

Introduction:

- Luke 1:4 That you may know for certain what you have been taught.
 - ****Christmas Foretold-God's Plan, the plan was recorded in the OT.
 - ****Christmas Told-God's Action, it is the account of the event itself in the Gospels.
 - ****Christmas Retold-God's Heart, When your heart has been touched you cannot but help share what God has done for you.
- Last week we examined God's Plan.
 - We looked at old, old prophecies that spoke of Messiah's birth. That fact is amazing in itself that a book as old as the Bible could predict with such clarity the birth of Jesus. Then when you look at the activity of God in the OT you find out that God did have a plan in sending His Son. He wrote it out in the OT.
- Let's Look at God's Action today. It is one thing to have a plan it is another to execute it. How did God execute His plan? ****God acted and caught their attention.***Revealed Himself****Became flesh.

I. God Acted: He Caught Their Attention

- A. Something is up! With all the supernatural activity of the account regarding the virgin birth, one has to assume that God is up to something. Four hundred years of silence. There are no prophets speaking. Time seems to be moving along and faith has been reduced to religious activity.
 1. *"Indeed, the Sovereign Lord never does anything until he reveals his plans to his servants the prophets."* (Amos 3:7, NLT) Last week we looked at scriptures regarding the birth of Christ. So the event does not come as a total surprise. In fact, Simeon (prophecies) and Anna (is called a prophet) are expecting the arrival of Messiah.
 2. The prophets had spoken hundreds of years before the event. None the less, God had spoken. And in this 'break out' event God speaks once again! 'It is time!'
- B. ****Before God speaks He most generally gets your attention first.
 1. Look at all the people whose attention God had captured!
 - a) Zacharias - the attention of professional priests. Visited by Gabriel the angel of the Lord.
 - b) Mary - the attention of the one chosen. Visited by Gabriel the angel of the Lord.
 - c) Joseph - the attention of one willing to participate in God's plan. He dreams.
 - d) Wisemen - the attention of kings! They understand the scriptures, follow the star
 - e) Shepherds - the attention of laborers. Encounter the Angel and angels singing.
 - f) Simeon and Anna - the attention of simple believers. Both told they would see Messiah.
 2. Often before God speaks He captures the attention of those who He intends to hear.
 - a) The people of Noah's day. The ark, that is strange.
 - b) Moses - sees a bush burning.
 - c) Isaiah the prophet sees a vision, Is. 6.
 - d) Peter - throw out your net.
 - e) Tim - before I got saved, in hind site there was so much supernatural activity going on in my life. People were witnessing to me. Nothing seemed to be going right in my life. I was supernaturally made sober one night and God spoke to me.
 3. ****Encounters like this are mysterious and they often lead to revelation because they cause us to look for God. So God caught their attention and secondly he....

II. God Acted: He Revealed Himself

- A. Once the attention has been gained God can begin to speak. The message can now be delivered.
1. Mystery - In the NT mystery Gk. *mysterion*, and revelation are often found together. The mystery is the object that proclaims the revelation. Note: each one of the natural manifestations that we see above proclaim a revelation about the purposes of God or about the baby. Mystery and revelation go together. Col 1:27 *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* NKJV *****The purpose of mystery is often to cause us to search out the revelation that is hidden in it. There are so many mysteries in the Christmas story. That is why Mary pondered all these things in her heart.
 2. To reveal means to make known. The OT prophecies we looked at last week made known God's plan. The actual event makes known God has come in the flesh and appeals to us to go deeper in the revelation.
 - a) Gr *kalypto*-to cover, to bury, to hide (. *apocakalypto*- to uncover, reveal, to make obvious. Revelation is call apocalyptic writing. OR the Revelation of Jesus.) It has to do with the manifestation of God. Making God visible.
 - b) Revelation leads us to pray Eph 1:17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* NKJV
 - c) Not only is the attention of these people captured by God by they also get revelation of who He is and what He is doing! *****Revelation requires our response! Repentance and worship!
- B. Proverbs 25:2 *It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.* NKJV God conceals a thing and the heart of kings ponders it to find its truth.
1. God conceals (creates mysteries) things and reveals just enough to keep us looking into a matter.
 2. He has created us to want to know the unknown-to ponder. That is the wisdom of our God. I Tim 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* NKJV
 3. Some of you need to ponder once again this age old story that you might find for yourself once again the freshness of the eternal truths hidden in the Christmas story.
 4. As Christians we are called to manage/steward these truths. One way we do that is by not becoming so familiar with them that we forget the revelation of the truths. 1 Cor. 4:1 *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.* NKJV Gr. *oikonómos* - Household administration, treasurer, manager.

