

“The God who came in the flesh.” (4)

A medieval astrologer prophesied to a king that his favourite mistress would soon die. Sure enough, the woman died a short time later. The king was outraged at the astrologer, certain that his prophecy had brought about the woman's death. Word spread through the kingdom and soon got back to the astrologer. The King summoned the astrologer and commanded him, ‘Prophecy, tell me when you will die!’

The astrologer realized that the king was planning to kill him immediately, no matter what answer he gave. But then, he thought of the most brilliant answer that would not only insure his immediate future, but would keep him safe and prosperous for years to come. ‘I do not know when I will die,’ he answered finally. ‘I only know that whenever I die, the king will die three days later.’

There have been many so-called prophecies made over the centuries which have been false and we know they have been false because they didn't come true. Over the centuries many religious groups and individuals have prophesied the return of Jesus but still we know He hasn't returned because this world is still turning and evil is still rampant. But if the Bible tells us anything, it clearly tells us that Someone is coming.

But today I don't want to focus on His second and final coming, I want us to focus on His first coming. All the way through the Old Testament before Jesus came to Earth there were over 400 prophecies about Him and His work. And we barely have to open our Bibles to find the first prophecy concerning Jesus coming into the world.

After the fall of man in the beginning God curses the serpent and says 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.” The Old Testament more or less begins by telling us that the One coming would be both God and man. The text tells us that God will put enmity between Satan and the woman.

And because the writer tells us that it will be through her offspring or seed as some translations have it, this obviously refers to His human side. **Isaiah 7:14** “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah declares that He would be a child born of a virgin but that He would also be called ‘Immanuel.’

And what does Emmanuel mean? After an angel spoke with Joseph concerning Mary being pregnant, the angel declared to Joseph in **Matthew 1:23** “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

A little later in **Isaiah 9** we're told that He would be a descendant of David. **Isaiah 9:6+7** “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” And so, Isaiah the prophet tells us that not only would He would be a descendant of David but that He would also be called ‘Mighty God’.

In **Micah 5** we hear that Jesus would be a Judean but also, He would be everlasting. **Micah 5:2** “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Now we could be here for hours just going through some of these prophecies concerning Jesus but my point is this. In the whole of mankind's history, there has only ever been One man who seriously claimed to be God as well as man and **do you know who that is?** Jesus the Christ, the son of David and the Son of God.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21 “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Paul says it was God who was ‘in Christ’ reconciling the world unto Himself. And so right from the very beginning after mankind messed up in the garden and sin entered the world, God had a plan.

And that plan was to make it possible for God and mankind to be reconciled again and enjoy that fellowship which He so desires from His greatest creation. We all know why He's coming the second time, not to reconcile but to judge the world.

But why did He come in the first place? Jesus Christ came to tell us that God is 'with' us. We read it a moment ago where the angel declared to Joseph in **Matthew 1:23** "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Can we understand what God was saying? He's saying that in coming to be 'with us,' God wanted to join us in our pain and struggle. Our God doesn't sit on His throne and shout out orders at us. His love for us caused Him pain and led Him to join with us in our pain.

When we read about Jesus being pushed around, oppressed and mistreated, what we actually see is God making Himself woundable for our sakes. **John 1:1** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Colossians 2:9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

All of these texts tell us that God is screaming out to mankind, 'I want to live with you!' Jesus Christ came to show God's love in its most glorious light. The love of God for us didn't begin at Christ's coming, it begun way before that. But it is in Jesus we have the clearest and most lovely expression of His love for us.

I love that story about the bus driver who was driving a bus full of children through a country road. After a few miles up the road he realised that his brakes stopped working and as he was moving he noticed there was a gate up ahead which led into an open field, the problem was there was a young boy sitting on the gate.

And so as you can imagine he's faced with a dilemma and so in order to save a bus full of children he drove through the gate killing the young boy who was sitting on it in the process. A little while later when the all the children's parents arrived, the parents wanted to thank the driver for saving their child's lives but found him at the front of bus holding the young boy he had just killed in his arms. One parent asked another, 'I wonder whose son that is?' to which another parent replied, 'It was the driver's son'.

That's what God did loved ones, He sent His one and only Son into the world to die for all of mankind. **1 John 4:9** "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."

