

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11 Have you ever wondered why God would have the second person of the Trinity be born as a human being? Why would God enter His creation? Why bother with rebellious man? For that matter, why create people who could rebel and cause so much pain and suffering? Why not just appear in the sky and speak the plan?

This morning I'm going to try to give you an overview of Scripture to show you the incredibly wonderful and fearful plan of our Creator. I've heard it said that the mistake of young preachers is trying to preach the whole Bible in one sermon. I'm intentionally doing just that so that we can step back from the trees to see the forest. As we do so, I hope you will see the importance of the Babe in the manger and why that path was a part of God's plan.

It begins in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Moses wrote that opening line of the Torah under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He used a plural name for God. That first line tells us that God began creation with space and matter. The next couple of verses add light to the equation (Genesis 1:3). A millennia later, the Greeks decided everything was made up of earth, wind, and fire and we tout that as a great advancement in the thought of mankind. Moses was way ahead of them scientifically a thousand years earlier. Moses went on to describe the crowning creation as man made in the image of God. **Unlike all the other creatures, God personally breathed the breath of life into Adam and he became a living soul (Genesis 2:7).**

As we study the Scriptures we see that the instrument of creation was Jesus (John 1:3). The Apostle Paul tells us that everything that was created was for the purpose of showing us clearly the attributes and divine nature of God (Romans 1:20). Keep that in mind. The very first chapter has Jesus creating man in His image and telling us that every creature He made reproduces after its kind (Genesis 1:25). The second chapter tells us of the need of man to find a suitable helper. First, Adam names all the animals, but he notes that none of them are like him. Then God/Jesus creates Adam's bride from his side. God brings her to Adam and he says, "Woah Man!" (Genesis 2:18-23). That's how I read it. And so begins God's plan to reveal His divine nature to us. We see God's intentional pairing of creatures according to their kind, the importance of man in creation, along with an emphasis on Adam's need for a spouse, and her creation as God's final act of creation. From this we can see that God is relational being.

So far so good, but we don't have many clues as to where this is headed. The very next chapter explains all the evil in the world. Man rebelled against the Creator. They did the

Commented [PW1]: Genesis 1:1 (ESV)
¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Commented [PW2]: Genesis 1:3 (ESV)
³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Commented [PW3]: Genesis 2:7 (ESV)
⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Commented [PW4]: John 1:3 (ESV)
³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Commented [PW5]: Romans 1:20 (ESV)
²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Commented [PW6]: Genesis 1:25 (ESV)
²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Commented [PW7]: Genesis 2:18-23 (ESV)
¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.
²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

only thing God asked them not to do thinking it would somehow satisfy them and meet the longing in their hearts (Genesis 3:6). That rebellion brought sin and death, every pain and sorrow throughout the ages. But the plan had only just begun. God promised Eve that she would have a male descendant who would crush the power of the one who deceived her, but this One would suffer in the process (Genesis 3:15). Now we have a clue. These first three chapters have set the stage. A hero is coming.

As the story unfolds we meet Abraham. God selects him out of a pagan nation and calls him to go by faith to a place he has never been. By faith Abraham obeys. God then gives him a son in his old age by miraculous birth and promised that this son, Isaac, will be the father of Abraham's descendants who will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. But later, God tells him to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Abraham believed God could raise up Isaac and obeyed God (Hebrews 11:17-19). At the last minute an angel stopped Abraham and God provided a ram for the sacrifice. Because of Abraham's great faith in God, God considered him as righteous and promised that a descendant of his will bless the entire world (Genesis 22:17-18). Now we have another clue.

Abraham's descendants did become a great nation, received God's laws, inherited the Promised Land, and established a place of worship according to the words God had given through His prophets. The whole story of the nation of Israel is very much like an extended story of the Garden of Eden. God declared that He is their husband (Isaiah 54:5). They were blessed beyond measure and had everything they could need. But just like Eve, they rebelled against God, seeking out other gods to satisfy their desires.

Isaiah prophetically defined God's plan in greater detail. He predicted a child would be born to us, and son given to us, and that this child would be called Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace and reign forever (Isaiah 9:6). Isaiah's songs spoke of the suffering this one would endure as He took our transgressions upon Himself (Isaiah 53:5). But while Isaiah prophesied, Israel continued in rebellion toward the One who called Himself their husband. God called their idolatry "adultery." In fact, an entire book of the Old Testament, Hosea, compares Israel to the unfaithful bride of a prophet.

