

Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc.

1789 Iglehart Ave St. Paul, MN 55104-5215 www.dtminc.org Ph. (651) 283-0568

The Christmas Story From Heaven's Perspective

by Dan Trygg

"And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. ...And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil (the malicious liar; slanderer) and Satan (the adversary), who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Revelations 12:5,7-9

"But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish... The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressors... For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name shall be called Marvelous Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace... The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will accomplish this." Isaiah 9:1-7

"Jesus [said], 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" John 8:12

We are all familiar with the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. We know about the virgin, Mary, being with child by the Holy Spirit, about the journey to Bethlehem, and the birth in a stable. We have heard of the shepherds in the field, to whom the angels proclaimed the tidings of the Messiah's birth, and how they searched and found Joseph, Mary and the Babe, lying in a feeding trough. These are familiar, warm elements of the story of Jesus' coming that are friendly, comfortable, nostalgic, ...a happy part of what we celebrate in our homes at this time of year. **We don't often think of the intrigue, the warnings from God in the night, the need to flee for their lives, the murder of innocent children in an insane attempt to destroy this Child, who would someday rule the world.** This heavy, hostile, evil side of the Christmas story occurs shortly after the birth of Jesus, and in Matthew's gospel actually receives more attention than the account of His conception and birth. Matthew presents this boldly, matter-of-factly, as if this should not be at all shocking to us. **This depiction of evil lurking nearby, plotting, waiting and ready to pounce seems to be part of Matthew's understanding of the world in which we live.** It is consistent with the Biblical worldview, though we have tended to blunt our awareness of this reality, preferring to preoccupy ourselves with entertainment and creature comforts. The passages listed above present a very different picture than what we normally are aware of during this season. They offer us a glimpse into the larger view of seeing the birth of Jesus from heaven's perspective.

What we find is that **there is an enemy, described as a malicious liar (the devil) and our adversary (Satan), who, we are told, deceives the entire world.** That is a pretty strong statement, but it rings true with the rest of the Scriptures. He is called the god of this age (II Cor. 4:4), who seeks to blind the eyes of human beings to keep them from seeing the truth of what God has done for them in Jesus. In another passage, the Bible says that he is somehow behind the "eon of this world" (Eph. 2:2), and that we all have walked according to that system or mindset, which is "according to the prince of the power of the air, concerning the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience". What does this mean? It means that somehow **this adversary has influenced all of us in many ways.** His "way" involves walking contrary to God's "way", and he uses our human desires to manipulate us into doing his will, and entraps us with lies and addictions, guilt and inner pain (II Tim. 2:23-26; 3:6,7). In another place, the apostle declares that **our battle is really against the spiritual powers that are opposing and attacking us, not against human beings.** Humans may be manipulated or influenced by these spiritual enemies, but they are not, in themselves, the enemy (Eph. 6:10-12). They can be redeemed from service to these spiritual adversaries, and can actually be turned to oppose him (II Tim. 2:26).

How does this all work? How is it that we can be so influenced, and yet not clearly see it? Am I saying that the "devil made me do it", whenever I do wrong? No. It isn't like that, at all. **If we can begin to understand how he operates, and what his limitations are, we can recognize the traps he sets for us, and avoid them.** The apostle Paul mentioned that *he was not ignorant of the enemy's devices*, or strategies (II Cor. 2:11). **Satan was originally one of the greatest angelic beings.** He was a "covering cherub", one who had served in one of the most trusted positions in the very presence of God (Ezk. 28:14). When the Creator made him, he was blameless, and was arrayed with beauty and splendor, befitting one called to such a high position. The origin of sin remains a mystery, simply described as "unrighteousness was found in you" (28:12-15). **Apparently, he became enamored with himself, and wanted to exalt himself over the other angels.** He wanted to be worshiped and served like God Himself (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezk. 28:16,17). **Instead, he was thrust from his high position, and took one-third of the angels with him in rebellion**

(Rev. 12:4). **These, he highly organized into ranks, areas of responsibility and tasks**, referred to as principalities, powers, rulers, authorities, world-rulers of this present darkness, spirits of evil-intention in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). Satan is not anywhere near an equal opposite of God. **He is much greater than we are in our present humble human existence, but he is limited**, both in location and knowledge. **He cannot be everywhere at once, ...nor does he know everything** (the "too little, too late" response of killing the babies in the Bethlehem area proves that). But, because he does have myriads of fallen angels, highly organized and in close, almost instant communication, it can *appear* that he has much more direct power than he, in reality, actually does. Direct, or indirect, **his web of workers encompass the globe, infiltrate all levels of government and commerce, are influencing and steering media and promoting his evil agenda to brainwash, damage, blind and control human beings**. There are even "familiar spirits" assigned to follow our family line to exploit areas of past sin and revisit it upon succeeding generations.

