

## Scripture Reading: Galatians 3:1-16

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4 Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? 5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?-- 6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.”

# "God's Promises Fulfilled In Jesus!"

We come today to the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent: The candles are lit and we are prepared to see the Christ candle next week representing how Jesus came as the Light of the World. We have seen in prior messages the hope, love and joy of this season where we remember the coming of Jesus and traditionally this fourth Sunday would focus on peace: The message that the angels brought, and so I would like to have us consider their messages!

- Now I did not take our text from the Gospel accounts where we find these angels and I do have a reason for doing so!

We have spent almost two years in the early chapters of Genesis: There we have seen the foundations for God's grand plan of salvation AND we have seen how it is where we should always find Jesus and His work. Before that we studied Acts and our weekly Bible studies have considered Romans and Galatians recently. There we see the impact of the work of Jesus and how the Spirit of God is filling the earth with His Kingdom. So I hope I can tie much of this together this morning and put a big bow on it [very appropriate for the season] and help us understand what great peace we should have because Jesus has come...

- A peace for us and for the world!

Now in Genesis we started with creation where God creates for six days and rests on the seventh...Something confirmed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment of the Law: Something that establishes the seven-day week that all the world uses, despite it having no solar or lunar significance...

- Something that should haunt the skeptics just as hearing ‘the year of our Lord 2014 probably does!

Seven is seen as significant in the Scriptures and we often find things in sevens: Michael summarized the seven letters to seven churches in Revelation just last week!

- So it was no surprise to me that when I reviewed the messages that came in the Christmas accounts that we have seven of them!

So my goal is to review them quickly and then relate what is proclaimed to our text and our lives... These passages and messages and truths are perhaps so familiar that sometimes we almost take them for granted or at least don't meditate on them enough... Something I hope will change after today!

- These important messages reveal the events which give us true peace!

**Our first Christmas message comes from the Angel Gabriel as he appears to Zacharias in Luke 1: “11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. [mention the dual nature of this ‘answer’]**

**14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."**

➤ **Truly we love God because He first loved us!**

**Six months later we see the same Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary with our second message:**

**Luke 1: “26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"**

**29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."**

➤ **What a great message of hope!**

➤ **And a great message of hope that has been largely lost today in many quarters of Christendom!**

**Please notice that there are no conditions on this proclamation, just as we saw with God’s covenant with Abraham...**

**Mary WILL conceive**

**She WILL name her son Jesus**

**He WILL be great!**

**He WILL be called Son of the Highest**

**He WILL be given the Throne of David**

**He WILL reign over the house of Jacob**

**His Kingdom WILL have no end.**

**The simple reason that we have SO much pessimism in the Church today is that we accept that Mary did conceive and name the child Jesus who is certainly a great man and Son of God.**

**But sadly many have now come to think that Jesus getting the Throne of David, reigning over the house of Jacob and establishing an everlasting Kingdom somehow got put off for a few thousand years.**

**There was a good reason that the angel brought this message to Mary and that the Holy Spirit preserved it for us in Luke’s account...**

➤ **That is what happened when Jesus came to earth!**

➤ **And these truths brings great hope and even greater peace!**

**The angel Gabriel continues to explain what is going to happen to Mary and she responds in obedience: Even with something as important as the coming of Jesus, God uses means: Like this couple!**

**Thus we have the next angel appearing to Mary's husband Joseph:**

**Matthew 1: "18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."**

**The angel gives Joseph great insight into what HAS happened to Mary and again tells us of things that WILL happen...**

- **She WILL have a son, something Joseph could not have known at the time!**
- **Joseph shall name Him Jesus.**
- **Jesus WILL save His people from their sins!**

**This is the fulfilment of all the promises we have been studying in Genesis and what the Apostle Paul summarizes for the struggling Saints in Galatia.**

- **Jesus is THE Seed of the woman and THE Seed of Abraham...**
- **The Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world!**

**The next appearance from an angel is to the Shepherds on the very night that this child was born...**

**Luke 2: "8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."**

**Again we see present realities they can see and touch, like finding a babe in the manger, combined with realities that would be tougher to believe: The Baby IS Christ the Lord and He will bring great joy to all people: This is why we sing Joy to the World...**

- **The coming of Jesus changes everything!**

**This is confirmed by our fifth message brought by a heavenly host which then appears to the shepherds:**

**Luke 2: "13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"**

**The host are seeing God's grand plan of salvation being carried out and they know it brings God much glory...**

- **Glory to God on the highest!**

**But the impact is seen in the here & now:-- Peace on Earth, goodwill toward men! Again this is difficult for many to believe today, even within the Church! We see prophesy conferences and Internet videos, to say nothing of the evening news, showing how awful things are today hoping & praying Jesus will come back soon to make things better...**

- **At bottom, those who think like this simply do not believe that the heavenly host were telling the truth!**

The angels did NOT say there would be peace on earth or goodwill toward men after at least two thousand years when Jesus comes back again... They saw and proclaimed the incarnation for what it was:

- God Himself entering history as the baby Jesus & that changed everything!