During eight centuries as a nation that went back and forth from partial obedience to rebellion. Eventually they went into captivity. But God would not abandon His bride. The promise of that male child who would defeat the enemy of our souls still stood. The picture of a man and his bride from the beginning of creation was yet to be fulfilled. The prophecies of Isaiah and others had not yet come to pass. God returned the nation of Israel to the land of promise, but they were under the thumb of Syria and then Rome. Finally it happened. An angel appeared to shepherds and told them the time had come. A choir of heavenly hosts sang the good news (Luke 2:9-14). Time was split in

Commented [PW8]: Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Commented [PW9]: Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Commented [PW10]: Hebrews 11:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,
¹⁸ of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Commented [PW11]: Genesis 22:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,
¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Commented [PW12]: Isaiah 54:5 (ESV)

⁵ For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

Commented [PW13]: Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Commented [PW14]: Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Commented [PW15]: Luke 2:9-14 (ESV)

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

two. God was entering creation as a baby. How could that be? The virgin birth! (Isaiah 7:14) Why? To save us from our sins by taking our sins upon Himself!

But there is another purpose beyond that. It goes back to the very beginning. God was carrying out a plan to make a bride for the Son of God. You see, the Apostle Paul tells us that marriage, from the very beginning, was profound mystery representing Christ and His bride (Ephesians 5:31-32). The picture in creation of the man and his wife is of Christ and those who are His, called out from the world, like God called out Abraham. They consist of Jew and Gentile who, like Abraham, come to God by faith.

Why not just appear in the sky and invite us? There are more reasons than I know, but let me give a few. First and foremost, the bride must be pure. The only way to declare us innocent from our rebellion toward God is if one who did not participate in that rebellion to take our punishment in our place. It would be as if a judge paid the fine he imposed on a guilty party. Jesus paid our fine. Once our debt was paid, He could send His Holy Spirit to live in us and begin our transformation. Jesus promises that when we see Him that transformation will be complete (1 John 3:2). In pre-marital counselling I tell couples to remember, they can't change their spouse, they can only change themselves. But that is not true with Jesus. He can change us. He will change us if we let Him, so that we might be His pure and spotless bride.

I believe another reason is that for this divine romance to be as deep and rich as possible, we need to know He understands what we go through and would endure it Himself for our sake (Hebrews 2:9-10). He would have been perfectly justified in wiping us off the face of the earth, but He came down to us to show us He understands, loves us, and is willing to extend mercy to us. That is the perfect husband, isn't He? What woman wouldn't give everything to know a man like that, willing to go through everything she has suffered, forgiving her for every wrong, loving her unconditionally, and even willing to suffer and die for her sake? He came as a baby to demonstrate the love of God. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (John 3:16).

We should never doubt that God understands our struggles and our pain, for He has experienced them personally (Hebrews 4:15). We should never doubt His love, for He showed us the greatest love that can be demonstrated by dying to make us His bride. And when this picture becomes clear in our hearts and minds, it should cause us to love Him in return. The more we see of the depth of His love, the more deeply we should love Him. That is why the Apostle Paul prayed that we might know the depth and height and breadth and width of God's love and might know this love that surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Commented [PW16]: Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Commented [PW17]: Ephesians 5:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Commented [PW18]: 1 John 3:2 (ESV)

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Commented [PW19]: Hebrews 2:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Commented [PW20]: John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Commented [PW21]: Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Commented [PW22]: Ephesians 3:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now, if we step back and look again at the big picture we can see it has unfolded in an incredible way over thousands of years. Adam desired a wife and God created one from his side. The Apostle Paul calls Jesus the Second Adam and tells us that His wife is the church (1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Revelation 21:2), which includes everyone throughout time who has by faith placed their hope in God. The Creator becoming a baby in the manger 2000 years ago began the process of making that possible while God remains just and holy. A holy God cannot just overlook our sin. It had to be dealt with. Jesus could not have an impure bride, so He made a way to sanctify us by His own side being pierced. The final act of creation was Eve, and the final work of God is the perfection of the bride of Christ. Just as Abraham found righteousness in His faith that God could resurrect Isaac on Mt. Moriah, so we too find faith in the resurrection of Jesus who was sacrificed and conquered death on the very same mountain. He crushed the Serpent's head in the process, fulfilling the promise to Eve.

Jesus' farewell address to the disciples was the language of betrothal, or in our day we'd say engagement. "Drink all the cup, I go to prepare a place for you, if I go I will come again and receive you to be with me so that where I am there you may be also (John 14:2-3). This is all right out of the proposal language of Jesus' day.

