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Christmas - A Crucial Part of the Big Picture, of God's Eternal Purposes



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #348 ~

During this time of the year we focus on Christmas, a celebration of God becoming man and being with us, of the incarnation and of Immanuel. In this post, we look at God’s word to see how Christmas fits into the broader picture, in God’s eternal plan, from the past to the present to the future. I examine key events and people leading to Jesus’ birth and up to the present day and then to the glorious future God has in store for His children.

John 1:1-2. In the beginning, in eternity past, was the Word, the One who is the Son of God, and He was with God, and He is God. That Jesus is the Word means He is a communicator, and His purpose is to tell the world the truth of God through His life and His words. Heb. 1:1-3

John 1:3. The Son of God is the Creator, for by Him all things are made and are sustained, spiritual beings and physical beings, things you see and cannot see, things animate and inanimate. His most important creation are humans, for only we are made in the image of God. Gen. 1:26

Genesis 3:1-10. The 1st humans were Adam and Eve and they were perfect, but they sinned against God, resulting in them and this entire earth being cursed by God. And their sin was passed on to all their descendants, to all mankind (Rom. 5:12). Since God is holy, then He must punish a person's sin, for He cannot let the guilty go unpunished. Exod. 34:7

Genesis 3:15. The first one to sin against God was Lucifer, who tempted Eve to sin. That he rebelled like this means he is an enemy of both God and man. This *"1st gospel"* predicts that a descendant of Eve, One we know as Jesus Christ, would defeat this devil. That Jesus would descend from Eve means He would be a man. That the devil would bruise Jesus' heel means that He would be wounded. That Jesus would bruise the devil's head means that he would be defeated.

Genesis 3:21. The garments of skin worn by Adam and Eve signifies that an animal was sacrificed and blood was shed, symbolizing the fact that God would kill a substitute to atone for man's sin – and this is Jesus Christ, God the Son, One who would be God and man, and a mediator between God the Father and man.

Genesis 12:1-3. God wants to bless the families of the earth, even though people sin against Him. Gen. 3:15, 21 hints as to how this would happen, but there's more. Abram is the father of the Jewish people, and God wanted Jesus Christ to descend from him. That is, Jesus would be a Jew. The rest of the Old Testament describes the history of the Jews and of Israel. Matt. 1 and Luke 3 give us Jesus' genealogy, the names of His human ancestors. So it was through Jesus, Abram's descendant, that

the world would be delivered from its curse and then forever blessed.

Isaiah 7:14. God gave a sign to the Jews so they would know the identity of the Savior. The sign was that Jesus would miraculously be born of a virgin. So Jesus would not come into the world as a grown-up man, but would be born, be a child, and be a Son. We also learn that He is called Immanuel, meaning *"God with us."* That God wanted to do this shows His great, amazing love for us – and only since Jesus is both God and man could this happen and would it happen. That Jesus becomes a man means He is like us, can relate to us, talk to us, and love us, and that we can see Him, be with Him, talk to Him, and love Him.

Isaiah 9:6-7. This prophecy, like Is. 7:14, says that the coming Savior would be a child, a son, one born of a woman. We also discover that He would be a descendant of David, that He would be a wise, loving, and powerful King over the whole world, One who would bring peace and rule forever and ever.

Isaiah 52:13-15–53:1-12. This speaks about Jesus Christ and that He would be God's servant, and would suffer and sacrifice His life for the sins of people, and then be greatly exalted, and greatly influence all the kings of this world. More than any other Old Testament passage, Is. 53 explains the gospel, that Jesus, at His 1st coming, would suffer and die to forgive the sins of all the people who would repent of their sins and believe that He died on the cross to be punished for their sins. Rom. 5:8, Rom. 6:23, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 3:18

Micah 5:2-5. This prophecy is precise, for it tells us exactly where Jesus would be born, the little town of Bethlehem Ephrathah. It also makes it clear that Jesus will be a ruler, that He *"will be great to the ends of the earth"*, that He will shepherd His people, and that He will bring peace to the world.

Revelation 12:3-4. This sums up the life and death struggle between the Jewish people, who were to bring forth Jesus into the world, and the dragon, the devil, whose goal was to wipe out the Jews to prevent the birth of Jesus. The Old Testament describes in great detail this battle between the Jews and the devil. The 7 heads and 10 horns represent 8 empires the devil works through so as to defeat the Jewish kingdom. Vs. 4b refers to the Roman empire, specifically to Herod's failed attempt to kill baby Jesus, for God foiled him. Lk. 2:1-8, 16-18

Galatians 4:4. Since eternity past, God had planned out the perfect time for His Son to be born of a woman, to be the God-man, to be God and man at the same time, which is an increible miracle, what we call the Incarnation (John 1:14-18). The Old Testament times of the Jews and about 400 *"silent years"*, along with all the other events and people in the Gentile world during that period, led to the birth day of Jesus. Not only that, but the Savior would come into this world at the right time, when the rulers, languages, roads, and nation of Israel were just what God wanted and had already planned them to be. Is. 46:9-11

Luke 1:26-35. The angel Gabriel tells Mary that she is the *"favored one"*, for she would be the mother of the Savior, the Son of the Most High. He also informs her that her son would be a King, and that He would *"reign over the house of Jacob forever."* Mary was surprised but thrilled to know that as a virgin, she would bear a son, who we know to be Jesus Christ, and that He was the son of man but also the *"Son of God"*, the Savior, her Savior, and the Judge and King of the world. Luke 1:46-55

Matthew 1:18-25. An angel tells Joseph that Mary, his future wife, would give birth to a son, and that would be a miracle for she was a virgin. So her son would be the Son of God, be both God and man (*"For in Him, all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form"* – Col. 2:9, John 1:14, Phil. 2:5-7). He also tells Joseph that her son's name would be Jesus, and that's because His purpose was to be a Savoir, for He would *"save His people from their sins."* Not only that, but Jesus would be

“Immanuel”, which means *“God with us.”* Put together, these three powerful and unbelievable truths sum up the main message of Christmas, that God wanted His Son (1) to be a man (2) so that He would save us (3) and we would be with Him forever (3). To know that the great and perfect God wants to be with us and have an intimate and wonderful relationship with us for all eternity is amazing, astonishing, the best and greatest gift and blessing imaginable.

Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2. The central message of Christmas is summed up in the previous point, but there’s much more to this story, and it’s found by examining the entire Matt. 1-2, Luke 1-2 narratives. Let me sum it up: 1) Jesus Christ is Immanuel, Lord, Savior, Judge, King, the Son of God, and son of man. 2) Jesus is the main character but there’s a supporting cast: the righteous Zechariah and Elizabeth, John the Baptist’s parents; Mary, Jesus’ mother, and Joseph, her husband; Simeon and Anna, two godly believers who were expecting the coming of the Messiah; lowly and humble shepherds; three wise men worshiping the King; the angels; and that evil king Herod. Apart from Herod, all of these characters are godly, righteous, humble, devoted, faithful believers.

What else do we learn? 3) There are the ancestors of Jesus. 4) A huge spiritual battle was taking place, for enemy forces, the devil along with Herod, tried to kill Jesus. 5) Prophecies relating to the birth of Jesus were fulfilled – about Him being King over His kingdom, Abraham and his descendants receiving land, and the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. 6) Both people and angels worshiped Jesus. 7) Glory was given to God. 8) God’s character, His wisdom, power, love, joy, holiness, faithfulness, greatness, humility, sovereignty, etc., was manifested. 9) God’s plans and purposes were perfectly carried out and fulfilled. All this big-picture information is part of the larger Christmas story, taking us from long before the birth of Jesus up to His birth over 2,000 years ago, and then up to the present day, and then to the eternal future when, with His Father, He is reigning as King over the world, and being worshiped by all.

Mattthew, Mark, Luke, and John. From these four gospels, we read about Jesus' life, how He was both God and man. We see examples of His perfect character, His love, compassion, zeal, patience, forgiveness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, diligence, and perseverance. We learn about His purpose: He was preaching the gospel, teaching the people, discipling believers, and predicting the future. We read about His suffering and death, that He died on a cross for us, that He was punished for our sins, and thus paid for all the sins of those who would believe in Him. We know that Jesus was raised from the dead, thereby proving His victory over sin and death. We find out that there were many witnesses to His death and resurrection, which is historical proof of these most important events.

Matthew 16:18. There is the church age, beginning on the day of Pentecost and ending with signs in the heavens and the world going dark (Acts 2:17-21). During this age, Jesus is building His church, working through His word, the Spirit, and believers. The gospel is preached, His word is obeyed, disciples are made, the church is growing, and Christ is victorious, defeating sin and death in those who believe in Him. That the Jews have returned to Israel, to their homeland, is the #1 sign that we now live in the end-times, and that we are fast approaching the end of this age, that time when Christ the King returns to rapture the church, judge the world, save a Jewish remnant, and begin His 1000-year reign over the world.

