

A DIFFERENT SPIRIT 1420

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This is a time of year when people are much more conscious of Jesus than at other times of the year.
 - 1. Many churches conduct special Christmas services, celebrating the birth of Jesus.
 - 2. This is despite the fact that we do not know Jesus' birthday. Furthermore, He did not command His disciples to observe it.
 - B. Nevertheless, we do rejoice at Jesus' birth.
 - 1. It is proof of that great passage in John's prologue in which John declares that "the Word became flesh." **Jn.1:14**
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John 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- 2. But the reason we rejoice stretches all the way back to the very beginning revealed in Genesis.

II. SIN RESULTED IN A LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

- A. When God created, everything was created perfectly.
 - 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Gen.1:1
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Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

2. But He didn't stop there. The account in Genesis 1 reveals how He made light and darkness, an expanse called Heaven, plants and trees that bore fruit after their kind. Day and night, sun and moon, living creatures swarming in the waters and flying in the heavens and then creeping on the earth.
 3. And finally, as a culmination of it all, God made man – male and female. And then He rested on the seventh day – not because He was tired, but to indicate that He had succeeded – and that all was perfect. **Gen.2:1-3**
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Genesis 2:1–3 (ESV)

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

B. Chapter two continues.

1. It provides a more detailed account of man's creation. It tells us that God planted a garden in Eden and that is where He put man.
 2. He provided food and in the middle of the garden was a tree of life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen.2:9
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Genesis 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3. God put the man in the garden. He wanted him to **work it** and **keep it.** **Gen.2:15**
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Genesis 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

4. Then He gave a command – a rule, or regulation. He told the man he could eat of every tree in the garden – except for one. And He told him that if he ate of that one tree, he would **surely die.** **Gen.2:16-17**
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Genesis 2:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

5. Then God created woman – because it was not fit for man to be alone – a perfect partner for this man. And He told them that they were to form a union between them – we call it marriage. **Gen.2:23-24**
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Genesis 2:23–24 (ESV)

²³Then the man said,
“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

C. And then comes chapter 3.

1. We are told at the outset of the chapter that there is a crafty serpent in the garden.
 2. And so we may not be so surprised when that crafty serpent convinces this woman to eat of the one tree that God said not to eat from.
 3. It takes some convincing, but she does it.
 - a. He makes God seem restrictive – he had God not allowing them to eat of any tree in the garden.
 - b. Then He made God fickle, telling this woman that she would not die – as God promised. Instead, He just did not want anyone else to be like Him, knowing good and evil. **Gen.3:4-5**
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Genesis 3:4–5 (ESV)

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

- c. But of course, she takes the bait. She was hungry and the fruit looked really good and she wanted to be wiser than she was.
- d. And then she gave some to her husband. He should have known better. Did he just watch her eat it? Their eyes were opened and they clothed themselves.
- e. God approached them and they hid – as if we can hide from God. He asked them, “Where are you?” And as so often, God wasn’t asking for His own knowledge, but to cause this man and woman to think through their own actions.

4. Predictably, the man blamed the woman and the woman said she had been deceived by the serpent.
 5. And the result was that God drove them out of the garden and away from His presence.
- D. Now we all know this story. Someone who hears it for the first time might react to it by asking, “Why was it such a big deal to eat this fruit? Why did God make them leave the garden just because they bent the rules a little bit?”
1. We can answer that question by going back to chapter 1. When God made man, note that we are told that He made him (them) “in His image.”
 2. In other words, there was a part of him (and her) that was like God.
 - a. Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4 that “God is a spirit” and that we must worship him “in spirit and in truth.”
 - b. Adam and Eve were not robots. They were made both physically and spiritually alive by the spirit that God placed within them.
 3. That’s a big deal. Adam and Eve were given physical bodies but those bodies were possessed and directed by the spirit that was within them.
 - a. That spirit possessed a will. They could determine what they wanted to do.
 - b. It also possessed intellect. The capacity to think and reason and reflect.
 - c. There were emotions, what we sometimes think of as the heart. Not they physical organ, but feelings like love and hate and sadness and joy.

- d. And God's intention was for them to use the spirit they had been given to be like Him – not because they were forced to do so, but because they could choose to do so.
 4. But that disobedience brought all that to an end. They were distanced from God and removed from the garden.
 5. The rest of the story - as far as sin – doesn't get better – it gets worse.
 - a. Others sinned and sin grew worse, to the point that God destroyed all human civilization through a flood, except for Noah and his family.
 - b. But that didn't solve the sin problem. In fact, we can use a passage in Ephesians to summarize the problem that sin became. Paul wrote in **Eph.2:1-2**:
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Ephesians 2:1–2 (ESV)

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

- 1) These people had sinned.
- 2) Their sin resulted in spiritual death.
- 3) They had been deceived – following a system that was opposed to and in rebellion against God.
- 4) Note he says that they followed the prince of the power of the air. That's the serpent. That is Satan.

