

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent,
the beginning of a new Christian year,
and the eve of the Christmastide season.

Today we turn our attention from
the focus of the second Advent
to the great mystery of the first Advent—
when God-the-Word became the incarnate Jesus
to save us from our sins.

Matthew 1.18-25

Deciphering the Ways of God

Matthew 1.18-25

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The coming of the birth of Jesus—

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about . . .

The New Testament, and Matthew's Gospel, begins with these defining words:

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David,
the son of Abraham . . .”

With this introduction, we are made aware of several crucial details:

- (1) Jesus is the Messiah, the long-promised and long-anticipated Savior-King;
- (2) Jesus is the ultimate descendant of the two most imminent persons in Hebrew heritage, both of who were recipients of larger-than-life covenant promises;
- (3) The promised coming of Jesus was thousands of years in development.

These opening words set the trajectory for the entire New Testament and the revelation of the New Order and point us toward the superiority of the person and work of Jesus.

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. (Hebrews 8.6)

God's ways are not our ways.

What makes someone of
consequence to God?

Surrender and obedience.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to
bring Jesus into human life;
it is our work to develop
attentiveness to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the one and only way
God saves us and is with us.

You see, Jesus Christ, the One through whom we have the forgiveness of sins is the physical image and the exact representation of the invisible God.

He is God-the-Word through whom **all** things were created:

- ▶ there is nothing in existence that has evolved—everything in heaven and on earth, visible or invisible to the human eye, including all positions of power and authority— all things were created by Him and for Him.

Since only God was greater than our sin and His love for sinners was so intense,

- ▶ it was His pleasure that His Son, the God-Word,
 - ▶ take on human form and become the God-man, Jesus Christ—
the Fullness of Deity in bodily form—
 - ▶ and die for the sins of all humanity.

On the death-cross, the blood of the God-man, Jesus Christ, poured out of His body as He paid the penalty of our sins by His death.

Now God-the-Judge can forgive our sins and, as God-the-Father, welcome us into His family with His Son.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2.14-17)