

The Story of the Son of God

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we thank you for your word, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the scriptures that speak of him. Father, we pray that as we hear your word explained today, that you might graft your word into our hearts and work in us so as to bring forth in us the fruit of good works.

May we live in a way that honors the Lord Jesus Christ, and we pray this for the honor of your name as well. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friends, about a month or so ago, I was... Oh, actually, one more thing I needed to ask. There were apparently some outlines, and they may be helpful for you. Did everyone get outlines?

Okay. Good. All right. A month or two ago, I was flipping through some channels on the television, and I saw a documentary advertised. It was a nature documentary. I don't watch a lot of nature documentaries, but this one intrigued me.

It was going to trace the life of a big male red kangaroo in the center of Australia. And it took me a while to get around to watching it, but in the last month or so, we've watched it.

[1 : 0 5] And we saw everything. We saw this kangaroo even. They had cameras even in the pouch of the mother, and you could see pictures of it growing. We saw it. So we saw this kangaroo in the mother's pouch.

We saw him rise through the ranks of other males. Eventually, we saw him rise to be the leader over them all. Then came the fire, the drought, the deaths, the survival of this big red.

But then we saw the dogs attack. And the cameras slowed down as this great red kangaroo ran away from them, seemingly floating above the ground.

And the dogs were just dropping, as it were. And I really did wonder at the strange and unexpected ways of our God in relation to nature.

I mean, I thought to myself at the time, how could this rather bizarre, unwieldy, huge, and apparently ungainly animal look so beautiful? But it is one of the most beautiful things I've seen in a long time.

[2 : 0 8] It brought tears to my eyes. How could it just sail over the red sand as though no effort were involved and leave the dogs in its wake? Now, the first British people in Australia, they felt a similar sort of sense of awe when they encountered that sort of mixed-mode creature called the platypus.

In fact, at the day when they found the platypus, it was common in England that you would sew together various parts of different animals to make a new creature.

And someone thought that's exactly what had happened here, that there was an elaborate hoax going on. After all, it looked like make-believe, a sort of stitched-up animal. I mean, what have you got?

You've got a mammal, yet it lays eggs. It's got webbed feet. It's got a bill like a duck. A female has milk for its young, but it has no nipples. Underwater, the platypus shuts down all normal senses of sight, sound and smell.

It seeks out its prey by electrical signals and mechanical waves that it picks up with its bill. It is another really bizarre creature, isn't it? And I think another bizarre and unexpected way of our God in his world.

[3 : 19] And I don't know what he was doing with Australia, but he had a ball, I think. It is one of the things that delights me about Australia. And Heather and I have travelled most of Australia.

And as we've done so, I've thought to myself, as I've seen these things, I've thought to myself, I would never do it this way. This is too weird. How is that going to work? Even with fires, which we are seeing today, they have been part of our country for so long.

You think, how does that work? But in God's way, it does. Work it does. And then I think about my own life. You see, I grew up in a Christian family. I was sent off to boarding school not far and went to boarding school from Papua New Guinea to a place not far from here in Melbourne, where I promptly rejected the faith.

And I became a rebellious youth. And then God confronted me. I had been quite stupid and I drove outside the law. There was an accident. I hurt two people.

But it stopped me in my tracks. And it led to my conversion three months, two or three months later. Now, friends, let me tell you that if I were planning my conversion to Christ, I wouldn't have done it the way that it happened.

[4 : 23] But God did and did something unexpected, something that I haven't really been able to fathom out completely in full. And, you know, we have lots of people in our church here at Holy Trinity that are Chinese.

And I've similar thoughts as I think about China and Christian faith. You see, all around the world, people have been reporting the openness of the Chinese to the gospel.

Wherever they have filtered out from China into the world, they are open to the gospel. Where other parts of the world are becoming incredibly hard to the gospel. Now, when I think about it, I suspect that the that Chinese openness to the gospel is actually connected with the closing of China to the gospel for 50 years.

And I think how bizarre is that? I would never have thought of doing it that way. That is. No, you wouldn't have ever thought that when people saw China closed down to the gospel. I thought, well, what are we going to do?

But God, in his mercy, may actually be using China to preserve Christian faith in the world through it being closed, through China being closed to the gospel for 50 years.

[5 : 31] I think how bizarre is that? And the ways of our God are often not like that, aren't they? They're often bizarre to our thinking, often unexpected, often surprising, often not the way we would do things at all.

