

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 374

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the birth of Jesus. When wise men from the east asked wicked King Herod **"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2)** Herod was told by Bible scholars that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. This, as you know, was predicted by the prophet Micah. The birth of Jesus was not a total surprise for it had been predicted for centuries. Alfred Edersheim found 456 verses in the Old Testament Scriptures referring to the Messiah or His time. We can conservatively say that Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His birth and ministry. The prophet Daniel even specified the time when the "Anointed One" (Messiah) would be born (Dan. 9:25-27). Most babies are "expected" for nine months, but Jesus was "expected" since the Garden of Eden. The Hebrew people obviously saw babies in a different light than others who did not have this hope.

As you know, the sin of Adam and Eve brought curses. In the midst of pronouncing those curses God gave a promise. He promised that the "Seed" of the woman would crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Since we normally think of a baby coming from the seed of a man, this is possibly a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus. From the day that God gave that promise godly people have hoped and longed for the birth of Jesus. Consequently, the birth of the Promised Seed is a constant theme throughout the entire Bible! These hundreds of references provide a thread connecting Eden and Bethlehem.

- For example, since both Noah and his son Shem were ancestors of Jesus (Lk. 3:36), Noah built an ark to save his family. If Noah died childless the thread would be broken.
- God also promised Abraham that his Seed would bless all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3).
- Paul argued that this promise was not to "seeds" referring to many people, but to one "Seed" meaning one person who is Christ (Gal. 3:16).
- The covenant of circumcision involved this precious thread and the male organ of procreation.
- The servant of Abraham promised to get a wife for Isaac by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh (Gen. 24:2). The association of this oath with the "Promised Seed" is obvious.
- Isaiah referred to the "Promised Seed" by predicting that a "child" would be born and that the government would be upon his shoulders (Is. 9:6-7).
- The ancestors of Jesus were specifically selected by God. Out of the 12 sons of Israel, for example, the promised messiah would come through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).
- Out of all the descendants of Judah God chose David to be the ancestor of Christ. He said: **"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah," (Psalm 89:3-4).**
- Matthew began his gospel with the legal genealogy of Jesus through Joseph. **"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).**
- Please also note that both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David (Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3).
- While Matthew presents the legal genealogy of Jesus through Joseph (his legal father), Luke presents the biological genealogy of Jesus through his mother Mary (Lk. 3:23-38).
- These genealogies are important as they connect Christ to the promise God made in Eden.
- They prove that Jesus was the long awaited Seed who would destroy the devil (Gal. 3:16).
- The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was therefore not an isolated event, but rather the culmination of a promise that devout people had cherished throughout all of history!

- Heaven was involved and a multitude of angels announced the birth of Jesus. They told a group of shepherds to look for a “sign” and the sign they were looking for was a baby (Lk. 2:8-14).
- The shepherds found the baby Jesus and immediately spread the word (Lk. 2:17).
- Simeon was a righteous and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. When he saw the baby Jesus in the temple he said: **“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk. 2:25-32).**
- Anna was a devout widow who never left the temple but worshiped God night and day with fasting and prayer. When she saw the baby Jesus she too gave thanks to God and spoke about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem (Lk. 2:36-38).
- The wise men came from afar to worship this baby who would become a king (Matt. 2:1-12)
- Paul beautifully expressed this same hope when on trial before King Agrippa. Since Agrippa was well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies, Paul felt he would understand the hope of Israel. Paul said: **“And now it is because of my hope in what God promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night” (Acts 26:6-7).**
- The essence of the Gospel is that the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus were “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Jesus was the final piece of the beautiful puzzle that God planned before the foundation of the world and promised to every generation.

While most find genealogical studies boring, we invariably think differently if the genealogy involves an inheritance that would make us rich. On Dec. 14, 2011 a check for \$6.1 million was made out to a woman from Kansas City. This is apparently the largest unclaimed inheritance award in U.S. history. For obvious reasons she wants to remain anonymous. Years ago her ancestors invested in an obscure company and income from the stock was not claimed for several generations. We may safely say that this woman was not bored while studying the genealogical records of her family.

A \$6.1 million inheritance, however, is insignificant by comparison to the eternal treasure we will inherit in Christ. Remember! **“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Rom. 8:15-17).** Seeking to understand this inheritance should not be boring.

The birth of Jesus is one of the most significant events in all of human history. As you know, it divides all of history into A.D. and B.C. The birth of Jesus not only deserves a prominent place in history, but also a prominent place in our minds and hearts. Perhaps even more important than his birth, however, is the promise that Jesus is coming again! Don’t forget that promise (2 Thess 1:5-10).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce