

Incarnation – The Same God and The Same Plan

Gen. 3:15; Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:12-15

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Christmas is a season and a time in our larger culture that evokes many different feelings. Largely, though, we are encouraged to be filled with happiness and hope. Even our approach to consumerism and gift-giving can be found in this larger cultural idea. We give gifts so that at least one day a year, we can feel like it is all okay when, in reality, our lives and the world are filled with turbulence and trial. Personally, I think all of those things and the desire to feel hope is a God given wiring that we all have. Christmas tells us that it is not just some fleeting moment to be experienced, but instead, a reality we can live in now and ultimately forever. That hope is available to all because of a child born in a manger 2000 years ago. An act of divine love and grace. For many of us, we see the character and nature of Jesus, and we are compelled by it. We even see it as aspirational and good for our families and society at large. That is, specifically, we zero in on the attributes of love and grace in Jesus. As we do that, we begin to have a hard time reconciling the character and nature of the God in the Old Testament with this meek and mild savior born in Bethlehem. But, if we do a little work, we will come to see that all along the way, **God had graciously long purposed to bring about rescue for humanity.**

1. Jesus, a new nature for God?

- a. **In Advent - We remember that God can be trusted for the future because of His actions in the past.**
 - i. This is something that we have talked about as we have gone through this series and in this season. Christmas, and the season of worship that is attached to it (Advent) is all about remembering.
 - ii. Often, in that action of remembering, we need to purposefully separate cultural items from religious or sacred items. – Remember, that doesn't make the cultural items (presents, food, particular family traditions) bad. It just means that we are to purposefully engage with the central focus of the season and those cultural items do not always do that.
 - iii. **What is the central focus?** → That God made good on his promise to send the Messiah. And, with that, if God has demonstrated himself faithful in the past, we have every reason to trust him for the future.
 - iv. One of the unique challenges with Christmas is that we often feel drawn to Jesus, but wonder if the character and nature of this "meek and mild" savior matches up with the God of the Old Testament?
- b. **So, let's ask a key question → Does God's character and nature change in the New Testament?**

- i. To answer this, we are going to look at three passages in the OT that both predict and find their fulfillment in Jesus.

2. Gen. 3:15 – The first promise of redemption.

a. God's willingness to redeem and the first glimpse of the gospel.

- i. The larger passage is about the fall of man. God has created the cosmos, the world, and everything in it including man. Only man though is created in the image of and after the likeness of God. (Gen. 1:26) This positions man uniquely among all created things as the pinnacle of God's creation. Man is ultimately created to be in right relationship with God, enjoy his presence, and offer him right worship.
 - ii. Genesis 3:15 is part of the curse against the serpent. The first two chapters of Genesis are an account of the creation of the cosmos and of human beings. **In these chapters Adam and Eve enjoy an intimate relationship with God and each other in the Garden of Eden.** Genesis 2 ends on a note of peace and harmony. In Genesis 3 the serpent appears, and he deceives the woman who eats from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹
 - iii. Man (Adam and Eve), however rebels and ushers brokenness and death into the good world that God created. Genesis 3, is God's response to the fall.
 - 1. So, what is God's response?
- b. God's response to the fall is one of truth and grace. → How do we see this?
- i. **First**, he seeks man out. (Gen. 3:9)
 - 1. This means that God (who knows all) intentionally and peacefully seeks out man after man has rejected him. His posture is not one of the vindictive cosmic toddler that might be associated with the God of the OT.
 - ii. **Second**, God will not force man to live eternally in a broken state. (Gen. 3:14ff)
 - 1. God upholding justice over evil is not cruel, it is actually kind. He does not abandon man and force him to a life of painful separation.
 - iii. **Third**, God promises to ultimately and eternally hold the deceiver (Satan) accountable. (Gen. 3:15)
 - 1. **On the problem of evil in the narrative** - The narrative doesn't explain, and the attempts on the part of some Bible readers to fit a fall of angels into the "gap" between the first two verses of Genesis 1 shows how desperate people are to come up with an explanation. Indeed, nowhere in the Bible is there an explanation of how evil was first introduced into the cosmos. While space does not permit a rebuttal, arguments presented on the basis of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are not credible. The serpent simply appears with no explanation of its origin.²
 - a. **For the original reader (hearer), it is less important as to where evil came from and more important to know that it can be dealt with permanently.**
 - iv. The simple truth here is that we see in God's character both truth and grace. He holds man's evil (sin) accountable (which is actually a merciful thing) and he promises to send one who will conquer the deceiver once and for all (which is gracious).

