

Story #3: Your Deliverance, Pt. 1

The Last Adam

The Three Stories of the Bible

Luke 1:26-37; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

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Some children huddled around a pastor for the Sunday morning children's sermon. The pastor asked, "What's brown, has a bushy tail and lives in a tree?" A boy yelled, "God!" He expected the subject to be about God and assumed that any question must lead to it. Like that child, we tend to hear what we expect and miss what's really being said.

This morning you expect me to talk about God. Some of you may doubt that you will hear anything new or significant because you've heard a lot about God. As a result, you begin to tune out. Just as damaging, however, are the preconceived notions that prevent us from hearing what's being shared. I believe God wants to say something new to you. Will you listen?

The Bible tells three stories. Story #1 is your design. Throughout our children's early years, their designs have been plastered all over our refrigerator. We've enjoyed their art work and all that it tells us; but you are the artwork of God, and God wants to say something with you. You were designed by God, in his own likeness, to live as God's child, God's companion and God's prince or princess. That's the Bible's first story.

Are you busting seams in excitement over who you are and what is possible for you? The human potential movement hasn't begun to discover what we are capable of. However, many of us have trouble believing in our potential and in that first story because of the Bible's second story. Story #2 is your death. In Genesis 3 we learned how and why death came to us as children, companions and princes of God. We found how our vision destroys our relationship with God. We discovered how we become deceived and dominated. As painful as it is, we saw in our discussions why death is consistent with God's love. Today, however, we begin looking at the story of your deliverance.

In the children's message, I shared a picture entitled *Simeon's Moment*. The picture captures the moment Simeon recognized what he held in his hands. To God he cried, "My

eyes have seen your salvation." Simeon saw something astonishing in the 8 day old baby he held. He may not have understood it all, but he knew this child would change everything.

To understand what God is doing about your deliverance and how you can respond, we need to discuss that infant. We need to consider again the birth of Jesus.

Around 4 or 5 B.C. a teenage girl was startled when an angel visited her. The angel announced, "Mary, *you will be with child and give birth.*" The angel said more. "*Give him the name Jesus.*" The name Jesus means salvation. The angel continued, "*He will be great. He will be called the son of the Most High.*" Few people in that day were given such a title. That wasn't the title of a religious man. It may be accorded to an emperor, to the ruler of a dynasty. Still the angel spoke, "*God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign forever. His kingdom will never end.*"

Mary understood from those words that she would give birth to the Jewish messiah. She understood the messiah would have God's favor, that the messiah would deliver Israel from 500 years of dominance and occupation from other nations and that he would rule the people. However, she was just a single teenager. She was pledged to a man, but didn't expect to be married any time soon. She questioned, "*How can this be?*"

The angel responded, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you.*" That was unexpected. She may have thought the Holy Spirit would come upon Joseph so that he would marry her. "*The power of the Most High will overshadow you.*" That was unexpected! "*So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*"

The angel's response told Mary much more than his announcement. The announcement pointed Mary back to King David's rule. David restored for Israel the peace and self-determination that their enemies had robbed. Jesus would some how bring that; however, the angel's response to Mary revealed that Jesus would not only be a human prince of deliverance. He would be a divine prince. Born of Mary, he fully shared in our humanity; but born of the Spirit he would share in God's divinity. He would not carry the problem of Adam. He would not experience the separation from our divine Father that occurred in Eden. Jesus' vision would not be affected by Adam's act. He would not be influenced by the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*. His vision of life would be totally different from every other human being. He would not see things in terms of good and evil. He would not have an independent sense of justice. He would focus only on his Father's will. He would know what it is like to trust God implicitly with no inner tendency to fear, hide or second guess. He would enjoy the innocence and intimacy for which we were designed. You and I were designed to be as innocent and intimate with God as Jesus. When we lost that, we became lost. Lost people are vulnerable, and that describes you, your neighbor, every human being. However, Jesus was sent to change that

How Jesus changes that for us is wrapped up in his identity and his actions. Because Jesus was born of Mary, he is our brother. Because he was born of God, he is a new Adam, a new kind of human being.

The Apostle Paul recognizes Jesus as our brother and calls him the *firstborn among many brothers*. Are any of you firstborn? Firstborn children are generally treated differently by their parents, and they frequently model, lead and show the way for their younger siblings. Sometimes the firstborn shoulders some of the responsibilities of a parent; and some of us siblings will follow only when the firstborn has been authorized by the parent. Do you know what I mean? The firstborn must carry some clout other than their own. Jesus came with that clout from his father. He came as the firstborn. He did not come as our father. He came from our father to restore us to the father. He didn't begin a new race in this world. He came to reclaim and deliver the existing one, to which he belongs.

Yet, the Apostle Paul recognized Jesus as a new Adam. He called him the *Last Adam*. That name suggests the identity of someone who produces something as significant as the first Adam. The first Adam was the source of all human life, the father of all humanity. What must the *Last Adam* be? For one, he is the last. None follows him. He completes God's plan for us.

Paul gives us a comparison of the two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15. Adam was a living being, Jesus a life-giving Spirit. Adam came first, and so we receive his material nature first. After that, there a spiritual life to gain. Adam came from the dust of earth. Jesus came from heaven. Adam's nature dominates all born through Adam. Similarly, Jesus' nature fashions all subsequently born through Jesus. We look, live, act and suffer like Adam, but we will look, live, act and rejoice like Jesus. That's the destiny produced by Jesus.

Because of Jesus, nearly everything can change for you, even now. You may feel deeply alone; but you don't have to? You may carry guilt or worry deeply, but you don't need to. You may be tired, sick and depressed, but even that can change.

I can't remember when I first turned to Jesus. I served Jesus as a child, walked with Jesus as a youth and look to Jesus as an adult. This firstborn brother and last Adam has made such an impact on me. I've increasingly discovered what it is to be loved. I have tasted the peace of forgiveness. I lose it sometimes, but Christ helps me quickly regain it. Some time ago, I stopped trying to be righteous for Jesus and just paid attention to Jesus' leading in my life. As a result, I'm more honest, patient, forgiving, gentle and so on. There are areas in my life that God is convicting and cleansing, and there are times of weeping and sorrow. Still, I'm frequently surprised by the love and power of God for us. With no pretense, no deception, no exaggeration, I can say I have a new identity.

In Christ we become both a physical and spiritual people. I am both. I am like Adam physically; but increasingly I am like Jesus' spiritually. I feel such a love from our heavenly father. I have such a passion to help others experience that. I don't want you to just believe in your father's love. I want you to experience it fully. I want you to celebrate everyday an exciting companionship with your heavenly father. Furthermore, I'm awaiting the same future that Jesus has already embraced. He's the *firstborn* for me. How about you? He's also the *last Adam* that has profoundly changed my life.

You don't have to bribe Jesus to come and change you. He loves you. His hand is extended right now to you. However you're hurting, whatever you've done, wherever you are, just let him take your hand and lead you back to your real father. He'll not only show you the way. He'll be your way.