And last week we saw this, we looked at the story of the seed. This week we're going to see some even stranger things. But I want us to orient ourselves to the story.

I want to remind you, in case you weren't here, and even if you were, remind you of what we saw last week. Do you remember last week we took this lightning tour through Genesis? Genesis, first thing we saw was that there was a sort of preface to Genesis, ran from Genesis 1 through to chapter 2, verse 3.

And that introduction, that preface, told us of God's creative activity. And then we saw that there was a key new word or formula that was introduced in chapter 2, verse 4.

The word was a Hebrew one. The Hebrew word is Toledot. And I told you it could be loosely translated as the generations of or this is what became of. And I gave you a chart.

[6 : 35] If you've got an outline, you might see it on the back part of the outline. And there are 10 of these statements throughout the book of Genesis. And I think they each introduce a new section, but they divide the book up into five major sections within Genesis.

And the first Toledot told us what became of the heavens and the earth. And you don't have to read very far on to find what happened to the heavens and the earth or what became of them.

Humans sinned. That's chapter 3 of Genesis. And God's response we heard in chapter 3 was to curse the serpent, the man and the woman. And we noticed that curse was outlined in Genesis 3, 15.

God said to the serpent these words. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

And we noticed that the word God uses for offspring is seed. And we noticed that the serpent would have seed or offspring and the woman would have seed or offspring.

[7 : 41] And the enmity between the serpent and the woman would be reflected in the enmity between their seed. We saw it with Cain and Abel in the first Toledot. But there's more.

We noted that the seed of the woman specified in Genesis 3, 15 was male. He might be struck by the seed of the serpent. However, the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

And from that moment on, as we worked our way through Genesis, we looked for a male, individual, head-crushing seed of the serpent. And as we moved through the whole, the various Toledots, we saw that story progress.

We saw it, for example, in the tension between Cain and Abel, the two descendants of Adam and Eve. Cain, the younger, killed Abel, whom we thought might be the seed to come.

As a result, a third son was born to Adam and Eve. His name was Seth. And he was, as it were, the seed that replaced Abel. Anyway, to cut the story short, as Genesis progresses, we see we learn more and more about this seed as the story follows through the generations that follow.

[8 : 49] And we find that it follows particularly, it goes particularly through the family of Abraham. And as it does, God adds various new elements to this. The seed would not only be male and head-crushing, blessing would flow through him.

In fact, that blessing would spread to all nations on earth. And the seed would be connected with kingship. That is, the seed of Abraham would be kings.

The seed of Abraham and Sarah together would be kings. Then right at the end of Genesis, we learnt that kingship would flow through a particular tribe within Abraham's descendants. That is, one of the sons of Jacob.

That is, Judah. So at the end of Genesis, we know what to look for. We are looking for a male, kingly, descendant of Abraham and Sarah.

And Judah, in particular. A male, kingly, head-crusher. He will overthrow the grip of the serpent, the devil, and he'll crush his head. And by this, he will bring blessing to the nations.

[9 : 50] So, let's now follow the story and see how it goes. Now, I need to tell you that the story immediately after Genesis has a very different focus. We know what to look for, though.

However, the children of Abraham have a pressing problem in the book of Exodus. You might remember what it is. They are still in Egypt. A cruel oppressor is in place. A pharaoh. And when we look at Pharaoh's rule, at times it looks serpent-like in its thrust.

He certainly harasses the people of God, cruelly tortures them. But the rescuer that comes is not from the tribe of Judah. So he can't be the right one. No, rather, he's from the tribe of Levi.

He's a certain Moses. And through him, God does deliver the people from the cruel tyranny of Egypt. But they're still in the bind of sin.

They sin against God in various ways. And as a result of their sin, they find themselves wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Until the generation of the Exodus dies out.

[10 : 50] And they begin to near the edge of the promised land. And that's where we enter the next stage in our story. As they do so, this bizarre and unexpected event occurs. Let me explain.

There's a man who turns up numerous times in the New Testament who's the focus of this story. And I want you to turn in your Bibles to this. It's Numbers 22 to 24. And if you're looking for a page number, I've got it somewhere here, around about 160 in your Bibles.

I want to end up in Numbers 24. Let me tell you what happens. Israel's coming into the promised land. And they're coming to a group of people called the Moabites.

And the Moabites are terrified because of the huge number of people that are with Israel. Their king is a man called Balak. And he decides the best way ahead is to hire a local prophet who can go out where he can see all of Israel encamped and curse them.

