

Those of you who know my story know that I was immersed in church life from before I was born. Some of my earliest memories were of the church nursery, children's church, Sunday School, kids' choir, Mission Friends on Wednesday night, Vacation Bible School in the summer. And the part that I think I enjoyed the most about those experiences of growing up in the church were, of course, **the stories**. I loved the stories. Adam & Eve. Noah and the ark. Joseph and his brothers. David and Goliath. Daniel and the lions' den. Jonah and the great fish. Such amazing stories. But for some reason – I'm not sure if it was how they were taught or just how I made sense of them in my own mind – those stories were sort of like the religious version of Saturday morning cartoons. They had a lesson, they had a moral, they conveyed a transcendent and supernatural truth, but they were stand-

alone stories. They didn't have any connection with what came before or after. They certainly weren't part of one big, overarching storyline of history. And so each story was sort of self-contained as far as its content. I'm afraid a lot of church kids grew up with that same impression.

What I came to understand later – much later – is that all these little stories are part of a single greater story. And while each of these smaller stories has its own unique events and characters and takeaways, they all ultimately share a common theme, a common purpose, and, most importantly, a common main (though often unseen) character. Each of these stories, from beginning to end, is about how God has worked in history to save sinners and to make all things new through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. The stories of Adam and

Noah and Joseph and David and Daniel and Jonah are, at their heart, about Jesus. I think we may be tempted to think that the OT is just this collection of stories about heroes and miracles, and then Jesus just sort of shows up out of nowhere in Bethlehem. Just kind of pops up with no warning, no preparation, like a guest star on a television show. But that's not the case. The reality is that the entire Bible, from the very beginning, held hints and whispers and signs and shadows of Jesus. Here's how pastor and author Kevin DeYoung puts it in the introduction to *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook* [READ PAGES 12-13].

So with that being the case, for the four Sundays of Advent we're going to go back in time, back in history, back in the Bible and look at 4 characters whose lives point us to and prepare us for the coming of Jesus at

Christmas. And regardless of how familiar you might be with these individuals, these stories, my hope and prayer is that you will see them through new eyes and that even the most well-known stories might cause you to rejoice and worship in new ways as you consider what God has done for us through the incarnation, Jesus coming to earth in the flesh.

So this morning, the first Sunday of Advent, we're going to go all the way back to the start and take a look at the **first man, Adam**. What does Adam have to tell us about Jesus? Well, let's start with what the Bible tells us about him. I would invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, to the very first chapter, so Genesis 1. The first 25 verses of Genesis 1 recount how God began with nothing but Himself, and He

spoke all of creation into existence. By the word of His command He called into being light and dark, water and sky, seas and earth and plants, sun and moon and stars, fish and birds and animals. And then we get to v.26 and we read this [READ GENESIS 1:26-28]. So what do we learn about Adam? First, he was created. Like everything else besides God, he was made. He had a beginning. But unlike every other created thing, Adam was made in the image and likeness of God. Now scholars argue over all that that means, but all of them agree that man is like God in a unique way that sets him apart from all other living creatures. We see in v.28 that Adam is given a mandate, a task, a job. He is given dominion over creation to rule over it under God's authority. He's also given the mandate to multiply, to fill the earth with offspring. So Adam is created

in God's image to fill the earth and rule over it. You with me so far?

Let's keep reading in chapter 2, which goes back and retells the story of man's creation while filling in some of the gaps and giving more of the details [READ GENESIS 2:7-8, 15-25]. So here we see that, not only was Adam created, but he was created from the dust of the earth. God formed him from dirt and breathed the breath of life into him so he became alive. We also see here that God gave Adam a place, a garden to work and keep where he was to eat of every tree but one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he ate of the tree, God told him, he would surely die. Then God, declaring that it is not good for the man to be alone, brings the animals to Adam so he can name them. Then, seeing that none of the animals is a

suitable partner for the man, God creates a companion, a woman, from Adam's side. And together, they exist in perfect harmony with God and with one another, naked and unashamed. So he's formed from the dirt, placed in the garden, given a wife, and they are together and naked and unashamed.

