Christmas Messages in the book of Genesis

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Merry Christmas! Christmas is the day of celebrating the birth of Christ Jesus. We will celebrate Christmas next Sunday at Samuel Church in Clayton. Even though Jesus was born in Bethlehem Judea around 2,000 years ago, his birth had been prophesied long ago even at the creation of the world. Today we will find Christmas messages in the book of Genesis. I would like you to have the attitude of an explorer to find treasures hidden in the Old Scripture.

First, let there be light (Ge 1;3) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. When this world was formed, its initial stage was nothing but emptiness and darkness. Genesis 1:2 says, “*Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*.” Before God created this world, there is no order, no life or no light on this earth. Then, on the first day God created light. When God said, “*Let there be light*.” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. (Ge 1;3-4) This light is not a sunlight or any physical light in this world, but a special light and godly light. John the Apostle called it ‘the true light’. (Jn 1:9) Paul indicated this light as Jesus Christ. He said in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.*” God reveled his glory through Jesus Christ. the light. But Jesus is not one of God’s creatures. Jesus is God himself the Creator. Jesus is the one who said, “Let there be light.” This Creator God became flesh and made his dwelling among us and appeared as a baby in a manger. This is the gospel and this is the Christmas message.

 The gospel describes the people just before Jesus was born like this. Matthew and Luke say, “*the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned*.” (Mt 4:16, Lk 1:79) God sent Jesus Christ as a great light to those who live in darkness and in the land of the shadow of death. Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*.” (Jn 8:12)

 Even though the true and great light came to this world, there are still many people who live in darkness. Their hearts are dark and heavy because of anxiety and fear. Their hearts are formless, empty, and dark because of the absence of light. You have many reasons for darkness, but you have no Jesus in your heart. Last Tuesday my son Sam and I decorated a Christmas tree and installed lights in front yard. It was a cold day, but we did not mind because we expected to make our spirit and community bright. After arranging the lights on the tree and front yard, my last job was plugging for the lights. I plugged it saying, “Let there be light!” Then, all the lights were shining on the tree and front yard. In this way Christmas lights make our spirit and community bright. Let the light make your heart bright! This time I ask all of you to say “*Let there be light*!” Turn on the Christmas light in your heart so that all the elements of darkness may be cast out. Amen! In this way from the beginning God made this world bright through the light of Jesus.

Second, an offspring of a woman. (Ge 3:15) The Garden of Eden which God had planted was beautiful and fruitful. It was full of light of God. But Adam and Eve turned off the light when they committed sin. Darkness and the shadow of death came into the Garden of Eden. Because of their sin this earth was cursed, and they had to pay the penalty for their sin. But God did not give them up. God promised them with the way of salvation through an offspring of a woman. God said in Genesis 3:15, “*And* *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*” God promised to send the Messiah, Savior of the world, through an offspring of a woman, who is Jesus Christ. When Jesus was hung on the tree, Satan stroke his heel. But Jesus crushed the head of Satan through his glorious resurrection. This is the gospel and this is the good news. In Luke 2:10-11, while shepherds were feeding sheep in the field at night, an angel of the Lord appeared to them and said, “*Don’t be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, he is the Christ, the Lord*.” Amen! People say that there were two special trees in the Garden of Eden. The first one is the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the other is the tree of life. But I believe that God planed another tree for us, which is a Christmas tree planted in Genesis 3:15.

Third, the ark of Noah and the manger of Jesus. (Ge 6:14) Since Adam’s fall, men’s sin began to increase like a snowball. Genesis 6:11 says, “*Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence*.” So, God was going to destroy people and the earth. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Ge 6:8) He was righteous man, blameless among the people, and he walked faithfully with God. (Ge 6:9) Then God said to Noah, “*I am going to put an end to all people...so make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out*.” (Ge 6:13,14) God ordered Noah to build the ark of salvation for himself and his family. The ark of salvation saved Noah, his family, and all pairs of animals who could start a new beginning after the flood judgment. The ark of salvation is the preview of the manger of Jesus. The word ‘*teba’* in Hebrew, which means ‘ark’ or ‘crib’ in which the baby Moses was put in the Nile River. The word ‘*phatne*’ in Greek is also used for ‘crib’ or ‘manger’ in which Jesus was laid in Bethlehem. As God started new beginning for this world in the ark of Noah, God also started new beginning in the manger of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, God’s covenant with the patriarchs. (Ge 12;3, 26:4, 28:4) In Matthew’s gospel the genealogy of Jesus starts with “*Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.*” (Mt 1:1) Matthew believed that the Messiah would come as the descendant of David and the descendant of Abraham. Abraham is the father of nation Israel. He is also the human ancestor of Jesus. When God called Abraham, he promised him to become a blessing. “*I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed through you.*” (Ge 12:2-3) Here God promised to send the Messiah through the descendant of Abraham saying, “*and all people on earth will be blessed through you*.” Here the blessing which all people on earth would receive is salvation.