The prophet's name is Balaam. He's the one who's quite famous. You'll see why in a moment. He's a little resistant at first, but finally agrees. And in a famous incident, the angel of the Lord comes and confronts Balaam through his donkey, which speaks to him.

[12 : 01] Okay, and basically his donkey says, don't do this that you're about to do. Eventually, Balaam agrees to do what he's told to do and agrees to only speak what God tells him to speak.

And so as a result, he ends up blessing Israel instead of cursing them. But as he blesses them, he utters this very strange prophecy. And I want to show it to you. It's Balaam's fourth message.

And it occurs at Numbers 24, 15 to 19, page 160 in your Bibles. Let me read it to you. Now, as I do, I want you to remember what we learned in Genesis.

Okay. Balaam spoke this message. The prophecy of Balaam, son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eyes see clearly, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate and whose eyes are opened.

I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A star will come from Jacob. A scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth.

[13 : 09] Edom will be conquered. Seir, his enemy, will be conquered. But Israel will grow strong and a ruler will come from Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city.

I wonder if you can hear the language of Genesis there. And Genesis 3, 15. First, verse 24 literally talks about the latter days. Second, verse 17 talks about a male Israelite who will arise.

His coming will be like the coming of a star from Jacob's family. Verse 17. He will be a scepter. Verse 17. One who rules. Verse 17. A ruler who will crush the foreheads of Moab.

Verse 17. Can you hear that? The strong echoes of Genesis 3, 15. An opponent who sets himself against the people of God. God will in turn oppose him.

And he will do so through his ruler, his star, his male descendant of Jacob. Now, can you hear? God's plan is still on track here. He's still got a ruler to come.

[14 : 08] A male Israelite ruler who will be a skull crusher. But then we get lost in the story for a little while. And the story of the conquest of the land. They basically come into the land.

And again, some unexpected and surprising things happen. You see, the very first city that is conquered in the land contains a prostitute called Rahab, who helps the people of God.

She helps God's people by lining up with them and protecting them. And God incorporates her into Israel as a result. Much later, one of her descendants, a certain Boaz, marries a certain Moabite woman, Ruth.

The Moabite woman then here bears a child. And his name is Obed. And he is the father of a certain Jesse.

And of course, Jesse is the father of one called David. So we now arrive at David. And it's an unusual beginning. And the strangeness really continues.

[15 : 11] David, you see, is not the first or most impressive of Jesse's sons. Do you remember the story? Jesse brings his sons in. And Samuel, the prophet, gets through the last one.

He says, is there another one? And Jesse says, yes. He's out looking after the sheep. And he's brought in. Certainly, he is the one. Now, he's actually called the little one.

I quite like that myself. Which could mean the youngest, could mean the smallest, could mean the littlest. Certainly, he's the least impressive. And we're told this in 1 Samuel 16.

In his early life, though, he rises to fame through one singular deliverance, which you all know about. It's recounted in 1 Samuel 17. There is this huge Philistine aggressor.

His name is Goliath. And he stands as representative of the Philistine god, Dagon. And everyone shakes in fear of him, even Saul, the king of Israel.

[16 : 08] But not David, the little one. No. He marches out against the tyrant with no armor, no sword, against this uncircumcised Philistine who's dared defy the armies of the living God.

All that David has is a sling and some stones and a confession that he represents the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom Goliath has defied. Moreover, he announces that it's not by sword or spear that the Lord saves.

Anyway, you all know the story, don't you? David reaches into his bag. He takes out a stone. He hurls it at the giant. And it strikes Goliath. Where? On his head.

And then David cuts off said head. And God's male descendant of Judah has struck an awesome blow to the opponents of God. Friends, David's unusual beginning is now surpassed by an unusual deliverance.

And we wonder, could this be the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head? And to answer that question, let's turn to the unusual announcements that God makes about David in 2 Samuel 7.

[17 : 19] Again, I would encourage you to follow in your Bibles, page 306. Now, the context is clear here. David is now king. The lion who is from the tribe of Judah has the kingdom.

He has a city, Jerusalem. He now seeks to build a house for God. But God turns his request on its head. He says to David, you're not going to build me a house or a temple.

No, instead, I'm going to build a house for you. Look at verse 11. 2 Samuel 7, 11. Look and listen to what God says to David. I'll slightly change the language so that you can pick up what the original Hebrew says.

God makes David these promises. The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you. And when your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your seed to succeed you.