c. How do we see that in this verse? → The word bruise or crush.

¹ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 166.

² Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 167.

- i. **Christian readers can go back to Genesis 3 and read the first announcement of the good news (the evangelium) there.** It's best to acknowledge that the first readers may not have recognized this, but that the ultimate author's purposes are recognized by the New Testament authors as they read the Old Testament in the light of the person and work of Jesus Christ.³
- ii. The challenge of Hebrew from this era is that it is a very simple language. It only has around 3,000 words. This might sound like a lot, but modern English has around 100,000 commonly used words and up to a million total words.
- iii. The words that is translated here is has multiple meanings – “bruise, crush, bind” are all possible meanings.⁴
 - 1. The central idea the word always conveys is that of a fatal blow or strike.
 - 2. **The serpent thinks he will deliver a fatal blow, but in a merciful twist of fate (for man) it is the offspring of the woman, who will deliver the fatal blow.**
- iv. Now, this is all nice, but do we see the reflected anywhere else in the OT, and how does this reconcile with the law and sacrificial system?
- d. **Cf. Lev. 16:33-34 → The day of atonement.** → This makes all the difference.
 - i. The point of the sacrificial system was a physical reminder of a covenant the God had made with the people and their need for God's forgiveness and grace.
 - ii. The book of Leviticus is the book that describes the sacrificial system in great detail and order. It can be a tedious and disheartening read for us moderns.
 - 1. The whole book though (and the sacrificial system) revolves are chapter 16, The Day of Atonement.
 - 2. **³³He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.”**
 - iii. The entire sacrificial system hinges on God doing for man what he could not do for himself.
 - 1. In this chapter and summarized in these verses is a provision the Lord made for the people. God set up a day that all the people's sins could be forgiven and atoned for. **But, the people were offering sacrifices for the sins so why this day? Because God was willing to forgive every sin, even the sins they did not know they committed. → This is grace.**
- e. **Cf. Matt. 1:21 → “Rescue his people from their sins.”**
 - i. We hear in Matthew's Gospel about the primary and eternal purpose of this child growing in Mary's womb, he will forgive his people's sins.
 - ii. What God promised in Gen. 3:15 is fulfilled through Jesus, God's Son who took on human flesh (the offspring of the woman).

3. Ps. 2:7 – The Son begotten of the Father

- a. **The larger context of this Psalm. → About David, but ultimately fulfilled in Christ.**
 - i. **The Old Testament is God's revelation before Jesus and the New Testament is God's revelation after Jesus.** But while the Old Testament was written before Jesus, he is not

³ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Genesis* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 169.

⁴ William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 364.

absent from the Old Testament. **Jesus himself taught otherwise.** After his crucifixion, two people were walking to a town near Jerusalem called Emmaus (Lk 24:13–35).⁵