When you think about it, we have spent almost two thousand years growing in our understanding of all that this incarnation means and watching its impact on history... These angels had seen it from the heavenly perspective and yes they knew how great the impact would be in all of the creation & all of history! However, unlike my bad habits that I learned in the government schools, these angels did not want to skip to the end of the book to see what happens...

- They knew, and we should know as well, that God's grand plan would continue to be worked out in history! *[Remember, that is the story of the book of Acts!]*
- And that history would still have rough spots both in the life of this child and the rest of history!

In fact it is the next message from an angel that lets us know about that part of the story...

Shortly after the birth of Jesus an Angel speaks to Joseph in a dream:

Matthew 2: "13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins & thus we are quickly reminded about the seriousness of sin!

The fall of Adam and all mankind was not a little 'oopsie' that could be made right with a simple apology! The sin of man had cast the entire creation into death and chaos as we have studied in the Book of Beginnings where we saw the sinfulness of sin before the flood in the days of Noah. Now right here in the Christmas story we are reminded of it again... King Herod in his pride and lust for power was willing to kill ALL the newborn infants in the region of Bethlehem just to get at Jesus. Of course he fails, but there are real results from his sin and much weeping from those mothers...

- Mothers who are not represented in most manger scenes that I have observed: But perhaps these weeping mothers should be!

So we have six messages from the Angels and the 7<sup>th</sup> is from God Himself, which is very appropriate!

The Holy Spirit speaks to Simeon...

Luke 2: "25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

- Notice that Simeon was waiting and praying for the same thing as Zacharias and the other priests!

27 "So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

- I could have, and have done entire sermons on the faith of Simeon and this incredible scene...

But for this morning let's just focus on the fact that he is saying the same thing that the Angels proclaimed to the Shepherds, there will be peace on earth and good will toward men, both Jew and Gentile! *[which was an incredible thing for him to declare at the Temple]*

So with all those messages ringing in our ears, let me return to our text quickly.

I chose Galatians 3 not because we need to study it at length: We have spent time there in our series on Genesis and Elder Denna has spent many weeks on this chapter it in our weekly Bible studies...

I am simply using it to illustrate how just as we should always look forward to the work of Jesus in the Old Testament; we should always strive to see the fulfilment of His work in the New! The work promised by these Christmas messages!

The Book of Acts lays out the history for us and then we have various Epistles or letters written to individuals & churches.

Some uplifting and others challenging just as we saw with the letters to the seven churches last week...

The Churches in the region of Galatia were the most troubled and Paul was very concerned for them so if we see these great truths about the Gospel that the angels and Spirit announced even there, we should see them everywhere, and that is just what I hope this will encourage us to do over and over again in our studies!

Paul has been warning the Galatians to not stray from the Gospel he had preached to them and it continues in chapter three which was our text:

**3:1-16**“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

- Remember the angel said Jesus would come to save His people from their sins and that is just what He did on the cross!

**2** This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? **3** Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

- Simeon held the baby Jesus in his arms looking at his Messiah by faith, not trusting in his own works!

**4** “Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? **5** Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?-- **6** just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

- Here again Abraham has faith in the promises of God with even less light than Zacharias, Mary or Joseph, the Shepherds or even Simeon had in their day!

**7** “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. **8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

- We spent some time a few weeks ago discussing how the Gospel was preached to Abraham and I trust you can see here how it was the message the angels gave the shepherds: Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace good will toward men!

**9** “So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

**Faith is what we see in response to the seven messages in the Christmas story...**

- **Zacharias, despite his doubts names his son John and praises God!**
- **Mary becomes the mother of God**
- **Joseph takes her as his wife**
- **The shepherds come to see the baby Jesus.**
- **The shepherds tell all who will hear about the coming of peace and goodwill!**
- **Joseph flees the wickedness of King Herod and goes to Egypt.**

**Finally, Simeon takes the baby Jesus in his arms and proclaims to Mary... “Behold , this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against ; 35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”**

**Jesus came to take away the curse of sin and that would come at great cost to Him, and that is why Paul continues in his letter to the Galatians with these words at verse 13...**

**“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

**...16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.”**

**Yes, the Seed of Abraham was and is the baby Jesus who was laid in that manger! 11 And thus the angel proclaimed “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”**

**The one who had come to establish His Kingdom and the one that we worship now as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!**

**Singing with that heavenly host,**

**“Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace goodwill toward men!**

**Communion Meditation: Luke 1**

**“39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.””**