

ADVENT

FORETOLD & FULFILLED



REENCHANTING
CHRISTMAS

PAUL GOULD, CULTURAL APOLOGETICS

“The ancients inhabited a world drastically different from ours.

Populated with gods and goddesses, nymphs and dryads, monsters and spirits, heroes and lawgivers, their world was not tame or dull. Life was a colorful adventure, a battle between opposing forces. The world was supernaturally imbued with personalities and powers. At any moment, you might be in the presence of a god. Divine judgment for sins was a constant worry. The human experience of the world was one of mystery, enchantment, and sacredness. Not so today. ...

As the world was emptied of the divine, space and time were drained of significance. Space is viewed today as nothing more than an empty container for particles in motion. The heavens

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are viewed by many as 'chiefly, a vast empty space with a humanoid God and a few angels rattling around in it, while several billion human beings crawl through the tiny cosmic interval of human history on an oversized clod of dirt circling an insignificant star.' God or the gods, if they exist at all, are silent and distant. Time is divested of meaning and viewed as a commodity greedily dispensed only if a perceived benefit, usually a personal pleasure or accomplishment, ensues. It is little wonder that modern man, in such a universe, has aptly been described as an 'empty self.' ...Emptied of transcendence, the human experience of the world fades to grey. Moral distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, are

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erased, and aesthetic evaluations of what is beautiful and what is horrid begin to blur. Everything once held dear and valued as sacred is now up for grabs. This even extends to the very concepts of goodness, truth, and beauty themselves.

Without an underlying vision of the world as magical or mysterious, life is utterly mundane. The divine fabric that holds together the warp and woof of reality is severed: ‘When mankind no longer lives spontaneously turned toward God or the supersensible world—when, to echo the words of Yeats, the ladder is gone by which we would climb to a higher reality—
[we all] must stand face to face with a flat and inexplicable world.’”

EXODUS 20:18-21, NIV

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

CARMEN JOY IMES, BEARING GOD'S NAME

“The hot spot of Yahweh’s presence was hidden in the innermost chamber of the tabernacle, guarded by the outer tent, which only the priests could enter. The entrance to the holy place was further protected by an outer boundary of curtains with an entrance near the altar. No toddler could accidentally wander into sacred space and tip over the menorah with its seven burning lamps. No sin-stained Israelite would suffer a violent death by getting too close to God’s holy

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presence. The outer boundary of the tabernacle kept them from danger while enabling them to live in close proximity. The layout of the tabernacle allows them to gaze at Yahweh's glory from a safe distance and have the assurance of his attentive presence without constant fear of ritual violation. Just like the law, the tabernacle offers grace by putting up protective fences.”

ISAIAH 7:14, NIV

“The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

MATTHEW 1:18-22, NIV

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and

MATTHEW 1:18-22, NIV

said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

ISAIAH 41:9-10, NIV

“I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

C.S. LEWIS, MERE CHRISTIANITY

“God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there.”



The Good News

BRIAN ZAHND, MY PROBLEM WITH THE BIBLE

“I have a problem with the Bible. Here’s my problem... I’m an ancient Egyptian. I’m a comfortable Babylonian. I’m a Roman in his villa. That’s my problem. See, I’m trying to read the Bible for all it’s worth, but I’m not a Hebrew slave suffering in Egypt. I’m not a conquered Judean deported to Babylon. I’m not a first century Jew living under Roman occupation. I’m a citizen of a superpower. I was born among the conquerors. I live in the empire. But I want to read the Bible and think it’s

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talking to me. This is a problem. One of the most remarkable things about the Bible is that in it we find the narrative told from the perspective of the poor, the oppressed, the enslaved, the conquered, the occupied, the defeated. This is what makes it prophetic. We know that history is written by the winners. This is true—except in the case of the Bible it's the opposite! This is the subversive genius of the Hebrew prophets. They wrote from a bottom-up perspective.”



The Good News

Mystery & Wonder

ST. ALPHONSE DE LIGUORI

“My Jesus, supreme and true God! What has drawn Thee from heaven to be born in a cold stable, if not the love which Thou bearest us men? What has allured thee from the bosom of Thy Father, to place Thee in a hard manger? What has brought Thee from Thy throne above the stars to lay Thee down on a little straw? What has led Thee from the midst of the nine choirs of angels, to set Thee between two animals? Thou, who inflamest the seraphim with holy fire, are now shivering with

ST. ALPHONSE DE LIGUORI

cold in this stable! Thou, who settest the stars in the sky in motion, canst not now move unless others carry Thee in their arms! Thou, who givest men and beasts their food, has need now of a little milk to sustain Thy life! Thou, who art the joy of heaven, dost now whimper and cry in suffering! Tell me, who has reduced Thee to such misery? 'Love has done it,' says Saint Bernard. The love which Thou bearest us men has brought all this on Thee."

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18, NIV

We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.



The Good News

Mystery & Wonder

Present To Others

JOHN WESLEY

"The best of all is, God is with us."

NEXT STEP

How can I become more curious and cultivate wonder in my life?