But then comes the tragic turn. Look at chapter 3, verse 1 [READ GENESIS 3:1-24]. What happens? First, Adam abdicates his authority. Rather than being with his wife and defending her from the enticement of the serpent and speaking truth in the face of his deception, Adam leaves her on her own to contend with the most crafty of all the living creatures. And when she falls to his temptation, he is right there to fall along with her. He eats the fruit that he was commanded not to eat. He disobeys God's word and

sins against God Himself. In effect, Adam tries to become God. That was the temptation, right? Eat this fruit and you will become like God. But he doesn't become like God. Instead, he becomes aware of his nakedness, and in shame he and his wife cover themselves with leaves and hide from God. And when God ultimately confronts him, he deflects responsibility and blames, first, his wife, and then, God for giving him his wife. But as a result of his disobedience, Adam bears a curse. He would experience pain from working the ground for the entirety of his life. He would be responsible for the earth bearing thorns and thistles. He would one day die and his body would return to the ground as dust. And worst of all, he is driven out of the garden God gave him, indicating that his intimate relationship with God is broken. And yet, in spite of the curse, Adam and his wife, whom he names Eve, are

clothed by God with animal skins to cover and protect them. You got all that? Adam fails to obey, bears a curse for his sin, and is driven from the presence of God.

So what do we see in that account that gives us hints about Jesus? What do we see about Adam that points us to and prepares us for the person and work of Christ? I want to show you seven ways. Let's start with the fact that Adam is created in the image and likeness of God. Again, theologians have suggested that that could be functional (man is made to rule like God rules) or essential (man is a spiritual being as God is a spiritual being) or mental (man can reason as God reasons) or moral (man has a sense of right and wrong as God does) or relational (man was made for community as the Triune God is a community in Himself). But the point is that Adam was made to mirror

God in some sense. He was built on the pattern of some attributes of God. Adam, and every one of his offspring, bears that image. Well in Colossians 1:15, the Apostle Paul writes, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...” So we’ve got some similarities and some differences, right? Paul describes Jesus using the phrase “image of the invisible God.” That’s similar to Adam. But notice two things. First, Adam is created. He is made. He

has a beginning. Jesus is described here as the creator of all things. All things were created by Him and for Him and through Him. Adam is created; Jesus is the Creator. And then, where Adam bears the image and likeness of God, Jesus IS the image of God. He's not a copy. He's not a facsimile. In Him ALL the fullness of God is pleased to dwell. Where Adam is like God in some sense, Jesus is fully God in every sense. So Adam is created; Jesus is the Creator. Adam is like God; Jesus is God.

Second, when tempted by the serpent, Adam tries to become God. He substitutes his own authority for God's authority, his own wisdom for God's wisdom, his own morality for God's morality, his own will for God's will. He acts as though he is his own god. And what does the Bible tell us about Jesus? It tells us that, although He truly IS

God, that He became a man, taking on true humanity.

John 1:1,14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the

Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the

word became flesh and dwelt among us." Philippians 2:5-

7, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in

Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did

not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but

emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being

born in the likeness of men." So where Adam is a man

who attempts to become God, Jesus is God who truly

becomes a man.

Third, Adam is placed in a garden where, when tested, he

turns from God. Instead of remembering God's words and

trusting God's provision and obeying God's command,

Adam abandons all of those, and he fails. What do we

know about the life and ministry of Jesus? We know that, on the night before His crucifixion, He shares a meal with His apostles. And then where does Jesus take them so they can pray? A garden. The garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Luke 22:39-42, “And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’” So Adam, in the garden, when he faces the temptation to pursue his own will, gives in and does just that. He turns from God and trusts in himself. Jesus, in the garden, when faced with the temptation to give in to his own will, avoid the cross, abandon His mission, turns

TO the Father and entrusts Himself to His Father's will, His Father's plan, His Father's mission. Adam turns from God in the garden; Jesus turns to God in the garden.

Fourth, when Adam sinned, one of the consequences was that the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles and cause man pain as he tried to work the ground. Adam is responsible for the thorns everyone else will have to contend with for all of human history. Weeds and briars and thorns. If you've ever had to contend with those, it's Adam's fault. But what do we know about Jesus? At His trial before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, we read, "Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their

hands.” Adam’s sin brings the pain of thorns on all humanity; Jesus bears thorns for the sins of humanity.

