tile depicting the story of Genesis 3:15 (show the picture on the ceramic tile of a man's foot with his heel being pierced by a stake, with the head of the serpent being crushed beneath his heel).

Like a puzzle being put together, the rest of the Bible fills in the details of this first promise of the coming of the Deliverer – till finally, Matthew 1:21 gives us the last piece: *"Give him the name Jesus (which means the LORD saves) because he will save his people from their sins."* Here we discover who is on the other end of that foot (in the Genesis 3:15 picture) – it's the Lord Jesus!

Thus the promise of Genesis 3:15 was A UNIVERSAL PROMISE GIVEN TO THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE.

You see, Jesus came to be the Savior of the whole world! There is no other name by which we can be saved. Jesus is the only way. He proclaimed, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me"* (John 14:6).

Our greatest enemies are sin and death. It is sin that makes life so miserable on this earth. And finally we die. But Jesus came to conquer sin and death through his own death and resurrection.

Today God offers Him as the Savior for all who will believe. John 3:16 says it all: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes on Him should not PERISH but have everlasting life."*

In Romans 10:11 God's Word says: *"He who believes in him will never be disappointed."* Entrust your life to Jesus Christ and you will never be ultimately disappointed in life. You will find hope, and forgiveness and meaning and purpose for life, and joy in living each day, and a wonderful future.

Malcolm Muggeridge, the famous British journalist wrote: "We seek wealth and find we've accumulated worthless pieces of paper. We seek security and find we've acquired the means to blow ourselves and our little earth to smithereens. We seek carnal indulgence only to find (that) we infallibly fall into the servitude of self-gratification.....Many people have asked me how it was that I came ultimately to be convinced that Christ was the answer. It was because in this world of fantasy...I have found in Christ the only true alternative." (p. 49,53 The End Of Christendom).

In his classic work, Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis wrote these final words of wisdom: "Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

The Apostle John encourages us with these words: *"... to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

Won't you come to Him today, and receive Him as your own personal Savior!