

OpenTheo

Whose Coming Forth is From of Old

December 24, 2019



Alastair Roberts

Merry Christmas, everyone!

If you have any questions or feedback, please send them to me on Curious Cat: <https://curiouscat.me/zugzwanged>.

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon (https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref_=wl_share).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

Who is the one who comes to us at Christmas? In Micah 5, verse 2 we read, But you, O Bethlehem of Frather, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. From the earliest years of the Church, and arguably from the New Testament itself, Christians have been reading the events of Christmas, not just as the time when Christ begins his life and ministry, but as the moment, that climactic moment, when one who has been active throughout Israel's history finally steps into the light. It is the moment when the one who has led Israel all the way, this silhouetted figure, is suddenly revealed for who he is.

Christians reading the Old Testament have especially seen in the figure of the angel of the Lord, or the angel of the covenant, the pre-incarnate Christ, Christ before he has come and taken human flesh, Christ active in the story of Israel. Christ is the one who

announced the birth of Isaac, and he will come as Abraham's true son. He is the one who wrestled with Jacob until dawn at the Jabbok, and he comes into the darkness of a world in sin to give his people a new name and a blessing, and that as the son of righteousness he might arise with healing in his wings.

He is the one who appeared in the burning bush to the shepherd Moses, declaring a sign, and he himself is given as a sign to shepherds. He is the one who brought Israel out of Egypt, delivering them from the rule of Pharaoh, and he comes as Mary's firstborn to bring about a new exodus from a greater and more fierce Pharaoh, to drown him and all the things that might pursue us, our sins, our guilt, our shame, and all the devils of hell, that they might be drowned in his death, in his grave, that we might pass through and enter into life eternal. He is the one whose glory was seen on Mount Sinai, where he gave Moses the plans for the tabernacle, and he has come to pitch his tent among us.

He is the one who appeared to Joshua as the commander of the armies of God at the Jordan, and he comes in frail human flesh to destroy all of the works of the devil. He is the one who came as if as a divine messenger from a distant court in the book of Judges, and he comes to dwell with us as one of us, so that heaven and earth may be joined as one. He is the one who stayed his hand of judgment, establishing the threshing floor as the site of Solomon's temple, and he himself comes as the site where hostility between God and man would cease, and peace and fellowship would be enjoyed.

He is the one whom Isaiah saw high and lifted up in the temple, the train of his robe and his glory filling the house, and he is born into an anonymous home in Bethlehem, and laid in a feeding trough. He is the one who Zacharias saw interceding for Joshua the high priest, when Satan was accusing him of having his filthy garments, and he comes in human flesh to be our great high priest, a greater Joshua, so that we might be wiped clean of all stain and stand before God's throne, spotless and free of all condemnation. This is the one who comes to us at Christmas, the one whose going forth has been from of old, from ancient days.

He is the one who is God with us. When we read the Old Testament we encounter him in the works of God, delivering his people from Egypt, in the appearances to the patriarchs, and we know that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of the Exodus, the God of the kingdom is the God who is here with us, the God who comes in human form in Mary's womb. And on Christmas day, as you, with me, celebrate this event, I hope that you will know something of the joy and the wonder that the angels first declared, peace on earth, good will to men.

If you are sorrowful this Christmas, I pray that our Lord would bring you joy. If you are mourning, that he would bring you comfort. If you have been troubled by conflict in the past year, that you may know his peace.

And if you are lonely and afraid, that you may know his presence. God be with you all.

