

Chapter 1

Jesus' Birth Promised in the Old Testament

The Prophecies.

Have you ever seen a sunrise? You will probably answer "Yes, we have sometimes seen the sun rise above the horizon". But that is not quite what I mean. No, have you ever seen how night very gradually changes into day, before the moment that the sun appears?

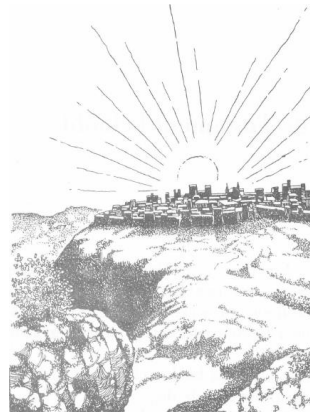
In the night, it is dark, so dark that sometimes nothing at all can be seen. Then comes the morning. But how? Just look towards the east. First very faintly, but later more clearly there appears in the eastern sky a streak of light. This streak of light becomes bigger and larger. A new day is beginning to dawn on earth. At last it becomes light, but you still can't see the sun.

But then the eastern sky becomes coloured. That is the sign that the sun is about to appear. The clouds slowly acquire a red tint, which becomes stronger, until it seems that the sky is on fire. Isn't it beautiful? In the east it becomes even lighter, and then the sky is no longer red, but orange - then purple! Beautiful! Oh, how many who see this are impressed by the glory of God, who made it all out of nothing.

What happens next? Well, very slowly, the sun, like a blood-red ball, rises and throws her first rays over field and farmland, trees and shrubs.

So, you see, very gradually night has been changed to day.

But why do I write like this? Surely, that is not Bible History? No, boys and girls, you are



the dawn of Salvation

right. It is not Bible History. Yet I have written it for a reason. I want to give you in this way a picture of something else. Would you like to know why I

have written this first? Listen then! Because it is difficult!

When Adam and Eve walked in that beautiful Paradise, they knew no trouble or sadness, no pain or suffering. The whole world was one large pleasant garden. Everything, yes everything sung and rejoiced to God's glory.

But then came that fearful thing, sin. Eve ate of the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil and transgressed. She tempted her husband, so that Adam too transgressed the Lord's Commandment and fell. Their peace and happiness disappeared immediately. Fear came instead. They trembled when God's voice sounded "Where art thou?" And then?

Oh, you already know the sad story, don't you? God cursed the whole of Creation. The curse of God rested not only on Adam and

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Eve, but also on the animals and plants, yes, even the ground itself was cursed. Death came into the world. One beast would now tear and devour another. The earth would now bring forth thorns and thistles.

Both of those first humans, Adam and Eve, lost their splendour. Their joy and blessed happiness disappeared. The anger of God, the wrath of their offended Creator, rested upon them. They would die! God said: "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return."

And not only Adam and Eve, but also their children, yes the whole human race, lay in spiritual death; they would die the temporal death and then in hell there awaited them, eternal death.

Perhaps you will ask, "What is that?" "Spiritual death" means that all men are sinful and depraved. They can do nothing but sin, and they will do nothing but sin. Everybody, men and women, boys and girls, children and greybeards, LIVE in sin. We have become slaves of sin.

"Temporal death" means, that all must die. God formed man to live for ever and ever to His honour. But now all men would die.

"Eternal death" means, that, in the Day of Judgement, everybody will rise again. Then after judgement the lost will groan forever in misery under God's wrath.

You see, children, these are the fearful results of sin. And no-one, no-one could help fallen man. It became dark on earth - night! Not ordinary darkness, no, but you all know what I mean.

God then promised that one day the Lord Jesus should come. He would suffer and die. He would take the punishment in their place. The Lord Jesus is the Son of God. He would be the great Redeemer, who could free them from

guilt and from the punishment of sin. This promise you can read in Genesis 3 v 15 which says- "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Oh, boys and girls, that was the first dawning of the new day, the day of God's grace. There was thus still a possibility of being saved from the slavery of sin. And that possibility still remains!

Adam and Eve believed that. They received from the Lord a new heart. They waited, longed and looked for the promised MESSIAH, the SAVIOUR. All sorts of questions may well have come into the hearts of our two first parents. "Who would that be? When would He be born? Where would He be born?" Oh, they did not know. One thing was promised them. "He would come", but nothing more!