Fifth, before he had sinned, when God had created the woman and brought her to Adam, they were naked and felt no shame. Sin had not introduced the idea of humiliation and shame into human experience. But then sin came.

And along with it came shame. And so Jesus is stripped and hanged naked on a cross. John 19:23, “When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic.” Put on public display as an enemy of the Roman Empire and a blasphemer against God, he willingly endures the shame of sin on behalf of sinners.

Hebrews 12:2 says, “...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before

him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Before sin, Adam is naked and unashamed in the garden; because of Adam’s sin, Jesus hangs naked, bearing our shame on the cross.

Sixth, Adam, as a result of his sin, brings a curse. And because Adam serves as a representative for all mankind, that curse of death and judgment is passed down to all his offspring. But what do we know of Jesus? Galatians 3:10,13, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them’...Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” Adam brings a curse;

Jesus becomes our curse. And then Romans 5:12-21 [READ]. This is probably the clearest connection in all of Scripture between Adam and Jesus. Sin and death come into the world and spread to all men through the one man, Adam. And it says Adam was a type of the one to come, Jesus, who would bring a free gift. Where many died through Adam's sin, many may live through the free gift of grace offered by Jesus. Where the judgment following Adam's sin brings condemnation, the free gift offered by Jesus brings justification (righteousness). Because of Adam's sin, death reigned, but because of Jesus' free gift of grace, life reigns in those who receive it. Adam's trespass leads to condemnation of all who are identified with him, but Jesus' act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all who identify with Him. Through Adam's disobedience many are made sinners, but through

Jesus' obedience many are made righteous. That's the good news, right? Though Adam, we are sinners, under judgment and condemnation, facing death; in Christ we are forgiven, declared righteous, recipients of the gift of life. 1 Corinthians 15:45 says it this way, "The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." And let me just pause here for a minute and say this: every single person who has ever lived has been born a child of Adam, IN Adam, identified with him, bearing the sinful nature that was a consequence of his sin. And as such, every single one of us was born under a death sentence, justly condemned for our sin. That's the bad news. The good news is that there is an offer of pardon, clemency, amnesty. By placing our hope and faith and trust in the person and work of Jesus – His sinless life, His death in our place to pay our penalty for our sin, and His

triumphant resurrection and defeat of death – we can receive a change of identity. We no longer have to be found “in Adam,” but can be found “in Christ,” identified and united with Him. And when that happens, the death sentenced we were under is transferred to Jesus, and we receive eternal, abundant, spiritual, transcendent life in its place. So while we are born “in Adam,” everyone we encounter today, everyone in this room is either still “in Adam” or you are “in Christ.” If you are “in Adam” today – if you’ve never trusted in Jesus and been transformed inwardly into a new person with new desires and new affections and new habits and new ways of thinking and speaking and treating people – let me plead with you to consider who Jesus is and what He has done. Let me plead with you to cast yourself on His mercy and believe in Him.

Which brings us to our seventh and final point of connection between Adam and Jesus. Where Adam was commanded to have dominion over the earth and all creation, he failed. Jesus, however, will reign over the entire cosmos forever and ever. In his prophecy to the virgin Mary, the angel Gabriel says, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” The Christ child will reign forever! And in Revelation 11:15 we see the fulfillment of that promise, “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world

has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” Where Adam was commanded to rule and failed, Jesus will reign forever and ever.

Where Adam was created in the image of God, Jesus is the Creator and is God. Where Adam, a man, tried to become God, Jesus, who is God, truly became a man.

Where Adam turned from God in the garden, Jesus turned to God in the garden. Where Adam brought the curse of thorns on all men, Jesus bore a crown of thorns for men.

Where Adam, before he sinned, enjoyed the freedom of being naked and unashamed, Jesus, because of Adam’s sin, was stripped naked and bore the shame of sinners.

Where Adam brought a curse that resulted in death, Jesus bears the curse of sin and offers life. And where Adam

failed to rule obediently over God's creation, Jesus will reign over the entire created order forever and ever. Christ is the true and better Adam. Do you see that? Does it help you know Jesus better? Does it help you love Him more? Does it help you trust Him more? Does it compel you to worship Him more? Does it drive you to obey Him more? I pray that it will.