

1 ☐ “Christmas - The Big Picture!”

Luke 2:1-18

2 ☐

- The Lord Jesus loved to teach in parables. The Scriptures, from beginning to end [from Genesis to Revelation] are full of images and pictures; ... slices of life, real events in history [and some allegorical images] which God has isolated and preserved for us in the Bible to help us understand Him and the eternal truth He desires to communicate to us.
- By moving from one of these images to another we can overview and summarize the important truths in Scripture which explain the true significance of Christmas [i.e. the miracle of the Incarnation].

3 ☐ 1st image: The Exodus Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-8

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6 ☐ N. T. Scripture uses the language of liberation from slavery when it describes the salvation which the Gospel of Christ brings:

- Rom. 6:17-18 *“But thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”*

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■ Romans 6:14 *“... sin shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”*

■ John 8:31 *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

8 ☐ The Exodus account [Ex. 2] indicates that God was sensitive to those who were suffering under the oppression of this slavery [He Cares!]

■ Ex. 2:23-25 God heard the Israelites crying out for help. Verse 25 says: *“So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.”*

■ Ex. 3:7 *“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.”*

9 ☐ The N. T. counterpart to this is the declaration that God is sensitive to our lost and condemned condition; He is concerned!

- II Peter 3:9 “... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”
- I Timothy 2:4 “... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”
- Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 20:34; Lk. 15:20; etc. The Gospel accounts of Jesus constantly portray Him as having compassion and concern for the people of this world!

10 ☐ **The Exodus account indicates that God actually got involved! He came down to intervene on their behalf!**

- Ex. 3:7-8 “*The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious and, a land flowing with milk and honey ...’*”

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- John 16:27b-28 “... I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”
- John 14:2-3 “*In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*”

12 ☐ 2nd image: A Woman, a Child and a Red Dragon [Rev. 12:1-11]

13 ☐

■Rev. 12:5 The central feature of this image seems to be clearly identifiable as the Lord Jesus Christ

14 ☐ Rev. 12:1 The woman who gave birth to the male child seems to represent more than just Mary, the literal mother of Jesus. Many interpreters see this woman as a mystical reference to the universal church, as the true Israel of God.

- The earliest reference to this woman who gives birth to this special child is in Gen. 3:16 -
 - “... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.”
- Rom. 1:3 says that Jesus, “... as to his human nature was a descendant of David.” - Therefore, physically, Jesus was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham.

15 ☐ **NOTE: Rev. 12:1 - The “woman,” who gives birth to the child in Rev. 12, appears in heaven!**

- Rev. 21:2 refers to “... the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”
- Eph. 5:22-32 portrays the church as the bride of Christ!

■ **Summary:** Therefore, the church, as well as O. T. Israel, is connected to this miracle of the incarnation.

16 ☐

■ **Gal. 6:16** refers to “the Israel of God” in a way that seems to point to the greater, or universal, church!

a) Rom. 2:28-29 says: *“A man is not a Jew if he is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart ...”*

17 ☐

b. In Phil. 3:3, the Apostle Paul says to the Gentile Christians at Phillipi, “... it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus ...”

c. Gal. 3:29 says to Gentile Christians: *“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* [cf. Eph. 2:11-22 were Gentiles who formerly were *“foreigners to the covenants of promise”* but are now in Christ *“... are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, ...”*

18 ☐

d. In I Pet. 2:9-10, Peter uses the imagery which God used to describe O. T. Israel [in Ex. 19:5-6] to describe Christians in the N. T. church: *“... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

19 ☐

Christ, the Savior of the world, is born into the world through the church, and He continues to be born into the hearts of those who embrace the gospel all over the world, through the church!

■ **Rev. 12:17** says, *“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring - those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”*

■ **cf. Gal. 4:26** - *“Jerusalem which is above ..., which is the mother of us all.”*

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Rev. 12:9 identifies the Red dragon as Satan. The context makes it clear that spiritual warfare surrounds the birth of the child.

■ **Rev. 12:9** - *“The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. ...”*

- Rev. 12:7-8 - *“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.”*
- Eph. 6:12 - *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.”*

21  **3rd image: Babylon [Rev. 17:1-6]**

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- **The idea of prostitution, adultery and infidelity is used throughout Scripture to describe spiritual apostasy**
- **The first thing we learn about Babylon in Scripture is in Genesis 11**
- **Later, the Babylonian captivity lasted for 70 years and was a time of humiliation and sadness for Israel.**


24  **There are numerous passages in the O. T. which reflect the mindset of the people of Israel during this period of the Babylonian captivity:**

- **Isa. 49:14 - “... The LORD has forsaken me, the LORD has forgotten me ...”**
[Isaiah writing about the Babylonian captivity before it even took place!]
- **Psa. 137:1-4 - Alludes to the sense of longing for the homeland of Jerusalem which the Israelites experienced during their exile in Babylon.**
- **Psa. 77:1-9 - Many interpreters believe this psalm reflects the mindset of God’s people who were in exile in Babylon.**

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■ **During the Babylonian captivity, there were false prophets who were claiming that this captivity would soon be over, but Jeremiah wrote a letter to the captives telling them that these were false prophecies. He explained that this captivity would last for 70 years and Jeremiah told them what sort of mindset they must have toward the captivity itself - in Jeremiah 29:4-9**

...

26  **It seems the passage in Rev. 17 demonstrates that God has lifted up Babylon as a type, or a symbol, of all that is evil and anti-God in this world.**

- **It is a symbol of the world system which is heavily influenced and**

controlled by “the prince of darkness,” Satan, the devil

- Just as O. T. Israel mourned because of her captivity in Babylon, Christians [the church] mourn and sometimes become disheartened and discouraged because of their position in this world, in the midst of the Babylonian world-system.

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- Jeremiah’s letter to the Babylonian captives also teaches us how to live in this world until the Babylonian captivity of our own age comes to an end! We are to be good, responsible citizens! We are to live exemplary lives. We are to understand that the times are in God’s hand and that He will deliver us from this place when the time is right!

28 ☐

Isaiah the prophet foresaw the suffering of the Babylonian captivity [He wrote before the captivity and over 700 years before Christ was ever born]

- Isa. 40:1-2 Isaiah foresees the end of the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity and gives a message of comfort to the captives.

29 ☐

And how does He comfort them?

1. The entire emphasis of Isaiah 40 is on the greatness of God and the comparative in significance of man [God is BIG!!! POWERFUL!!! The CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE!!!]
2. Isa. 49:16 - in reply to Israel’s cry of despair, says: “... *I have engraved you on the palms of my hands ...*”

30 ☐

3. Isa. 7:14 - In another context, Isaiah prophesies the amazing thing God is going to do, the reason why all His people who live daily in the Babylon of this world system can have hope!

“... the LORD himself will give you a sign: the virgin will [conceive] be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel.” [cf. Matt. 1:23 “God with us”]

4. Isa. 9:6 “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*”