

The Name Above All Names



TouchPoint 5

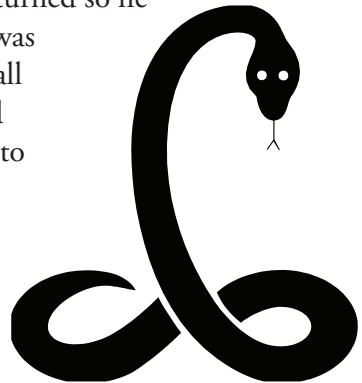
It's Mic with you again. Glad you are reading this important Touch-Point!

While hunting deer in the Tehema Wildlife Area near Red Bluff in northern California, Jay Rathman climbed to a ledge on the slope of a rocky gorge. As he raised his head to look over the ledge above, he sensed movement to the right of his face. A coiled rattler struck with lightning speed, just missing Rathman's right ear. The four-foot snake's fangs got snagged in the neck of Rathman's wool turtleneck sweater, and the force of the strike caused it to land on his left shoulder. It then coiled around his neck.

He grabbed it behind the head with his left hand and could feel the warm venom running down the skin of his neck, the rattles making a furious racket. He fell backward and slid headfirst down the steep slope through brush and lava rocks, his rifle and binoculars bouncing beside him. "As luck would have it," he said in describing the incident to a Department of Fish and Game official, "I ended up wedged between some rocks with my feet caught uphill from my head. I could barely move."

He got his right hand on his rifle and used it to disengage the fangs from his sweater, but the snake had enough leverage to strike again. "He made about eight attempts and managed to hit me with his nose just below my eye about four times. I kept my face turned so he couldn't get a good angle with his fangs, but it was very close. This chap and I were eyeball to eyeball and I found out that snakes don't blink. He had fangs like darning needles...I had to choke him to death. It was the only way out. I was afraid that with all the blood rushing to my head I might pass out."

When he tried to toss the dead snake aside, he couldn't let go. "I had to pry my fingers from



its neck.”¹

When I first heard this graphic story, I couldn't help but compare evil with that snake! It seems to be wrapped around all of us, flailing away at us, striking to inject its poisonous influence on our thoughts and actions on a personal level, and on a societal level. It has us caught real tight!

God was so disappointed in the choice Adam and Eve made to violate the boundary He had established for them in their perfect world because He knew that once sin came in and took over, it would infect everything about their

“God’s own heart was heavy..”

world. God’s own heart was heavy with what His new creation would have to go through because of it.

In his book “The Secret Message of Jesus,” Brian McLaren pretty well summed up what both God and the first people lost: “Adam and Eve lived in a primal human connection to God, an original fellowship and natural friendship with God. But their noble status quickly deteriorates as they disconnect from God and reject any limits placed upon their freedom by their Creator. The results of their disobedience are visible as the story unfolds – a sense of shame and alienation from God and one another, violence of brother against brother, disharmony with creation itself, misunderstanding and conflict among tribes and nations...” (p. 27).

Genesis 3:21-24 tells us that God had to make a difficult but necessary choice. Read those verses and write down why you think God had to do this: _____

Banished from their perfect home, no longer able to eat of the special fruit of the tree of life, their bodies would begin to know gradual decay and degeneration, and finally, horribly, death.

It would have been well within God’s rights to simply allow humanity to die off from their own evil. But there’s this thing about God. He loves that which He creates. And for whatever reason, He seemed to love people especially. So He would not be content to just let them die. He wanted to find a way to re-establish what had been lost – the natural friendship and closeness that He had once had with people but which sin made impossible.

He had another problem too. The longer history progressed, the more confused people got about God. Their ideas about Him, how He acts, and His intentions became confused and erroneous. God had to find a way to tell the people of earth who He really was and what His true intentions are toward them.

God managed to find a way to solve both issues – showing his true nature of love (and not the selfish God the serpent claimed he was), and a way to save people from the penalty their actions called for. What he chose to do is unparalleled in history in its uniqueness, in its effect, and in its boldness.

