

The Supernatural Expectation for This Christmas Season

It's not often we use Christmastime to revisit the creation story. Yet the story contains answers for many of life's most fundamental questions. And ultimately, it reveals a supernatural reason we celebrate this season.

Created for His Presence

Shortly after God spoke into the void, "Let there be light," and brought forth land and sea, vegetation and life, He planted a garden in a place named Eden. In this place, He formed the first couple. Out of Eden's ground, the Bible says, "The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, along with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four rivers" (Gen. 2:8–10).

Eden is so much more than just the name of a place, however. As I explore in my book, *Silence Satan*, its name in Hebrew actually means "God's delight." Eden represents God's presence.

Reading the creation account with Eden's literal meaning in mind reveals much about God's intent for humankind. (In the passage below, I've replaced "Eden" with "God's delight" in brackets.)

"The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in [God's delight], and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, along with the tree of

knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of [God's delight] to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four rivers" (Gen. 2:8–10).

Wow! Truly, God formed us to dwell in His presence. Indeed, we were created to be friends of God and live in His delight, where there are joy and "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11b). Out of the ground of His presence all good things are grown, which is His perfect will for our lives—complete peace, protection and provision. From here, rivers of living water flow, refreshing everything within reach.

Awaiting the Return of His Presence

Because of sin, the first couple was evicted from Eden, and thus, all of humanity separated from intimacy with our Creator and the benefits we receive in His presence. But committed to bring us back into relationship with Him, God put His redemptive plan in place. This is what the prophets foretold. One day, a virgin would bear a child—God's son—who would live among the people and restore them back into fellowship with the Father. His name would be Immanuel, which means, "God is with us."

"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14).

For thousands of years, God's people waited with expectancy for this child whose presence would change everything. And indeed, Immanuel came. The first Christmas Day some 2000 years ago celebrated the first time since creation that God cohabited with humankind. His arrival inaugurated a re-creation and reconciliation, again bringing light to darkness and returning God's people back into His delight.

Our Supernatural Expectation

Every year in the Advent season, we look to Christmas Day as

the return of God with us. That's what Advent means. It's the derivative of the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," and of the Greek word, *parousia*, meaning "presence." Truly, Advent is the season of preparation for the coming of God's presence to His people and all that we enjoy because of it.

But Advent need not end with Christmas Day. Because of Christmas, we no longer await the arrival of God with us—He is here! Rather, we now live in expectancy of the expression of God's presence in us. There's nothing more supernatural than the Creator living in you.

So this season, begin to expect the blessings of His presence. Expect the manifestation of His light to penetrate your darkest circumstances; His joy to replace your sorrows; and His peace to calm your worries. Yes, this Advent season, expect His presence to change everything about you. {eoa}

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