

## **Subversive Christmas**

Luke 1:26-35, 46-55

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In C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the realm of Narnia is cursed by the White Witch with perpetual winter. But as the lion Aslan, the character who represents Jesus, approaches, the snow begins to melt. This is a sign that the curse has been lifted and the reversal of winter is underway. Likewise the birth of Jesus marks the beginning of the end for this current world order. God has begun the work of restoring the corrupt broken world and reversing the curse of sin. The incarnation of Christ initiates the process of making all things new.

In Luke 1:32-33 the angel tells Mary that God is finally making good on His promise to king David. In 2 Samuel 7:11-16, God promised to establish the house of David and that his descendant would sit on the throne forever. Despite all the turmoil in David's family caused by his failures, God would keep His promise. Even when Solomon failed and the united monarchy was divided, conquered, and the children of Israel were carried off and humiliated in foreign lands. Yet even in exile, they still held on to His promise, because they knew that God's promise wasn't dependent on human effort, and that He would act on it no matter what.

But God's promise hasn't yet been completely fulfilled. Like the Israelites, we still live in a world under the curse of sin. Wickedness, violence, hatred, oppression, turmoil, and discord still run rampant. While we wait for the final consummation of God's kingdom, at least two dozen wars still rage around the world at the present time. The cycle of human rebellion still continues, and there's nothing new under the sun. No technology or psychoanalysis can fix the condition of the humanity. We find it to be a struggle just to get through Christmas without any tension or fighting. Thus now we must hold to God's promise as Israel did.

Yet things have started moving. The hand of God has initiated the reversal of sin in this world. Christmas reminds us that God is on the move, that the supreme God of the universe is not against us, but for us. The virgin birth is a sign that God is the one who took action to change things (vv. 34-35, 46-55), and that He won't stop what He started. God entered the world in the person of His Son, incarnated by the power of the Holy Spirit, the same power through which He created the world. The phrase "from now on" in verse 48 is used in many places in Luke and Acts, and signifies the subversion of the present age. This idea is clearly stated in verses 52-53. The way things operate in this world will be turned upside down. This idea is also stated in

Matthew 5:3-10. The wicked and the proud who prosper and reign in this present age will be brought low, and the weak and humble who trust in Jesus will inherit His kingdom in the age to come. On that day there will be no sickness and death. Peace will reign on earth and everyone in Christ will live in perfect harmony forever. Isaiah 11:6-9 paints a picture of what things will be like. The curse of sin will be reversed, and God won't stop until it's accomplished. On Christmas we celebrate the work God began through Jesus Christ, and the hope of its completion.

What is the implication for us today? The work God began is also going on in us, and we have been given the hope of its fulfillment. But also we are invited here to turn from our idols and toward God in genuine worship. In his narrative of the birth of Jesus, Luke includes many details about how people worshipped God. Mary worships in 1:46-55, Zechariah in 1:68-79, the heavenly hosts in 2:13-14, the shepherds in 2:20, and Simeon in 2:29-32. Luke calls us to allow the power of the gospel to substitute our idols for the true God in genuine worship. Idols are whatever our heart clings to, that which enslaves us, that which claims the loyalty that belongs to the one true God alone. The Bible states that those who worship idols become blind, deaf, mute, and lame, just like the idols they worship (Psalm 115:2-8, 135:15-18, Isaiah 2:8-9, 6:9-10). It's no coincidence that Jesus came healing the blind, deaf, mute, and lame. He came to turn the hearts of the people back to God, to restore spiritual life and reverse the effects of idol worship. And He does the same for us. For those who worship money, pleasure, and power, and whose hearts have become enslaved and deformed by their corrupting influence, Jesus offers restoration. Turn from worshipping your idols, whether it be your ambitions, dreams, family, or possessions, and turn to God in genuine worship. When we worship Him in Christ, we become like Him in righteousness. God has started the work of transforming and reversing the effects of sin both in the world and in us. And we have the guarantee that this work won't stop until what has been secured for us is brought to completion. Jesus is our hope, our future, our Savior, and our God.