

## The Beginning of Christmas

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### BEFORE TIME BEGAN

“Once upon a time” there was no time. Neither was there space or matter. There was only God – the great I AM – self-existent from eternity.

You couldn’t say He existed for a long time, because there was no time. He simply was – or rather, IS – forever in the present tense.

He wasn’t needy or lonely – He was complete, sufficient and perfect in Himself. He was existent in three distinct persons or personalities. In this sense He was a community within Himself. There was the person or personality of “Father”, of “Son” and of “Spirit.” And within the unified Godhead there was fellowship and unity in the most profound sense.

*John 1:1 In the beginning [that is, before the beginning of time] there was the Word [Jesus the Son] and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Fellowship and unity existed simultaneously.*

When Isaiah gives name to the coming Messiah who would be born a son to us, he calls him among other things, “Eternal Father” or better translated, “Father from all eternity.” (Isaiah 7:14) Since there was a Father from all eternity, then there certainly was one who made him like a father – namely a son. And if the Father and Son existed from all eternity, then certainly also did the Spirit of the Trinity. [We do know that the Spirit hovered over the yet unformed earth before creation. (Genesis 1:2)]

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed: “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” So we can know that Jesus and the Father were together in a glorified state before the world was created, and we assume so also the Spirit. The singular Godhead was in perfect triune harmony and fellowship.

These names of “Father,” “Son” and “Spirit” for the three persons of the Godhead seem to be roles that they carry out, and helpful designations for us as humans to better understand those roles. As “Father” our God is like the head of a family – ruling, caring, providing, disciplining and encouraging. As “Son” our God is like a devoted member of the family who respects perfectly the will of the Father and relates in love to the other members of the family – in our case, those who have been adopted into the family as co-heirs. As “Spirit” our God moves often unseen and often mysteriously through our lives and through His creation to accomplish His perfect will.

But I’m getting ahead of my story.

### THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTMAS

So Christmas began in the mind of this One triune God when for His own good pleasure He determined to create. Or to say it another way, He determined to multiply and have relationship outside of Himself. He didn’t need to, He wanted to. It was an extension and expression of His love.

Christmas didn’t begin with a baby in a manger, nor with a star or an angel’s announcement. Christmas began with God’s very thought of creating man. At Christmas, we not only worship the God who became a man – we worship the God who thought up man – desiring to love and be loved in return.

Our Christmas story goes on.

In His love, God wanted man to have choice. In His wisdom, God knew that man would choose wrongly. In His love, God wanted relationship. In His wisdom, God knew that relationship would be broken by wrong choice.

So at the very instant of God thinking up man, God thought also of sin, knowing it would accompany the creation of a creature with will. In that sense, the beginning of Christmas is the moment of the thought of sin.

In the mind and heart of this loving and all knowing God, He knew that man would need a Savior – one who could reach down and save man from His wrong choices. God further knew that there must be a price paid to restore relationship.

He knew that this Savior must be Himself. After all, there was none other. It would take the perfection and power of God to forgive and restore. And it would take a man to pay the price for man.

Thus the dilemma. What to do.

God's answer: God would become man – the “God-man.”

*1 Peter 1:20 For He [Jesus the Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.*

This clearly points to Christmas beginning in the mind of God, long before creation.

## THE CREATION OF ANGELS

But before we come to the creation of the earth and mankind there was another creation of God that was closely related to Christmas – the creation of angels. The Bible tells us that the angels sang for joy at the creation of the earth, so they were created at some point previous.

*Job 38:4, 7 [God:] Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

In this verse it is generally understood that the “morning stars” and the “sons of God” are here referring to angels (perhaps two different types). We learn in Hebrews 1:14 that angels “*are all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.*” So, it would appear that angels were created to herald the coming of mankind and thereafter to minister to all present and future believers.

So Christmas in the mind of God also included the creation of angels who would minister to this creation called man. And at the birth of the Savior, angels were actively involved – speaking to Zacharias in the temple, Mary at her home and to Joseph in a dream. And, of course, a multitude came to the shepherds.

But again, I'm getting ahead of my story.

## THE REBELLION IN HEAVEN

So angels were created – with an intellect, a moral conscience and a will – spirit beings, just like Himself. God was multiplying. And from all accounts, multitudes of angelic beings were created – archangels, cherubim, seraphim, guardian angels and probably many more kinds.