1. In the words of St. Augustine, “the New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed.”⁶
- ii. It is much quoted in the New Testament, both for its high claims for the Person of God’s Anointed and for its vision of his universal kingdom. It is unsurpassed for its buoyant, fierce delight in God’s dominion and his promise to his King. **While it is usually considered a coronation psalm,** it seems on closer inspection to recall that occasion (7–9) at a subsequent time of trouble (such as that of 2 Sam. 10). At David’s own accession there were no subject-peoples to grow mutinous (3). For Solomon there were plenty, but there were few for any of his successors. **A greater, however, than David or Solomon was needed to justify the full fury of these threats and the glory of these promises.**⁷
- iii. The term *messianic psalm* may be used in one of two ways. In a general sense, a messianic psalm is simply a psalm which anticipates the Messiah. We understand that all the psalms are messianic in this sense. Secondly, in a narrow or precise sense, this it specifically anticipates the Messiah.⁸
 1. An example of a narrow or precise Messianic Psalm - Psalm 16 is often read as a messianic psalm in the narrow sense. The key is taken from Paul’s speech in Antioch mentioned above (also cited in Peter’s speech in Acts 2:25–28). Paul argues that the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 16:10 can’t be associated with David since David was dead and buried. The ultimate fulfillment came with Jesus who died but was raised “incorruptible” (to borrow language from 1 Cor 15).⁹
- iv. **Paul helps us to understand the Messianic nature of Ps. 2:7.**
 1. At the conclusion of his sermon in Acts 13, Paul cites four passages from the Old Testament to make his point. Two of them are from the Psalms. He applies these passages (which in their Old Testament setting referred to David and other worshipers) to Jesus:
 - a. You are my Son; today I have become your Father. (**Ps 2:7 in Acts 13:33**)
 2. **Specifically, Paul quotes these passages to affirm Jesus’ Sonship and his resurrection.**¹⁰
- b. **The divinity of the Son – God making a covenant with himself on behalf of humanity.**
 - i. The psalm is written about David and his reign as king, but it echoes of a much deeper need.

⁵ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 63.

⁶ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 65.

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 66.

⁸ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 67.

⁹ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 67.

¹⁰ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 66.

1. **A greater, however, than David or Solomon was needed to justify the full fury of these threats and the glory of these promises.**¹¹
 2. God had made covenant with man before, and it always failed. Not because God failed but because man did. Even the covenant with David would fail. But, when God sent his Son and made a covenant with him, it would be the “new covenant” and it would last forever.
- ii. Why is the true humanity of Jesus so important? Most of all, because our salvation depends upon it—the humanity of Jesus is an essential element of the gospel message. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks to this issue: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.... For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:14,17). The humanity of Christ is also central to Paul’s argument that Jesus has overturned the work of Adam: “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19).¹²
1. As the early church father Irenaeus put it, **“He became like us so that we might become like him.”**¹³
 2. For the validity of the work accomplished in Christ’s death, or at least its applicability to us as human beings, depends upon the reality of his humanity, just as its efficacy depends upon the genuineness of his deity.¹⁴
 3. **“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,”**¹⁵ **and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**¹⁶ **For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.**¹⁷ **Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**¹⁸ **For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** – Heb. 2:14-18
- iii. If Ps. 2:7 shows us that one greater than David would be needed, it also reminds us that the “great one” would come through David’s line. A fact the gospels attest to and that is even foreshadowed in the answer of David’s successor.

4. 2 Sam. 7:12-15 – Through the line of David.

a. A promised line should show us a long-promised plan.

- i. The question of a successor for David is now faced, for though his death was by no means imminent it was nonetheless inevitable that he would *lie down with [his] fathers*, an expression which suggests fellowship beyond the grave. *I will raise up your offspring* (Heb. *zar’ākā*, ‘your seed’): the original implies not only one generation but many. In God’s perspective, history is seen whole, its purpose clear and certain to be achieved.

¹¹ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 66.

¹² EFCA. *Evangelical Convictions*, 2nd Edition (p. 123). Free Church Publications. Kindle Edition.

¹³ *Against Heresies*, III.10. via EFCA. *Evangelical Convictions*, 2nd Edition (p. 137). Free Church Publications. Kindle Edition

¹⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 645.