This blessing was handed over to his descendants as a covenant. Abraham had many sons, but only Isaac is regarded as the covenant son. The covenant son means the one who inherits and succeeds God’s promise of salvation. In Genesis 26:2-4 God said to Isaac, “*Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and I will bless you...I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed*.” Isaac believed in the LORD and stayed in Gerar.

Isaac had two sons, but his younger son Jacob became the covenant son. God appeared to Jacob in his dream while he was sleeping in the desert and said, *“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All people on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring*.” (Ge 28:13-14)

Jacob had twelve sons. His covenant blessing did not go down to Reuben, his firstborn son, or Joseph, his most beloved son, but Judah, his fourth son. Why not to Joseph, who is the seemingly perfect man, but Judah who was full of short-coming and mistakes? There appeared five women in the genealogy of Jesus. Among them Tamar, the mother of a twin Perez and Zerah, was Judah’s daughter-in-law. Genesis 38 explains in detail how and why Tamar had twin sons from Judah. Judah was not perfect morally but was chosen by God as the covenant son. It was only by God’s grace and his divine sovereignty for salvation of the world.

Jacob’s blessing on his twelve children, especially on Judah confirms God’s choice for Judah. Before Jacob died, he called his twelve sons and blessed them one by one according to God’s sovereignty. He blessed Judah in this way in Ge 49:8-10, “J*udah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you...The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.*” Here the words ‘*your hand will be on the neck of your enemies*” is the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 which says, “*he will crush your head.*” and of his glorious resurrection based on 1 Corinthians 15:25 which says, “*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*”

Here the scepter is the symbol of kingship. A scepter is an ornamented staff which a king or a ruler carries. Jacob prophesied that the Messiah, the King of the Jews would come from the seed of Judah. Indeed, King David is the descendant of Judah. Not only the Jews, but also the three wise men, the Magi believed that the Messiah would come as the king of the Jews. So, when they entered the palace of Herod and asked where the king of the Jews was born. (Mt 2:2)

Jacob’s blessing on Judah continues. Jacob blessed him in Genesis 49:14 which says, “*He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes*.” This is a prophecy more than a blessing. The words ‘donkey’, ‘colt’, ‘vine’, ‘branch, ‘garments in wine’, and ‘blood of grapes’ reminds us of the image of Jesus. Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey while people were waving the palm branches. Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and had bread and wine at the Last Supper. Finally, Jesus’ garments were wet by his own blood. All these represent the metaphor of the Messiah Jesus Christ. Who knew these things would happen to the descendants of Judah? Even Jacob who had blessed Judah did not know what he was talking about.

Fifth, the saving of many lives (Ge 50:20) Joseph was not the covenant son even though he had the perfect image of the Messiah Jesus. Let’s see the Christmas message in Joseph’s life. Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, who loved him most among the twelve. Joseph was hated by his brothers and sold to Egypt. In Egypt Joseph suffered much as a slave in Potiphar's house and in prison. But God raised up Joseph to the second man next to King Pharaoh. When Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt for food, Joseph arrested them and disciplined them until they repented all their sin. Joseph’s discipline was the expression of his genuine love for his brothers. Later when his brothers were afraid of Joseph, he said to his brothers, “*Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*.” (Ge 50:19-20) We find many images of Jesus through Joseph’s life. Joseph was sold by his own brothers for twenty shekels of silver. (Ge 37:28) as Jesus was also sold for thirty silver coins by his own disciple. Joseph was imprisoned, but God raised him up to the highest position. Jesus was also imprisoned and died, but God raised him up to the highest place. Above all, God used Joseph to save many lives as God used Jesus to save the whole world. Matthew testifies the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:21, “*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins*.” The name ‘Jesus’ is ‘the Lord saves’ and ‘Savior’. Joseph believed that God had sent him ahead to Egypt through his brothers so that he might prepare food for the people. His brothers intended to harm Joseph and sold him to the foreigners. But Joseph believed that it was God’s divine intention to save many lives. People intended to harm Jesus and crucified him. But God intended to save many lives through his death on the cross.

In the Garden of Eden God promised to send the Savior Jesus from an offspring of a woman. This promise was fulfilled when Mary gave birth to a son. God asked Noah to build the ark of salvation for his family. The ark of salvation was built when Jesus was laid in a manger. God’s promise continued to hand down to Abraham’s descendants as a covenant. As God promised to Abraham, all people on earth are blessed through Jesus. In this Christmas season I ask all of you to make your spirit bright. Say to yourself, ‘Let there be light!” so that all the elements of darkness may be expelled and the light of glory may fill your heart. Amen!