



The title of this devotion may mislead you into believing that this is a story of Mary and Joseph, of the three Magi, and of the shepherds *"keeping watch over their flocks by night;"* and though the story bears a direct link to that grand event, it is based in a period far removed in years – around 2000 BC!

The Ancient Christmas Promise begins with a childless woman being told by an Angel of God that she will bear a child – even though the woman was barren! When she objects such a feat would be impossible, just as did the Virgin Mary, the Angel asks, *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?* (Gen 18:14) This answer is so very much like the answer the Angel Gabriel gave to Mary when she, too, questioned the possibility of a virgin bearing a child: *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* (Luke 1:37)

Of course, you have discovered I am speaking Sarah, Abraham's wife. But the fullness of God's purpose in providing an example and shadow of His only Begotten Son in the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac is beyond question. In fact, it is confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ!

When we consider the fullness of intrigue and scintillating 'coincidences' of the two accounts, we are drawn into wondrous awe of God's perfect hand and operation in history. We have now endured two thousand years from the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ at Bethlehem. Looking back over that misty period of history, the books are literally filled with wars, diseases, plagues, and other catastrophes. But we see sprinkled across those same annals of history the testimonies of great men and women of God who served to awaken the Church to the clarion call of God to obedience and faith. Some were great military and political leaders who staunchly resisted the spread of Islam into Europe and Russia. Some were exiled from a wealthy and powerful church for simply preaching the truth. Others were burned at the stake rather than to recant that truth of the Gospels.

But let us travel back to the beginning of that two thousand-year-period since the coming of Christ. How could such a momentous event occur while men slept? Why were we not alerted to His Coming which served to divide all Eternity in two parts – Before, and After? Well, we WERE so informed of the coming event in amazing

abundance. Not only did the prophets tell us outright, but we have amazing examples from the Law and the Prophets (of which Jesus remarked) as our Lamp of Understanding. We have the prophetic example of our ancient parents in Eden when sin was discovered in their rebellious hearts: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* (Gen 3:15) This is a direct prophecy of the role of the coming Messiah in Christ. But more than words, God gave us a real, visible example for the necessity of a Redeemer. ²¹ *Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.* (Gen 3:21) When I behold the natural beauty of the living creatures God has made, I am bewildered that man could so thoughtlessly disregard the commandment to have dominion over them in kindness and in love for that which God has made.

But Adam's sin resulted in the first death of a living creature that God had created to be a joy to man on earth. But more, the sin of Adam has resulted in EVERY death upon the earth since. Imagine the compassionate heart of God being compelled by love of men to take the life of a beautiful and innocent animal to provide cover for the sin and nakedness of Adam and Eve! Please consider with deep sensitivity the sorrow God felt in taking that life, and more, how it reflected the sacrifice of another beloved Life near and dear to the Father at Calvary's brooding brow! The first man, Adam, was a 'living' soul; but the last Adam was a 'quickenning spirit" (Life Giver). *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.* (1 Cor 15:22-23) Christ is the first man of the New Creation having redeemed us with His own blood.

As time endured through the ages, man became so vile and depraved that God saw every imagination of his heart was of evil. In His foreordained will and knowledge, God is never surprised at the rebellious nature innate to the heart of man. But He uses history itself to teach us of our own total dependence upon Him. God sent the Deluge to destroy all living upon the face of the earth except for those eight souls, and creatures, aboard the Ark of Noah. Now man will come to know that he cannot be ruled by his private desires – he requires law for his own wellbeing.

Enter a pagan fellow of Ur of the Chaldees named Abram. Abram did not prepare in any seminary to be accounted worthy of the calling of God. He may have never even considered the God called Yahweh. But when God called Abram to leave house and home in Ur and travel to an unknown place, Abram followed, just as did Andrew, Peter, James, John, and Matthew without uttering a question or an objection. That, my friends, is the calling of God – not of MAN! Abram, like the rest of us, was not a perfect man; and he often suffered for his shortcomings. But Abram believed God and was persistent in that faith. He was quite easily induced by Sarah to have a child by way of an ungodly union with Hagar. The fruit of that union of convenience (Ishmael) has led to a singular INCONVENIENCE for modern civilization by way of the Moslem horde. But God had promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations – so many as the sand of the sea. Abraham, by faith, believed that Promise without the slightest doubt. Why? Because it was the Word of God to Abraham! Would it not give great peace and blessing to the modern Christian if he so believed God as did Abraham?

Well, God often comes to us as a breeze upon silken curtains. As Abraham was sitting in his tent door one day upon the Plains of Mamre, Three Angels appeared walking out of the desert wilderness. The drama of the moment may not arise to that of the very well-rehearsed smoke and mirrors of a Joel Osteen 'celebration' but the difference was its authenticity. Abraham recognized these Three as divine, else he would never have knelt before them. ² *And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,* ³ *And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away,*

I pray thee, from thy servant. (Gen 18:1-3) Please note the Lord did not feel it necessary to introduce Himself to Abraham since a devout and Godly man will recognize the Lord when he hears His voice, as well as know the false voices of the wicked.

Among other important matters, one of the Angels made the Promise of a child for Sarah. Sarah is 90 years old. It is physically impossible for a 90 year-old woman to conceive and bear a child. Sarah KNEW this as well. She laughed at such a preposterous proposition. But the Angel reprimanded her. A miraculous conception was promised to Sarah just as it was to Mary. The child that Sarah would have (Isaac) would be the example of that Promised Seed of Abraham. The manner of conception is not stated in Scripture, but needless to say, the child was given as promised, and Isaac became the pride and joy of Father Abraham. He was the only begotten child of Abraham because he was the only legitimately granted child of Abraham. Years passed and the lad grew both in stature and in the love and admiration of the father.

When Isaac grew to be a young boy of perhaps twelve years age, a strange and seemingly tragic event occurred. God spoke to Abraham and said: *Abraham, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* (Gen 22:2) How sorrowful these words may have sounded on the ears of a father who was obsessed with love for his son. But, remember, Abraham trusted God. The command of God in this case must have sounded very similar to that first time Abraham had heard the voice of God in Ur. *Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.* (Gen 12:1) What had been Abram's response in that olden day? *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him.* (Gen 12:4) What is Abraham's response now that he is told to sacrifice his only son? *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.* (Gen 22:3) One of the amazing characteristics of Abraham was his unquestioning faith and obedience to the Lord.

As Abraham traveled three days on the journey, he lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah. Abraham instantly knew this was the place. It was the same mount upon which the Temple at Jerusalem stands and the same upon which – two thousand years later – our Lord was sacrificed. You know already the rest of the story: *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?* (Gen 22:6-7) Just as our Lord bore on His shoulders the wood for His sacrifice, so did Isaac (being a type and figure of Christ) bear the wood for his sacrifice on his shoulders. To his child-like and heart-breaking inquiry, Abraham replied: *My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.* (Gen 22:8) Yes, indeed! God certainly would provide Himself to be the Lamb of sacrifice. You can only get the depth of this meaning in the Received Text Bibles. The new marvels of deception will not render it. So God would not require the sacrifice of any man's son for sin, but only His own only Begotten and Beloved Son.

That event was two thousand years BEFORE Christ. We live in the age two thousand years AFTER. Time has mirrored itself in a marvelous way to our generation. God is calling His own Abrahams today.

Will you hear?

Can you see the Christmas story acted out two thousand years before the actual event?