You hear it? Your seed to succeed you. Your own flesh and blood. And I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

[18 : 29] So we've got an advance now, haven't we? We've got one who will be the seed of David who will build a house for him. God will build a house for his name and establish the throne of his kingdom forever. You see, the seed is yet to come.

This head crusher is yet to come. He will come from David. He will be of David's flesh and blood. He will be the son of God. And God will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Let me tell you what happened after this. David sees Solomon did build a physical house for God, a temple. But I'm not even convinced he started well.

But some people think he started well. He certainly finished badly. He and his descendants did wrong. And God did what verse 14 promised. He punished them with the rods of men.

He sent foreign people to come and cart them away. But God's love never departed from David, just as he had promised. And so the prophets continued to look for the seed to come.

[19 : 28] Let me just pick up one of the prophets who looked. Nearly all of them do it. But one in particular, Isaiah. In your Bibles, turn to Isaiah 6. It's on page 685.

Now, Isaiah 6 gives us a picture of God's holiness. The end result is God's judgment. Because if you've got a holy God and sinful people, inevitably judgment is coming.

Look at the last verse. Look at verse 13 in chapter 6. It refers to remnants of judgment. And the way it refers to them is a stump. It's as though, you know, every tree's been leveled.

And what you've got is just this stump. And it appears, and in that context, God refers to a holy seed. And as soon as we hear the language, it sparks hope in us.

God's purposes are somehow going to continue. There will be a seed. But what sort of form will this seed take? Well, the succeeding chapters tell us. Just flip over the chapter to chapter 7.

[20 : 26] Or if you're on the same page, chapter 7. Because what happens is the Lord gives a sign of the future. Look at the sign outlined, verse 14. We're told a virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.

And we'll call him Emmanuel. Now turn over to chapter 9. Because what it does is speak of the end of doom and gloom. Look at verse 2. We hear of a great light appearing and joy following.

Of yokes being lifted and enemies being defeated. Verse 4. But look particularly at verse 6. So chapter 9, verse 6. We hear of a child being born. A son being given.

A son being born. Of government being on his shoulders. That is rule. He has names. Wonderful counsellor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. But look at the location and the style of his rule.

Look at verse 7. There will be no end to the greatness of his government and peace. He will sit on David's throne and over David's kingdom. He will establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness.

[21 : 28] And not just for one moment in history. No, it will be from that time on and forever. Friends, it's sort of like Davidic king on steroids, isn't it really?

And the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. Chapter 11 picks this up. Flip over to it. Because when you get to chapter 11, the language of stumps and shoots returns.

A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse. And from his root, a branch will bear fruit. So now you've got just a shoot that's growing. And the spirit of the Lord will rest on him.

And that king will rule justly. And Eden will return. Look at verse 7. The wolf will lie down with the lamb. This is Eden coming back, isn't it? Precurse, as it were. The leopard will lie down with the goat.

Predators will disappear. Danger will be gone. And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Friends, there it is. You see, there's God's future. Here is the expectation of the prophets.

[22 : 28] A holy seed from the root of David. A serpent head crusher extraordinaire. Later in Isaiah, the language will change a little bit. In 27.1, we'll hear of serpents and great snakes being slain by God.

In 51, Isaiah 51, we'll be reminded of the Lord's ability to overcome the great sea monsters. And then we'll hear of the servant. The language of earlier Isaiah will return.

As we hear of this servant who will grow up before the Lord like a tender shoot. Like a root out of dry ground. This ideal, this kingly Israelite will have lain upon himself all the iniquity of us all.

Now, friends, I could explore this much from other prophets. I just wanted to give you a little glimpse. I want to now move to the fulfillment of all of this. For after centuries have passed, God does it again.

Again, it looks unusual, almost bizarre and well, certainly by most unexpected. Although if you've read your Old Testaments, as we have, it may not be as unexpected as you think.

[23 : 36] Certainly there are one or two who didn't think it is unexpected as most thought. But we hear of a descendant of David, born of a virgin, born in unlikely circumstance, born to unlikely people, born in an unlikely place, apprehended by unlikely people such as shepherds and wise men.

Foreigners, at least the wise men. And this week, this coming week, as we look toward Christmas, we are going to remember him. And the absolutely astounding thing that happened.

But I want you to remember him in the light of Genesis 3, verse 15 this week. You see, Jesus may indeed be the Christ.