Jesus was born a baby to grow up to make us His bride. Isaiah predicted how that would happen. Listen to how he describes it near the end of his book. ^{5b} *as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.* Isaiah 62:5b Think of it. We are no different from Israel, whom God never gave up pursuing, and pursues to this day. We have gone after other gods of wealth, lust, fame, man worship, drugs and much more, even after He paid such a great bride price that we might be His. Just as Hosea pursued His harlot bride with forgiveness and mercy, so the Lord pursues us. Just as Solomon adored the beauty of his bride and longed to hear her voice and look into her eyes, so the Lord desires His church, knowing that He will finish the work He has begun in us (Song of Songs 6:4-5). We are already perfect in His eyes, for He sees the finished work even now.

Church, we are the bride of Christ, the heavenly city, New Jerusalem. Your destiny is so glorious you can't comprehend it (1 Corinthians 2:9). That is why Jesus calls our entrance into heaven the marriage feast of the Lamb. It is when our wedding with Jesus takes place. That's why Jesus said we aren't married to our spouse in heaven for we all as one will be wedded to Him (Matthew 22:30). Listen to a few verses from the conclusion of our Bible. ⁶ *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has*

Commented [PW23]: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.
⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.
⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.
⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.
⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Commented [PW24]: Revelation 21:2 (ESV)

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Commented [PW25]: John 14:2-3 (ESV)

² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Commented [PW26]: Song of Songs 6:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.
⁵ Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me— Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.

Commented [PW27]: 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

Commented [PW28]: Matthew 22:30 (ESV)

³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Revelation 19:6-9

I don't understand exactly what that will all look like. The most perfect marriage on earth is but a poor shadow of what our relationship to Jesus is like. It will only get better with time as we realize who He is to us. Picture the most perfect husband, provider, protector, lover, and friend, and Jesus will be all that to us and so much more. He is right now, as much as we are willing to experience it. But when we sit down at that feast, we will be able to comprehend it with so much more clarity and understanding. No wonder John wrote that God is love (1 John 4:8).

Why did God become a human in the womb of Mary? It was to save us, to perfect us, and to prepare us to be His bride. It was to show us the depth of His love and riches of His grace. Why bother with rebellious man? Because there is hope for any who will turn to Him. Why create people who could rebel and cause so much pain and suffering? We would never understand the depths of His love, nor would our love be free and rich if He demanded it from us. Why not just appear in the sky and speak the plan? God desires a relationship with us. He loved us enough to become one of us to show us He understands our deepest pain and greatest need. Without His sacrifice we would be slaves of sin, caught in that rebellious cycle. Our sins dealt with, He could send the Holy Spirit to continue the transformation, empowering us to truly live with His life in and through us. It's the preparation to be His bride, like Esther was prepared for the king (Esther 2:12). That is the purpose of the babe in the manger.

As I was working on the sermon I happened to listen to a song and realized it was the Holy Spirit speaking to my heart on the very subject of this message. Let me take you from winter to summer while holding to the same theme of our marriage to Jesus.

Deep Enough to Dream by Chris Rice

Lazy summer afternoon Screened in porch and nothin' to do
I just kicked off my tennis shoes
Slouchin' in a plastic chair Rakin' my fingers through my hair
I close my eyes and I leave them there And I yawn, and sigh, and slowly fade away

Deep enough to dream in brilliant colors I have never seen
Deep enough to join a billion people For a wedding feast
Deep enough to reach out and touch The face of the One who made me
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace Do I ever have to wake up

Commented [PW29]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Commented [PW30]: Esther 2:12 (ESV)

¹² Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women—

Awakened by a familiar sound A clumsy fly is buzzin' around
He bumps the screen and he tumbles down
He gathers about his wits and pride And tries again for the hundredth time
'Cause freedom calls from the other side And I smile and nod, and slowly drift away

Deep enough to dream in brilliant colors I have never seen
Deep enough to join a billion people For a wedding feast
Deep enough to reach out and touch The face of the One who made me
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace Do I ever have to wake up

'Cause peace is pouring over my soul See the lambs and the lions playin'
I join in and I drink the music Holiness is the air I'm breathin'
My faithful heroes break the bread And answer all of my questions
Not to mention what the streets are made of My heart's held hostage by this love

And these brilliant colors I have never seen I join a billion people for a wedding feast
And I reach out and touch the face of the One who made me
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace Do I ever have to wake up

And I'll change the ending to: And I can't wait to wake up – there.

Questions

- 1 What is the purpose of creation?
- 2 What do we see of God in the creation of Adam and Eve?
- 3 Why did God count Abraham as righteous?
- 4 How is Israel's story like Eve's?
- 5 What did Isaiah say about the One who was coming?
- 6 Why did God come as a human baby?
- 7 What are some reasons God did not just appear in the sky?
- 8 How is the second Adam like the first? Unlike?
- 9 What is the marriage feast of the Lamb?
- 10 What is our fate if we scorn such great love and goodness?