What is his interest in us? Because we are made in the image of God, and he knows that his undoing will eventually come from "the seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15), he hates humankind and does all he can to interfere with and damage our lives. Furthermore, as we learn from the verses at the top of this study, he and his minions have been thrown out of heaven, and have set up their headquarters here on planet earth. Since God originally gave dominion to this planet to Adam and Eve, we are the rightful owners, and the enemy wants to keep us under his control so that we cannot take back what he has stolen from us. Furthermore, since he is preparing for his last stand, and he is enraged at God and us, **he is doing all he can to wound, abuse, deface, and destroy human beings**, because he knows that God loves us, and that someday those of us who overcome his lies and survive his attacks will eventually sit in judgment of him in the greatest war crime tribunal in history (I Cor. 6:3). Nevertheless, while he is insanely murderous in his intent, **there are certain limitations, certain realities and "rules of engagement" within which he must operate**. Even he does not have the ability to do what he might wish to do with us. He is limited. One area that seems almost inviolable is our free will. **He cannot simply take away our ability to choose. He must entice or coerce us into giving in to him.** He can use other people to dominate us, but he himself cannot actually simply "take us over". **We must be willing participants, so he works to control us by deception, or by the wounding and intimidation of others.**

How does he operate? This is very complicated, and multi-layered, but **he is working in at least two areas at once. He works in the society to create a cultural environment that is a seedbed for sin.** Sin is damaging to us, and eventually leads to dehumanizing values and actions. On the other level, **the enemy also works in the lives of individuals to create emotional woundedness** or boredom to accentuate the already-present feeling of emptiness which resulted from the fall. **Then he will suggest strategies to make us feel safe, or to give us a rush, ...ways to make us feel better when we feel bad.** These may start out as normal, natural ways of dealing with pain or emptiness, but eventually they can lead us into deeper and deeper bondage. God has designed us with emotions to tell us when something is wrong. We are supposed to listen to our emotions, and learn to understand how to use them to help us navigate through life. Often, however, **the enemy uses the brokenness and bondage of our family systems to disregard or shut down healthy emotions and we start down an unhealthy road of "dis-ease".**

We may use "feel-good" experiences to *medicate* our pain, ...or *retreat* to escape it, ...or we may begin to lash out at or *dominate* others to keep them from hurting us. **Whichever of these strategies we use does not deal with the real problems in a healthy, honest fashion, and actually causes more pain.** We have to spend ourselves, or risk ourselves, for the "feel-good's", and, when the effect has worn off, we find that not only are the original issues we were trying to escape still there, but we have compounded the pain with the costs of getting our escape (whether that means: simply time, money and energy spent on something unrelated to our problems, ...or other negative consequences such as a hangover, or guilt, pregnancy, or even STD's). Retreating doesn't work, either. And angry, abusive behavior toward others also has its price tag of guilt feelings, and damaged relationships. **The more often we rely on such strategies to deal with pain, the more we get entrenched into a pattern of bondage**, and the easier it is for the enemy to send us down that road.

Underneath all of this is the fact that God has plans for us. He designed us for something significant, and the enemy tries to hog-tie us with emotional pain and ineffective strategies so that we do not discover *who we are* and *what God has created us for*. **On the cosmic level, God also has a plan. He spent several thousand years preparing for the right moment to invade our planet as a baby**, to bring the light of His glory to dwell among us as a human being. He said He came to bring good news to the afflicted, recovery of sight to the blind, to proclaim release to captives, and to set free those who have been broken to pieces (Lk. 4:18). **His lowly birth was the beginning of an assault on the kingdom of darkness, an assault of love and goodness**, which will spread with those who truly walk in the light. **In Him, we can escape the bondage of the darkness, but we must choose to put off the deeds of darknesses, including the old strategies we learned, and put on the ways of our Heavenly King.**