He may indeed be the descendant of David. He may be Emmanuel, God with us. He is all of those things. But do not forget that he is the fulfillment of Genesis 3, verse 15.

Let me just show you how the New Testament picks this up. The story of the seed in Genesis 3, verse 15 is remembered. It's echoed at various places throughout the New Testament. Let me show you some of them.

[24 : 44] In your Bibles, turn to Luke's Gospel. And I want you to all do this, actually, because I'm going to ask you to participate in this. Luke, chapter 1, 68 to 75, page 1026.

And what I thought we'd do is read this section of Scripture together. So Zechariah says, read with me.

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he said through his holy prophets of long ago, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

To show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham to rescue us from the hand of our enemies and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives or all our days.

Friends, let's flip again. I want you to go to Acts 3, 24 to 25, page 1093, Acts 3, 24 to 25, and look at what it says. I'll give you a moment.

[26 : 01] We hear this. Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. Can you hear what's being said? There's nothing really in one sense, though it is unexpected.

If you knew the prophets, you wouldn't be surprised. And he says this. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers.

He said to Abraham, through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed. Now flip over to Galatians 3, 7 to 8. And I'll see if I can find a page number.

Otherwise, someone can. Oh, yeah. 1245. Galatians 3. Listen to what Paul says. Verse 7. Understand then that those who have faith are children of Abraham.

Those who have faith are children of Abraham. Even the non-Jews. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham.

[27 : 03] Now we know that because we saw that last week in Genesis 15. Didn't we? We saw it in Genesis 12. That God was promising that the blessing that came to the seed through the seed of Abraham would be for all nations on earth.

That all nations would be blessed in him. And that's what the last statement means. All nations will be blessed through you. Now flip down to verse 16. Same chapter. And we read this.

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say and to seeds, meaning many people, but and to your seed, meaning one person who is Christ. Remember the seed can be read in two ways.

Even in the original language. Like sheep. Singular or plural. And what Paul's point is here is think of it singular. Friends, the last passage to look at is Revelation chapter 12.

Page 1245. I'll give you a moment. Revelation 12. 1245. This passage is grand.

[28 : 04] It speaks of a woman giving birth. And there's no, you know, there's no prizes for guessing who the woman is. But it also speaks of a dragon standing watch seeking to devour her child.

Why? Because the serpent will seek to strike out at the heel of the woman and her seed. But he will crush the serpent's head.

So. As he, this dragon watches, she gives birth to a male child and the child is snatched up to God and to his throne. And in verse nine, we're told that the great dragon is the same as the ancient serpent in the garden.

And he's also known as the devil or Satan. But through Jesus, he is overcome. And Jesus himself had echoed that way back in Luke chapter 10. When his disciples carried out his ministry, he says that as it happened, he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

But there is, let me say so much more that I could say. There are so many verses I could show you. But what I want you to hear is that what we celebrate this coming week is not simply a baby in a manger.

[29 : 22] No. See, what we celebrate is unexpected and unusual. And not just a stable. Unusual in the extreme.

It is the way of our God. We celebrate the birth of a head crusher this week. Of a serpent defeater. Of one who undoes Adam and Eve's sin and its consequences.

Of one who undoes your sin and my sin. Of one who defeats the evil one. Of one who reconciles us to God. Of one who is to be worshipped for all eternity.

Friends, finally and in him we can sing along with the people in Revelation 12. Now has come the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah.

Therefore rejoice you heavens. Rejoice you saints. Rejoice all the world. For the descendant of David, the seed of Abraham, the head crusher of the serpent has come.

[30 : 29] It's amazing, isn't it? We've traversed all of scripture and seen God work his purposes out. And so as you come to Christmas. Friends, please, please think that way.

Because God has been planning it this way. This is what he sees he is doing. So let's pray. Or has done, I should say. Let's pray.

Father, this week we celebrate your ways in your world. And even though we've become so used to them, when we look at them from this perspective, they are so, in one sense, unexpected and unusual.

But they are your ways. For this week, Father, we remember the birth of a head crusher and a serpent defeater. And one who undoes the impact of our sin.

And of Adam and Eve's. One who reconciles us to you. One who is to be worshipped for all eternity. And so we sing with all your saints in history.

[31 : 29] Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God. And the authority of his Messiah. And therefore we call upon ourselves and the rest of the world to rejoice.

Rejoice, you heavens. Rejoice, you saints. Rejoice, all the world. For your son has come. And we thank you for this in his name. Amen.

Amen.