It is the two “major” prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel that reveal the angelic rebellion that occurred in heaven before the creation of time, space and matter. The created will given to angels resulted in rebellion, just as God had foreseen would happen in His later creation of mankind, requiring a

Savior. But for whatever reason known only to God, there was no such provision of salvation for the rebellious angels.

Ezekiel 28 tells of the perfection of the angel known as “Lucifer” which translates as “shining light bearer.” He was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty and without sin. He was the “anointed cherub,” blameless in his ways from the day he was created until unrighteousness was found in him. The indication is that he might well have been God’s #1 angel. (Ezekiel 28:11-19)

Isaiah 14 tells of the rebellion of Lucifer. This is the only place in our Bible that his initial angelic name is used: Lucifer. His wisdom and beauty made him think greatly of himself. He said in his heart that he would ascend above all the other “stars” or angels and become like “the Most High” = God Himself. Pride was his downfall. Beware!

And then in Revelation 12:4 it says that the “dragon” = Satan “swept away a third of the stars (read: “angels”) of heaven and threw them to the earth.” These are those angels that rebelled with Lucifer and became the demons that torment mankind, rather than minister to them. So Satan (his new name) and his demons occupied that place that would soon belong to man, for they were “thrown down to the earth.” It could be that this was after the creation of matter when in Genesis 1:2 it says that “the earth was without form and void.” The angelic demons were waiting for man to come – to tempt and lead each into rebellion with them.

## **THE CREATION OF MAN**

So God then created time, space & matter. And in 7 days he created the earth and all the vegetation and creatures that would inhabit it. And as God’s crowning achievement God created the creature that would bear His image. Man was created with intellect, moral conscience and will – the same as the angels. But there was an important aspect of man – the very image of God – with which the angels were not entrusted.

We see in Genesis 1:27 that God determine to create man in the image of God. And then in the following verse 28 we see five specific words of command that indicate the uniqueness of man in the image of God, unlike the angels.

Adam is told to (1)be FRUITFUL, (2) MULTIPLY, (3) FILL the earth, (4) SUBDUE creation and (5) RULE over creation.

Note that the angels do not procreate, so are not fruitful or multiply. Nor do they fill, subdue or rule over creation.

But note that these are God’s very characteristics.

God is FRUITFUL in that everything He touches is good.

God MULTIPLIES in that He creates – such as angels and man

God FILLS all by His OMNIPRESENCE – being everywhere at once

God SUBDUES and RULES as He is Lord over all

Man, God’s ultimate creation, is created in the fruitful, multiplying, filling, subduing and ruling image of God.

And yet as God knew from eternity past, man would rebel and need a Savior.

## **THE INCARNATION**

This Christmas story continues.

Remember, God had determined to become a man, to redeem the race of man who would rebel, using the will he would be given. So it is, that the Incarnation = God becoming man was born in the mind and heart of God.

And God further determined that this would be accomplished by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit planting the godly seed in the womb of a chosen virgin girl. So it is that the Virgin Birth was conceived in the mind and heart of God.

Isaiah would write in 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [God with us].*

This was not only to be God with us most astoundingly, God AS us. The INCARNATION is the miracle of God in human skin – fully God and fully man – God WITH us.

**The incarnation is the paramount miracle of Christmas** – conceived not first in the womb of Mary, but conceived in the mind and heart of God from eternity past.

The incarnation and virgin birth was the primary involvement of the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity, in the Christmas story. We remember that the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive in her womb and bear a son. In response to Mary's question of "how can this be, since I am a virgin?" he told her *that "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God."* (Luke 1:31, 34-34) So we see all three of the Trinity involved here – the power of the Father, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit and the resultant holy offspring of the Son.

Thus, John 1:14 says that this God, called "The Word" – *"became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Here we learn that the Word who became flesh was none other than He who was the Son of God from eternity past – now called Jesus in his fleshly form.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

And so, as we celebrate Christmas by whatever conventions we use – lighted trees, decorations, giving of presents or presenting of Nativity pageants – never forget how and why Christmas began.

It began in the heart and mind of God long before the creation of time, space and matter.

At the very moment God thought of creating man, He thought of the sin that would occur.

And He thought of the need for salvation.

And He thought of the Incarnation.

And He thought of the angels He would create to announce that Incarnation and attend to the resultant believers.

Christmas was born both out of God's love and out of our sin.

In that way, Christmas is both a joy and a tragedy.

Christmas, and its resultant cross of Calvary, is the price God paid to provide intimate fellowship with us forever in eternity future – when again time will be no more.

And so, because of Christmas, God and man will live "happily ever after."  
Praise our God!