III. God Acted: He Became Flesh

- A. The greatest mystery or the greatest revelation of the Christmas story is that God became a man. God became flesh. He lived among men...Immanuel. God with us. This was a critical revelation to John the apostle.
1. ******"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."* (John 1:14, NLT)
 - a) ***In the garden of Eden, God was with His people.
 - b) ***At the birth and throughout Jesus life, God was with His people.
 - c) ***In Rev.21:11 *"Look God's home is now among His people."*
 2. The revelation is that God became a man and He did so by virgin birth. Virgin birth means that no man, or no man's seed was involved in the process. Mary did not undergo endometrial fertilization. She was with child by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit did a miracle!
 3. The Word became flesh/a man! This does not mean he ceased to be God...that would be a metamorphosis and not incarnation. Jesus did not experience a total transformation. He was still God in the womb of Mary. That is a wonder.
 4. The Word became flesh did not imply that later this man became God. That would be called divinization (the making of a God). You cant take something created and then make it God.
 5. *"Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: Christ was revealed in a human body and vindicated by the Spirit. He was seen by angels and announced to the nations. He was believed in throughout the world and taken to heaven in glory."* (1 Timothy 3:16, NLT)
- B. Why does this matter? Why was it important that God's plan unfold this way?
1. Because Jesus is the pre-existent Son of God. He did not become a son after his birth, or at his baptism or at the transfiguration. He was the Son that was given because God loved. Jn 3:16. Because Jesus is equal to God. Jesus is distinct from the Father. (Father did not die on cross, Jesus did. Jesus is seated at Right Hand of God. He is distinct from the Father.) Jesus is God the Father's personal embodiment. *"If you have seen me you have seen the Father."* Jn 14:8-9
 2. Because Jesus is the revelation of the nature of God.
 - a) He is the very representation of God. Heb 1:3 He reflects the glory of God and is the stamp of the very nature of God.
 - b) Whatever can be said of God the Father is shown in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - c) What is God like? Look at Jesus and you will know. Jn 14:8-9.
 - d) The fact that God is invisible to men makes the revelation of Jesus all the more meaningful. I can see Him!
 - e) Whatever Jesus said, Whatever Jesus did revealed the nature of the Father. (1) John 1:14...*we have beheld His glory."*

- (2) 2 Cor 4:6 *God who said, Let light shine out of the darkness...has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*
3. Because Jesus is the Son of God it makes redemption/salvation possible.
- The One who saves from sin must be nothing less than God or it is not possible. *"And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21, NLT) And in 1:23 he is called Emmanuel *"God with us."*
 - This is why God becoming flesh is so important. If the Son of God as God himself did not come from heaven and take upon himself our flesh, then we are still in our sin. Only One who is eternally God, can save.
 - It is mysterious that the Son of God is both God and Son and that He is the Son of God who became flesh and set the stage for our salvation. It is that 1 Tim 3:16 verse, *Great indeed we confess is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh.*
4. Because faith in the Son of God alone saves a person. Why does it matter?
- Unless one recognizes that Jesus is the Son of God and not just a mere human being, there can be no salvation for him. This is why John begins with the *"the Word became flesh"* and climaxes with Jn 20:31 *These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*
 - Unless you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, God able to save, there is no way to receive Him as Savior. This is why there is no greater damage to the Christian faith than to deny that Jesus came in flesh--that is the spirit of the anti-christ. I.e. no wonder there is such a fight to take the Christ out of Christmas, "don't say Merry Christmas." Don't let the Christ of Christmas infect our school children. It is the spirit of the age--antichrist.
 - To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to receive Him.
 - Jn 1:12 *To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the power to become the children of God.* To believe in Him as the Christ, Son of God, is to receive him into one's total life.
 - To believe is to confess: 1 Jn 4:15 *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him and he in Him.* Romans 10:9 *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
 - By faith in Christ as the Son of God there is salvation.

Conclusion:

- God's plan was foretold in the OT to give us hope. It was also told so that all people would know that God desires relationship with us.
- God's Action was to capture our attention, reveal to us His Son and make it even more possible for us to believe.
- The birth of Christ is the initiation of the plan of God to save his people