Matthew 24. This outlines what occurs in the end-times, what happens before the end of this age and Christ's coming. We read of birth pains, wars, famines, and earthquakes. We learn about the great persecution of the church, that Christians are betrayed and killed, and that they are to persevere and keep preaching the gospel of the kingdom until the end of this age. There's the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:27), the abomination of desolation, when the Antichrist desecrates the temple, and then greatly persecutes the Jews.

All this persecution of Jews and Christians is suddenly cut short and, at

a time unknown to us, Christ returns to rapture the church. As believers, we should be excited about Christ's coming, be watching and waiting for our Savior and King to come back to rapture the church and punish the world. The information in this chapter is extremely important at this present time, along with Dan. 7, 9; Luke 21; 1 Thess. 4-5; 2 Thess. 1-2; and the book of Revelation.

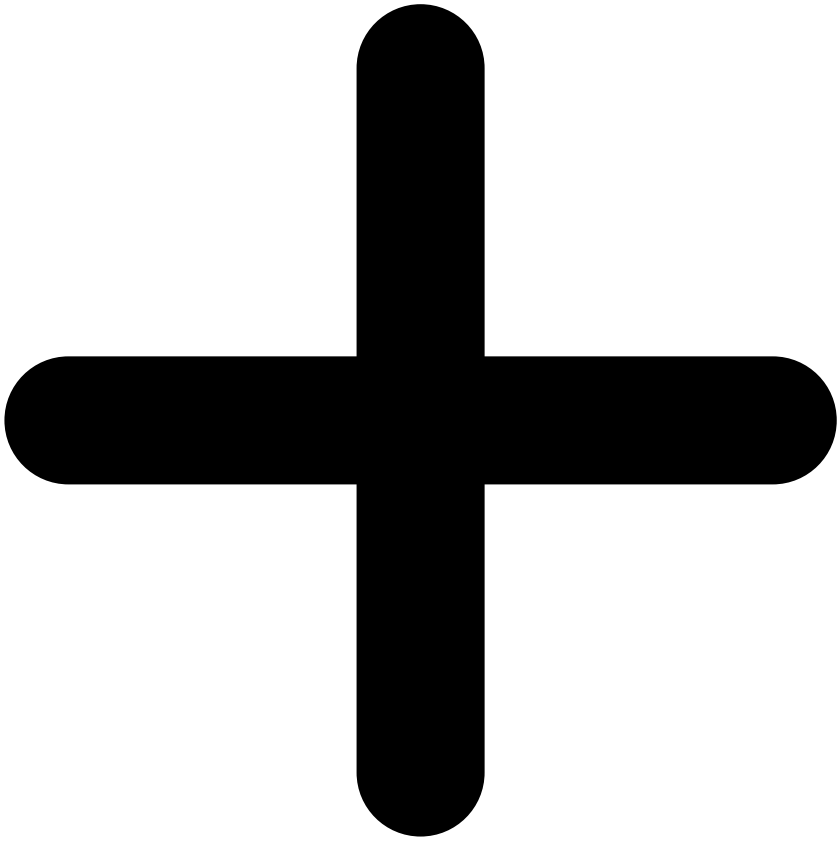
Revelation 12:5. This, as well as Isaiah 9:6-7, are the perfect end-times' Christmas verses. Rev. 12:5 tells us that the woman gave birth to a male child, referring to the birth of Jesus 2,000 years before this time. But it does not talk about His life on earth at His 1st coming, or about Him being born to be a Savior, or about His death and resurrection. It does talk about His ascension into heaven, and that Jesus was born to be a King – and that He will rule the nations of the earth with force, with a rod of iron, which happens at Jesus' 2nd coming.

The Christmas story about Jesus being born is only fully complete when we realize that it's about Jesus being a Savior (Ps. 22) at His 1st coming, a Shepherd (Ps. 23) during this church age, and a Sovereign at His 2nd coming (Ps. 24). This true story about Jesus being born, becoming a man, and being Immanuel, God with us, is not the beginning or end of God's working on this earth, but a key part, a continuation of the story of Jesus, the story of man, the story of our eternal life and eternal reign with Jesus Christ in His eternal kingdom. Rev. 1:4-8, 5:10

Isaiah 9:6-7. *"A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders, and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."*

P.S. Indeed, Christ always lives for us, and may we always live for Him.

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