God chose to come to earth. Himself. Personally. Ok, so maybe that doesn't sound earth-shattering at first. After all, just a couple of TouchPoints ago I did point out the verse in Genesis that says that God came to visit the earth in the cool of the day. So what's so unusual about God coming to earth?

It's the way He did it. In fact, His approach was so unconventional, so unexpected, that it took nearly everyone off-guard.

To solve a problem as huge as evil/sin, most of us might be tempted to come down with a very big stick! We'd shape up this place in a hurry. After all, if God's got all this power, why not use it to whip everyone into shape?

But God chose a different plan. He chose to make Himself – are you ready for this – vulnerable to humanity! What an incredible thing to do! Let me show you just how vulnerable.

“...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’

“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.’



“How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.’

“I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’”
(New International Version)

Though these words from the book of Luke in the New Testament might raise more questions than answers in your mind right now, there are a couple of things I want you to notice. First, a young woman named Mary will become pregnant by supernatural means. The Spirit of God would come upon her, and she would be overshadowed by God’s power. Without a physical connection, Mary would become the earthly mother of the Son of God.

“Imagine! God as a baby.”

Imagine! God as a baby. A helpless child who needs cuddling and caring and nurturing and the breast. A child as needful as any other of his parents’ protection and love and nurture and guidance.

I just shake my head in amazement that the God who had the power to create everything we know, made Himself a baby, and placed Himself in human hands to be raised as one of us.

See the huge difference between how God was back at the beginning and now? Back then He came as God. Now He comes as God in human flesh. He is God-Man. According to the Bible, he was 100% human but also 100% divine. I realize that doesn’t equate in our normal mathematical models. Remember, I told you this was unique!

This Son of God has a name: Jesus. It means Savior. And He came out of a heart of love, the heart of God.

Remember the end-zone shot in every Super Bowl you’ve ever seen when the team that just scored is kicking the extra point? Somewhere in the crowd somebody is always holding up a sign with “John 3:16” on it. Have you ever really read that text? I could print out the words of that text for you, but this one is so incredible, I think it will make a deeper impression if you will write it out in your own handwriting. Go ahead. It’s only 26 words:

Think back to the Genesis 3 text we read earlier where God had to keep people from the tree of life precisely because He couldn't afford to have them live forever. Now He's put in place a way for people to live forever after all!

No, God didn't change His mind about anything. Rather, He has put into motion a plan that will redeem people from sin, and literally remake them from the inside out so that they can live for ever. That plan is the essence of TouchPoint 6, but for now, I'd like for you to do a little exploring and discovering on your own. I'm going to list a few texts in the Bible that talk about Jesus, and I want you to write down what is unique or special or interesting or important about Him in each of them. I want you to get to know Jesus. After all, you should get to know someone you could be spending eternity with!

Matthew 1:18-25 _____

John 3:17 _____

John 1:1-18 _____

Colossians 1:12-17; 2:9 _____

1 John 2:1-2 _____

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Questions

In spite of the serpent's (Satan's) efforts to paint God in an unflattering light, what is the core of God's true nature? (Love)

What could God have done about the problem of sin when Adam and Eve made their mistake? (He could have just let them die)

What unexpected, completely unconventional thing did God do to solve the problem of evil?

John 3.16 talks about the loving God who gave His son so that we might have a way out of sin. How did Jesus, the son, feel about this? (John 10.17-18)

John 1.1-4 helps us understand a bit of the relationship of God and the Son. The Son is also what? (God)

How long has the Son been around?

According to the words of Colossians 1.12-17, what role did Jesus play in earth's creation?

What thoughts do you have about Jesus when you realize that He made the world, that He was the one disappointed when evil came into our world, and that it was Him who made the trip to earth to save us?

Please send this answer sheet, either by e-mail or land mail

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