

Remnant Life Church
December 16, 2018
Twas the Night Before the First Christmas
Galatians 4:1-7

Few written works revolving around Christmas are as familiar as the poem *The Night Before Christmas*

- Credit for the writing of the poem is generally given to Clement Clark Moore
- Professor of Oriental and Greek Literature as well as Biblical Learning
- General Theological Seminary in NY City
- Born just after American independence in 1779
- First published the poem anonymously in 1823 under the title *A Visit from St. Nicholas*
- His description writing was what, more than anything else, gave us the visual image of Santa Clause used today

Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there...

The night before Christmas, according to the lines of this poem was...

- Quiet and peaceful
- The family is safe and warm in their beds
- Everyone is dreaming sweet and wonderful things
- Outside it was cold, brightly lit from the new-fallen snow, and the idyllic Christmas setting

We know, of course, that it would be very difficult to use these same words about the world today

I want to look briefly this morning what it was like the night before that first Christmas over 2000 years ago

- What kind of a world was Jesus born into?

The Bible describes the condition of the world at that time:

1. A curse infested the earth
 - a. When Adam and Eve chose rebellion over obedience to God, the Bible says God placed a curse on the earth – **Gen 3**
 - b. All 3 participants in the rebellion suffered the consequences
 - i. The serpent (satan) was cursed above all animals doomed to slither on the ground from that moment on
 - ii. Eve had childbearing become a painful and difficult ordeal
 - iii. Adam had the ground cursed under him so that to get anything done required struggle and great effort

- c. The curse of sin on the earth brought suffering, toil, difficult, trouble, pain, conflict, and eventually death to all living things.
 - d. It continued from that day and continues to this day – that first night before Christmas a curse infested the earth
2. Heaven was silent
- a. Throughout the history of man, prophets came and lived and brought the word of God from heaven
 - b. Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obediah, Daniel, Zechariah, and Malachi
 - i. With the writing of the prophet Malachi's words, the last of the OT, there was silence
 - ii. For 400 years God did not speak to the people
 - iii. Within those 4 centuries, people still came to the temples and synagogues, but there was no new revelation
 - c. The heavens remained silent until an angel appeared first to the priest Zechariah, then to Mary and some shepherds and then to the Maji with a great announcement
 - d. But the night before Jesus was born there had been nothing
3. Men were looking for a savior
- a. Back in the garden when Adam and Eve sinned God punished them but that was not the only thing He did
 - b. You see, in God's holiness He had to deal with the sin
 - c. But it did not change His love for us (like parents punishing their children) – **John 3:16**
 - i. He also gave a promise
 - ii. One that the prophets would repeat to the nation of Israel time and time again
 - d. Man had been looking in different ways and with different motives
 - i. Some were selfish
 - ii. Some wanted revenge hoping for a military leader
 - iii. Others were even sincere
 - e. But there was a Savior redeemer coming!
 - 1. God would not leave His creation under the curse
 - 2. Sin and death would not win!
 - ii. And He would restore our relationship to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ
4. The clock in heaven was ticking
- a. **READ – Gal 4:1-7**
 - b. 'The fullness of time' means when everything was ready
 - i. It has been asked why did God not provide redemption at the time of the sin?
 - ii. Then we may also ask what delayed the art of printing language keeping man in great ignorance for so long?
 - iii. What delayed the discoveries of medicine to cure diseases that killed millions of people?

- iv. What delayed any aspect of life that was for the comfort, intelligence, and salvation of man?
- c. Simply put, it was at God's perfect time that will remain unknown to us...

But consider this...

- i. It was the time following the OT prophecies that would each be fulfilled by Jesus demonstrating providence and perfection of God
- ii. It was after a time of great effort to change the course of man from darkness to light
 - 1. Through great art and literature
 - 2. Specifically, the Greeks and the Romans who were looked on as the two great societies of the world
 - 3. But they failed, and man was sinking deeper into the pit of their own creation
- iii. It was a time when the world was in relative peace
 - 1. In the time of the Roman empire, Janus was a pagan Roman god of boundaries with two faces
 - 2. The temple of Janus was only closed in Rome during times of peace and remained open in times of war
 - 3. During times of peace, the boundaries between nations were much more open and available meaning communication was much easier
 - a. What better time in history for a new relationship with God to come into the world
 - b. The disciples and followers of Jesus would be able to move much more freely taking the message to the world
 - c. Because of this freedom, Greek (the language of the NT) was the most widely spoken language of the day
- iv. When God Himself, in His perfect wisdom, was ready...the time came

This was the world the day BEFORE Jesus was born

You see, what happened following the night of the first Christmas eve, meant the world would never be the same again!

- A. Jesus' birth, life, and death put an end to the curse that had infested the earth
 - a. Oh' there is still sin present
 - b. The snake still slithers, childbirth is still difficult, and man must toil to survive in the world
 - c. But unlike the time before Jesus now there is an end in sight because the eternity of the curse in the garden has been lifted
 - d. Soon, all of God's creation will be returned to the splendor of God's perfection
- B. Jesus' arrival shattered the silence from heaven
 - a. Listen to the very first two verses written by the author of Hebrews
 - b. *Heb 1:1-2a - God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

- c. They had been watching for Jesus, listening for the voice of God for over 400 years and yet had seen and heard nothing
 - d. The birth that morning was a trumpet blast to all creation that the promise of God was being fulfilled!
- C. The birth of Jesus came at the perfect moment
- a. Everything God does is perfect
 - b. Man is discovering more and more every year the impossible intricacies and amazing precision of the human body
 - c. Seeing the simplistic perfection and yet, at the same time, the overwhelming complexities of the most basic cells that give us life
 - d. God is perfect and that includes the time when He sent His Son to be our Savior

Everything changed when Jesus was born!

- His birth made all things possible
- The downtrodden would receive good news
- The poor would be cared for
- The brokenhearted encouraged
- The captive set free
- The blind would see

Of course, to the vast majority of the world, this all went unnoticed

- He was born where animals slept, not the chambers of a palace
- It was a fairly obscure town not the center of the Roman capital
- He was not welcomed by dignitaries, the wealthy, or royalty but by ignorant shepherds and foreign travelers

But the low-key nature of His birth did not in any way diminish the world-altering power of what took place that first night

It was an unknown poet who captures, I believe, the wonderous prospects of what that first night meant:

*That night when in Judean skies; The great star dispensed its light,
A blind man moved in his sleep; And dreamed that he had sight.
That night when shepherds heard the song; Of hosts angelic choiring near.
A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell; And dreamed that he could hear.
That night when o'er the new-born babe; The tender Mary rose to lean,
A loathsome leper smiled in sleep; And dreamed that he was clean.
That night when in the manger lay; The Sanctified who came to save,
A man moved in the sleep of death; And dreamed there was no grave.*