- 5) And he wrote that this is the spirit – there’s that word again – that now works in the sons of disobedience.
- c. In other words, the world had worked its magic on them, and they were now in bondage to Satan. They were his captives.
- 6. What a terrible place that is to be. Captivated by sin, estranged from God. No hope whatsoever. Those are themes Paul pursues in the book of Ephesians.
- E. But there is good news. There is a solution. But before we consider the solution, let’s make one more pass over this creation story.

III. EACH OF US HAS REPEATED THE CREATION STORY.

- A. Think with me – just for a minute – about that creation story. Created with a sinless spirit, placed in a perfect environment, then deceived by sin.
- B. We understand that story because we have all been there. Each one of us. We know exactly what this is like.
 - 1. We were born into this world and God gave us a spirit.
 - a. We have a will. We determine what we want to do.
 - b. We have a mind with an intellect. We can learn. We can listen. We can communicate with other human beings.
 - c. We have emotions. Some of us are more emotional than others, but we know what it is to laugh or to cry. To get angry or to be sad.
 - d. And we have a conscience. We feel bad if we don’t do what we thought we should.

We feel good if we do what we thought we ought to do.

- e. Our spirit is not our body. Our spirit controls our body. It is what is inside of us. Our spirit is who we are.
 - f. Paul writes about the outer self (the body) and the inner self (the spirit) in 2 Cor.4:16.
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2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

- 2. But just like Eve, we have been deceived. We are raised in a world that is corrupt and defiled from sin. We are exposed to it every day and at every hour.
 - a. Satan deceives us just like he deceived Eve. He wants to captivate us and have us as a part of his kingdom – a kingdom of darkness.
 - b. He has used the same subtlety that he did in the garden. John describes it as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. **1 Jn.2:15-17**
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1 John 2:15–17 (ESV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

- c. And, as I said, the problem is that sin captivates us. Jesus said that if we practice sin, we are a **slave** to it. **Jn.8:34**
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John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

3. Go back to Eph.2:1-2. When Paul writes this passage to the Ephesians, he encompasses all of us. **Eph.2:1-2**
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Ephesians 2:1–2 (ESV)

² And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

- a. I was dead in trespass and sin.
 - b. I once walked in these things.
 - c. I followed the course of the world. I was seduced by its thinking, its reasoning, its emotions, its desires.
 - d. I doing so, I followed the prince of the power of the air.
 - e. I was a son of disobedience.
4. Paul describes it a little further in ch.4:17-19.
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Ephesians 4:17–19 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They

have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

- a. They **don't know** – they are (willfully) **ignorant**.
 - b. They **don't care** (that they don't know).
 - c. If they stay in that state, that is what they become.
- C. But here is the **good news** – we don't have to stay enslaved. God can **renew our spirits**.
1. We all know that the gospel has the power to change and **transform** us.
 2. It does this from the **inside out**. It starts with the "**spirit**" that is in us.
 3. First, God offers us **forgiveness** through His Son.
 4. This is nothing we can accomplish by ourselves.
 - a. Paul describes it as being saved by grace through faith. **Eph.2:4-10**
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Ephesians 2:4–10 (ESV)

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good

works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- b. He made us alive together with Christ. Instead of death and separation, we have spiritual life through Him.
 - c. This is only the beginning. In the ages to come there are innumerable blessings He will “show” us.
 - d. We did not accomplish this – He did. We are saved by His grace, but faith is required. Our faith and its response does not earn us anything – it is God’s gift.
5. But there is a goal in mind. God has (re)created us for good works. We are to walk in them.
- D. Starting in chapter 4, Paul outlines those works in which God wants us to walk. We will focus on how the process takes place.
- 1. It starts on the **inside** and works **outside**.
Eph.4:20-24
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Ephesians 4:20-24

[20] But that is not the way you learned Christ!—[21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- 2. Paul spells out the process.
 - a. We “**learn**” Christ. We hear and are taught. Jesus left us a perfect example.

- b. We **put off the old man** that has been corrupted. We quit thinking like him. We quit acting like him.
 - c. Our spirits are **renewed**. That results in “putting on” the new man. To the extent that we renew our minds, we put on the new man.
3. This new man is **created after the likeness of God**. There is true righteousness (not false) and there is holiness.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. It is good for us to think of Jesus. His birth, His life and His death and resurrection.
- B. Not just at this time of year, but throughout the year.