Adam and Eve died. More and more people came into the world. Yet there was not one good person among them; all, all were sinners against God. The earth became more and more godless.

At last came the Flood. All those scoffers and swearers were drowned. Only eight people were spared. Noah with his family remained safe in the ark.

Yet when Noah was later mocked by his own son, and Shem and Japheth covered their father's nakedness, Noah cursed Ham but blessed Shem and Japheth, saying "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem." That meant that the Lord Jesus would come forth from the descendants of Shem. Noah then, knew a little more than Adam. He knew that the Saviour would not come forth from Ham or Japheth, but from Shem.

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Later still God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and promised that the Saviour would come from his seed. Thus by then the People was made known.

The blessing passed on to Isaac and to Jacob. But the people of Israel would become so great, as numerous as the stars of the sky, beyond numbering.

But while Jacob lies on his death bed, he foretells, through faith, that the Messiah will come forth of the tribe of Judah. He says - "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah." All the other tribes fell away.

Can you see that it is getting clearer, that it is becoming lighter?

Centuries go by. Then David reigns, the man after God's heart. The Lord promises David that from his descendants the Saviour shall come forth. By now therefore, the family was made known. There were many families in the tribe of Judah. All other families fell away, only that of David remained.

Oh, if only Adam, or Noah had known that. How overjoyed they would have been. Don't you think they would too?

The closer the time comes when the Lord Jesus will be born, the more we know about it. By means of the Prophets God makes more and more clear the coming of the Great Redeemer.

The prophet Micah, who lived in the time of Isaiah, even foretold the place where the Messiah would be born, for he says, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from

everlasting." Thus he tells us that the Lord Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

Even the time was made known. Daniel says "seventy weeks". He means seventy "week-years" or 490 years.

Jeremiah foretold the infant murders in Bethlehem. Hosea foretold that the Lord Jesus would have to flee into Egypt. Zechariah prophesied Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Isaiah foretold the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. It was foretold that He would be scourged and mocked, that He would be crucified, that they would cast lots for His vesture, that they would give Him vinegar to drink. But also it was foretold that He would rise from the dead, and that He would ascend into Heaven. Many other details were also made known.

Just as with the sun-rise the sky becomes lighter and the clouds become tinted, so now for the Israelites the heavens became red with the promises of God concerning the coming Saviour.

And ... were the Israelites happy? Did they expect the Lord Jesus? Did they long for Him?

Well, certainly the God-fearing Israelites did, but they were few. Most of them did not. Again and again they served idols. Sometimes it seemed as though nothing would come of it. Very often enemies ruled over them. This was God's punishment for their godlessness.

At last they were carried away captive to Babylon. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Now all was lost. Now it couldn't come to pass. Now it had become impossible!

"No!" said Ezekiel, It is not impossible! With God all things are possible. The Lord will

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bring you again into your own land. The temple shall be rebuilt. Jerusalem shall again be inhabited.

This also came to pass. The Jews did come back. And when they rebuilt the temple Zechariah and Haggai foretold that the Lord Jesus would walk therein.

Finally Malachi, as the last prophet, cries: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple". That means "It will not be long now."

Oh, God is faithful. What He promises shall come to pass!

The devil has always tried to prevent this. If Satan had had his way, he would have succeeded and not one soul would have been saved, for without the Lord Jesus none can be saved.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, commanded all baby boys to be thrown into the Nile.

Athalia tried to wipe out the whole of David's family. Haman gave orders that all Jews were to be destroyed.

Rut they failed. Every attempt failed. Why? Because not the devil, but God reigns.

Pharaoh died; Athalia was murdered and Haman was hanged. The Lord took care of that. They had to fail, because God is the Almighty.

All the devils together could not prevent the coming of the Lord Jesus. The Messiah must come. That King would defeat the devil and bruise his head. He would make payment for the sins of all His chosen people. He would take away God's anger and curse and He would bring all His people to eternal glory.

Now, the great question for us is; "Will He bring us to Heaven? Will He pardon our sins and free us from the slavery of sin?" There is no other way. Nowadays there are thousands who say that men can help themselves, but that is not true, that is a great lie. We must be born again, or, in other words, we must receive a new heart.

Kneel then often before the Lord, and ask if He will reveal to you your guilt and sin; ask if He will save you from that sin. Better to live praying, than to live heedlessly.