You see Jesus Christ came to expose the awful evil of our sin and He did this in two basic ways. **First**, He lived His life so radiantly, courageously and selflessly. Our lives by comparison are so loveless and withered and Christ assures us that sin does that to you.

Secondly, He allowed sin to show its true nature when it hounded Him to the cross. It was God's love attacking but it was man's sin doing the crucifying. And through it all, Jesus was saying to us all, 'I want you to see that sin is evil beyond description and it must be destroyed if God and man are to enjoy life together!'

In a sense Jesus Christ came to be mankind's Representative. And remember this loved ones, Jesus doesn't represent a chosen few. He came to speak for all, He came as a man so He could confess the sin of mankind. In Him, mankind has found a Man who can fully understand God's view of sin. In Him, mankind has found a Man who can approach a holy God on their behalf as their Mediator. **1 Timothy 2:4+5** "Who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."

Years ago I remember seeing the news reports of a coal mining accident in the **Alleghany Mountains**. Many miners escaped with their lives, but three men were still trapped somewhere deep within the earth's crust. Whether they were dead or alive, no one knew. What made the accident even more threatening to life was the presence of intense heat and noxious gases within the mine itself. If the men were not crushed by the rock, they well could have been asphyxiated by the fumes or killed by the heat.

Two days went by before a search expedition was allowed to even enter the mine because of the heat and fumes. Even then, there was great danger in store for anyone who would dare descend into what could well be a deep, black, grave.

I don't remember what happened to those three men. All I remember is a brief interview conducted with one of the members of the search party as he was preparing to enter the mine. A reporter asked him if he knew of the noxious gases and the extreme danger of the mine. The man said, 'Yes.' 'And you are still going down?' And the man said, 'Those men may still be alive.' Without another word of explanation, he put on his gas mask, climbed into the elevator, and descended into the black inferno of the mine. He put his life on the line that others might live.

Loved ones, that is what Christ done, Jesus Christ came to die to bear the sin of mankind. He put His life on the cross so that you and I might live. You know we have laws in this country which are good but there are times when people just smile at the law and mock the law. And there are even times in our justice system where people seem to escape the law and their crimes go unpunished. But God's justice system doesn't have any loopholes, and mankind can't escape the punishment for their crimes. We can't escape the penalty of our sins unless Someone comes to rescue us.

Which then brings the question, how then can God acquit sinners without mocking His law? How can God expect us to respect His law if, by 'just letting sinners off', He doesn't respect it Himself? Well loved ones that's why Christ came in the first place.

Romans 3:24-26 "All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

Can any of us seriously look at the cross and think God doesn't take sin seriously? The death of Christ on the cross shows us that forgiving sinners isn't easy, not even for God. God so respects His law that He won't offer a cheap and easy forgiveness that would make a mockery of it. He won't despise His law, but God loves sinners and pays the price so He can offer a just forgiveness to all of mankind.

And even after we become Christians and we mess up, He still offers us a way to be forgiven for those sins. 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." This is the second law of forgiveness and notice it's based on God's faithfulness to forgive us our sins not on our ability to forgive.

A little boy went to the Washington Monument and noticed a guard standing by it. The little boy looked up at the guard and said, 'I want to buy it.' The guard stooped down and says, 'How much do you have?' The boy reached into his pocket and pulled out 25 cents. The guard said, 'That's not enough.' The boy replied, 'I thought you would say that.' So he pulled out nine cents more.

The guard looked down at the boy and said, 'You need to understand three things. First, 34 cents is not enough, 34 million dollars is not enough to buy the Washington Monument. Second, the Washington Monument is not for sale. And third, if you are an American citizen, the Washington Monument already belongs to you.'

Loved ones, we really need to understand three things about forgiveness. First, we cannot earn it. Second, it is not for sale. And third, if we accept Christ, we already have it. 1 Peter 2:24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

Now just as a side note many religious people who believe in miraculous healing today often quote this verse to prove that Jesus wants us all to be physically healthy. But loved ones, when Peter who is quoting from Isaiah 53:5 he is not teaching that we will be healed of our ailments. He's teaching that our greatest ailment in sin and it is sin that we will be cured of through Jesus suffering on the cross.

