

NOT JUST FOR SUNDAYS

# TAKEAWAY

**Collide**  
Part 7 – Luke 2

December 20, 2009

## Watching Grass Grow

All the talk about seeing movement or growth in our lives or the lives of others has made me wonder, “*Is spiritual growth always visible?*” In nature, we might notice that a tree looks dead in the winter. A woman who is two weeks pregnant might look exactly the same as before she conceived. In both of those cases, things are definitely happening, but they are hidden from the casual observer. If we could look at the tree roots, we would see they are still growing and stretching deeper—even under frost or snow. A newly conceived baby’s cells—although microscopic—are multiplying exponentially. The growth is hidden for a time, but eventually it will show up. The tree leafs out in spring. The mother starts showing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester.

This is just how God orchestrated the appearance of His Son Jesus on earth. As far back as Genesis 3:15, God provided clear statements about His plan for redeeming His people. Hundreds of prophecies were given pointing to the fulfillment of God’s promise for restoration by sending the Messiah, Jesus. But most people didn’t see God moving behind the scenes to orchestrate all the details: correct lineage from David, virgin birth, Jesus born in a specific Podunk town called Bethlehem, etc. Zechariah 9:9 even predicted Jesus riding a donkey. (This minute detail was fulfilled at Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem described in Matthew 21:1-9.) All those Old Testament prophecies were adding up without many people (except certain prophets) noticing. Things were going along just as they always had, so why would anyone think something big was happening? Shepherds were watching sheep, the government was inconveniencing people by making them participate in a census, a virgin was having a baby. Wait...what? Suddenly all the hidden details were revealed in this amazing event. People who were looking for it noticed, but most people didn’t. They just kept living their lives, business as usual, as if watching grass grow.

*Christmas has lost its meaning for us because we have lost the spirit of expectancy. We cannot prepare for an observance. We must prepare for an experience.*  
~Handel H. Brown

Jesus said that people will respond the same way at His second coming. They won’t notice the signs of the times. They won’t realize how God is orchestrating all the details in preparation for Jesus’ return. Jesus compared it to Noah’s days when everyone else was just living life without realizing the flood was coming. Read Matthew 24:36-44. What were some of the common activities Jesus mentioned? Likewise, the signs and clues at the end of time might be hidden and not obvious, so what did Jesus say we should do in verses 42 and 44?

Are you alert like the prophets, looking for God to act and move in your life and the world around you? Or are you just going with the flow, not really paying attention to the amazing spiritual events that might be unfolding? Look around and notice God. Then point Him out to someone near you.

Part of God’s crafting of events was to direct certain people to write details about Jesus before He appeared on the scene. There are about 400 of these Messianic prophecies in the Bible. Some were written hundreds of years in advance. The following list includes some of the prophecies concerning His birth. Take time to look up a few of these Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in the New Testament. How can doing this help you stay focused on what’s important this week as you prepare for all the festivities?

Prophecies	Fulfillment
<b>Genesis 3:15</b> Born of a woman's seed (first Messianic prophecy)	Luke 2:7, Galatians 4:4, Revelation 12:5
<b>Genesis 12:3b</b> Will be offspring of Abraham	Acts 3:25, Matthew 1:1, Luke 3:34
<b>Genesis 49:10</b> Will descend from the tribe of Judah	Luke 3:33
<b>Isaiah 9:7</b> The Heir to the throne of David	Matthew 1:6, Luke 1:32
<b>Micah 5:2</b> Place of birth	Matthew 2:1 or Luke 2:4-7
<b>Isaiah 7:14</b> Born of a virgin and would be called Immanuel	Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:26-35, Matthew 1:23
<b>Jeremiah 31:15</b> Slaughter of infants	Matthew 2:16-18
<b>Hosea 11:1</b> Escape to Egypt	Matthew 2:13-15

### Living the Adventure

I've been thinking about Advent. My husband has recently taken to reading various daily passages of Scripture in anticipation of Christmas. I recall a childhood friend whose family had an advent wreath on their dining room table. They lit the candles and read various scriptures in anticipation of Christmas. They took time to remember the event of Christ's birth and the reason for the season.

Today I had a moment of convergence. It occurred to me that the word *advent* has the same root meaning as the word *adventure*. Both imply anticipating something. One anticipates an event, the other a destination. They both have in common the Life of Christ. One of those "collide" outcomes is that our lives become adventures, rather than just daily movement through time.

*Christmas is based on an exchange of gifts: the gift of God to man - his unspeakable gift of his son Jesus; and the gift of man to God - when we present our bodies as a living sacrifice and, like the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 8:5), first give ourselves to God. No one has kept or can keep Christmas until he has had a part in this two-way transaction.*

~Vance Havner

When I think about all of the people who collided with Christ at the beginning of His life, it makes me wonder how our adventures look by comparison. Mary and Joseph, I expect, were anticipating His arrival like any expectant parents: with hope, nervousness, uncertainty, and excitement. The shepherds were just minding their work, doing their part while they waited. They were not ignorant of the possibility, but never really anticipated He would come in their lifetime. Anna and Simeon were watching and waiting with joyous anticipation for Jesus to come to them. The magi—often referred to as the wise men—were actively seeking, watching, and moving toward Him when the signs became clear. He hadn't come for them, but they knew who He was. Herod was fearfully anticipating a usurper.

One thing about adventures is that they are never stationary—they always require movement of some type. Take note of each of the characters as you read through the familiar Christmas story in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 2. What did they do after they collided with the news of Jesus' birth? What does that tell you about what was happening inside them? Now look at your own life and ask yourself these questions: *Am I living the adventure or just living life and doing my part? What movement has there been in my life as a result of Jesus coming to earth? Am I actively seeking to meet the Savior of the world, or am I afraid of what a collision with Christ might do?*

**Q:** How can I make sure I get the Takeaway every week?

**A:** (1) Sign up on our website to receive the Takeaway by e-mail, (2) download the Takeaway from our website, or (3) pick up a copy as you leave the auditorium on Sunday.