Nevertheless, the immediate reference is to David's heir and successor, whose kingdom the Lord will establish, as he had established David's.¹⁵

- ii. Again, just like with Ps. 2:7 there is an immediate context that must be taken into consideration with this passage.
 1. David succeeded Saul through a divine proclamation via the prophet Samuel. (1 Sam. 16) Now, there is the question of David's successor and the prophet Nathan speaks into that via the Lord.
 2. **What is key to the passage as a whole and to the idea of succession is that the Lord is the one who is ultimately in charge and sovereign over all of it.**
 3. With that, the specific context is to David and the people living at that time who would have been wondering about who was going to be king next.
 4. However, as we read what Nathan says (through the Lord), it is clear, just like with Ps. 2:7, what is being promised is far bigger than any earthly king could deliver. Again, there must be one who is greater than David to fulfill what God is promising here. → We understand it is fulfilled through Jesus.
- iii. **But, how do we know that or are we just reading back and reading things out of context?**
 1. This is a very good question, and it is one that we need to be aware of and a caution that needs to be observed. Yet, we do not have to worry about the hard work of context and study, because Luke makes the connection for us.
- iv. **Luke 1:32-33 → The Angel Gabriel makes this connection when talking to Mary.**
 1. ³¹ **And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."**
 2. Do you see the connections? → Son of the Most High, given the throne of David, he will reign with no end.
 - a. Gabriel proceeds to say that Jesus will be *great*, a word he had applied to John (15), but now uses with a fuller meaning, for Jesus *will be called the Son of the Most High*. This sets him apart from all others and makes him Son of God in a special sense. Gabriel goes on to speak of him as the recipient of *the throne of his father David*. The Messiah was expected to be of David's line (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12ff.; Ps. 89:29) and it is clearly this that is in mind. It is further brought out in the reference to *his kingdom* as never-ending. In current Messianic speculations the Messianic kingdom was often seen as of limited duration. It was God's final kingdom that would have no end and it is this kingdom to which Jesus is now related. It is not a temporal kingdom, an earthly realm, but God's kingly rule. In due time Jesus would make this clear.¹⁶
 - b. Again → Genealogy mattered to the original audience. A promised line should demonstrate a promised plan.

¹⁵ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 230.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 89–90.

- i. **The genealogy demonstrated fulfilled prophecy** - In fact, this fulfilled prophecy. The prophet Isaiah looked forward to a time when “a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse [David’s father]” (Isa. 11:1). That is, the tree representing the monarchy would be hacked down until only a stump remained, but from that apparently dead and ruined stump would spring a fresh “shoot” that would grow to become a solid tree.¹⁷
 - ii. Readers may also puzzle over the fact that in Luke, Jesus’ line runs from David through David’s son Nathan (see Luke 3:31), but Matthew’s record runs through David’s son Solomon (see 2 Sam. 5:14). These and other differences are best explained in part by distinguishing a bloodline of descent from the succession to the throne. Luke traces the former, the actual line of Joseph; Matthew presents the latter, the way the line of David’s *kingly* descendants ultimately found itself falling on Joseph.¹⁸
 - iii. Regardless of the details, both accounts pass through Joseph, even though he was not the real father of Jesus. There is independent evidence that Mary, too, was a descendant of David (see Luke 1:32); but **the genealogies run through Joseph because the male line would legally establish Jesus’ right to the throne.**¹⁹
- c. We come back to the main idea → **God had graciously long purposed to bring about rescue for humanity.**
- i. From the first promise of redemption to the plan that would be recognizable and anticipated, God’s character and nature has not changed.
 - ii. **With this truth we need to ask ourselves a few questions and spend time in reflection.**
 - 1. If God’s character hasn’t changed and he is trustworthy and gracious, do I respond to his commands and instructions with those characteristics as my lens?
 - 2. If God has made good on his promises in the past, what keeps me from trusting him for the future?
 - 3. Do I actively spend time remembering what God has done and how he has provided for me in the past?
 - a. Remember, when we miss or forget all the little things, we will miss a mountain of evidence of God’s goodness.

¹⁷ D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 11.

¹⁸ D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 10.

¹⁹ D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 10–11.