Jesus came to die for us and He came to call us to trustful and holy living. The only Man who knows sin, in all its awful evil is the Man, Jesus Christ. And when we trust in the crucified Christ, sin comes to mean to him what it means to Christ. This is part of what the New Testament means by 'repentance'.

That's why a follower of Christ cannot choose a sinful lifestyle or think of sin in a casual way. Now there are some people out there who have a strange view of Christ's dying for them. They feel that somehow the moral law was set aside or at least weakened so they could be forgiven. But loved ones, it's the very reverse that is true.

It's because God wouldn't weaken or set aside the demands of His holy law that Christ had to die for our pardon. His cross doesn't stand as a symbol that God despised His holy law, it stands as a reminder that God honours that holy law. And so not only did He come to tell us that He want us to live holy lives which please Him but Jesus Christ came to give us hope.

If our hope for the future is based on our health, [what do we do when serious illness comes?](#) If it's resting on our wisdom, [what do we do when old age weakens our intellect?](#) If we're relying on our wealth, [where are we when the economy stumbles or our business collapses?](#) If our hope depends on our children, [where do we turn if our children turn from us or if they have no hope for themselves?](#) If we hope on the basis of society's progress, [how will we feel when the mass exploitation and oppression going on in the world gets worse and worse and crime figures continue to spiral?](#)

Loved ones the good news is that Christ has met and conquered all that man fears. He met our sin and defeated it, He met suffering and made it serve His purposes, He met death and killed it. All of this He achieved at the cross, [why?](#) Because He loves us so much, He wanted to give His greatest creation hope. Most people understand hope as some form wishful thinking. And we hear people saying these things all of the time. ['Oh, I hope something will happen.'](#) ['Oh, I hope they will marry me.'](#) ['Oh, I hope I get that job.'](#)

That's not Biblical hope, the Biblical definition of [hope](#) is ['confident expectation.'](#) Hope is a firm assurance regarding things that are unclear and unknown. [Romans 8:24+25](#) ["For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."](#)

[Hebrews 11:1](#) ["Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."](#)

Hope is not wishful thinking, hope is ['confident expectation.'](#) [There's a tombstone in England with this written on it, 'Gone away with a Friend!'](#) You see the Christian's hope is firmly grounded in God and Christ, so change and decay, threats and fears have no power to destroy it. [1 Timothy 1:1](#) ["Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope."](#)

[1 Timothy 4:10](#) ["That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially of those who believe."](#)

Now for many, the thing that worries them the most is the presence of evil in their own lives. They've earnestly fought against it but have no reason to believe they'll win against it. But Christ comes promising us that not only will we win against the penalty of sin, if we submit our lives to Him, we'll finally win against the power of sin too.

Read with me what the apostle Paul declared to the church in Thessalonica. [1 Thessalonians 5:23+24](#) ["May God himself, the God of peace, make you holy through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."](#) I've emphasised the last sentence because God's faithfulness is the basis for the Christian's confident hope of victory over sin. And remember this church, the victory is not only over the penalty of sin, we also beat its power too.

Now let me ask you, [do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for your sins and He has given us the power to beat any sin in our lives?](#)

[There is an old story that recalls how Satan once summoned his top demonic aides to plan a strategy against the church of Jesus Christ. Satan stood at the blackboard lecturing and illustrating the latest strategies in demonic warfare. At the end of this session Satan said, 'Now get out there and give your best possible effort to keep believers from winning the lost.' As the demonic hierarchy headed for the door, Satan hollered out, 'By the way, be careful, if those Christians ever begin to really believe and act on what they have in the word of God, then hell help us all, heaven's going to break loose!'](#)

Loved ones [aren't you glad that Jesus came?](#)

I one for one wouldn't know what my life would be like if He didn't come. And for those of you who know my past, I'm sure you would agree with me that I'm not even sure if I would be alive today if Jesus hadn't come. But He did come and one day the Bible says He will come again, not to offer forgiveness or salvation but to bring judgment on the world.

Acts 17:30+31 "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

Let me encourage you today to seriously think about Jesus and why He came to the earth in the first place. He came because He loves you, He came because He longs to forgive you, and He came because He desperately desires to have a relationship with you. And more importantly, He came because He doesn't want anyone to perish.