

The Story of Hope #12

God With Us

Matthew 1:1-2, 18-25 & Luke 2:1-14

Story of Hope Section 21

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Last week we were working through the times of the Judges, Prophets, and Kings. This took us from the book of Judges, all the way to the end of the Old Testament. During the span of those years, the Israelites seemed to be on an endless cycle of self destruction. Forgetting their Creator and Savior, they would drift from the truth and into the worship of false gods. In divine discipline, God would give them over to this way of life, which would always lead to horrible destruction. Foreign nations would harass and battle with them. This would often end in their capture and enslavement, where they were drug off to faraway lands. Their situation would become desperate, and then their leaders would **remember who they were**. Finally, they would cry out to God once more. True to his character, God would answer and raise up a leader. He would RESCUE them and return them to the land of promise. For a time, they would settle finding peace and rest in their land.

With the conclusion of the Old Testament, the Israelites are back in the Promised Land. The last cycle of rebellion, destruction, and restoration had been sobering for them. Yet, God had been faithful to return them to their Promised Land. Jerusalem has been rebuilt, and another temple had been constructed to replace the one that was destroyed.

As we turn the last page of the Old Testament, we find ourselves in a book called, Matthew. With just that simple flip of the page, we jump 400 years into the future. The times of the book of Matthew look incredibly different than where we left the story last week.

More than two thousand years had passed since God first promised Abraham that one of his descendants would be a blessing to the nations. The time of promise and longing was coming to an end. The years of silence were over. God was coming, and He was coming to dwell.

In the book of Luke, we are told that an angel named, Gabriel, appeared to a young woman named, Mary. Mary lived in the small, out of the way town called, Nazareth. She was of the Jewish age to marry, and was promised to a man named, Joseph. You can only imagine how unnerved, Mary was as an angel suddenly appeared to her and began to speak! The angel began by telling her that she had found favor with God, and that she would give birth to a son and he was to be named, Jesus.

Mary's thoughts must have tumbled in her head. She would have known the stories of the Rescuer well. She would have known that the Rescuer was said to be Eve's offspring. Not the offspring of Adam and Eve, but just Eve. Now the angel was telling her that this child she would carry, would be **holy** and the Son of God. He would not have a human father. The baby would not be apart of Adam's bloodline. Rather He would be of God, and would have His nature. The child would be sinless, as God is sinless. This baby, Jesus, would be perfect from conception. Mary must have marveled as she pondered what the angel had said. There was now a new problem. Would, Joseph, the man she was to marry soon understand?

Like you would expect, Joseph was troubled when he found out that Mary was pregnant. Not wanting her to face death, he decided to just end the matter quietly. Yet; even as he was mulling these thoughts in his head, an angel appears to him in a dream. The angel assures Joseph that all that he had heard from Mary was true.

When Joseph awoke from his dream, his mind and emotions must have been on a roller coaster ride. He was ready to quietly reject a woman whom he thought had betrayed him with another man. But, then an angel comes and tells him not to be afraid. His thoughts of betrayal must have evaporated to awe and wonder, as he listened to the angel connect Mary and Jesus with the old prophecy from Isaiah.

Jesus Is the Blessing of Abraham, and the King Promised to David. The angels and demons alike must have wondered who this rescuer would be, and when would he come? One waited with joyful anticipation, while the others with dread. Throughout the centuries Satan has attacked mankind, hoping to destroy the line of the Rescuer. Through the pronouncement of the angels to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, we can be certain that Satan had failed. Matthew tells us that Jesus is the blessing that was promised to Abraham, as well as the forever king from the line of David. The writers of the Gospels are pointing us to Jesus's credentials. Jesus is the blessing and The King. He is the way back to God.

God is the Rescuer. He is Jesus, Immanuel. Looking back, we can see it so clearly that God is the Rescuer. However; this must have been revolutionary to those who first heard the pronouncement of the angels. We were stuck in the mire and muck as the results of our sin, and there was simply no way that our heart problem could be solved. Even obedience to the law simply showed mankind that they were totally incapable of rescuing themselves. So God came. True to his character, God rescued. God put on flesh and entered as a baby. He became man in order to be our Rescuer.