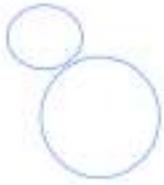


THE ARTIST AT WORK!
CHRISTMAS 2011



How to draw a cat? From <http://www.how-to-draw-cartoons-online.com/cartoon-cat.html>

here are the first and last stages, starting with 2 circles and ending up with the complete animal; here is an artist at work to create. It is a simple drawing of a cat; maybe you'd like to try it out later. Even the world's most famous



painting, the Mona Lisa, began life somehow; as an idea in the artist's mind, then some sketches perhaps in pencil before he began to create something that world now thinks is a masterpiece! The artist works away in his studio, sketching, planning, trying things out, starting all over again, painting, adding more paint, a different colour, till the whole thing is finished and he or she sits back and enjoys the work they have created.

The story we tell today started long before the part of it that the nativity play tells. Someone suggested that God, like the artist, has been planning it for a long time, but only told us about bits of the plan, a sketch with some clues:

1. A Child God promised that a child would be born who would be special. Hundreds of years before Jesus came, God had promised this child. He would be given some great names and titles, even being called Immanuel, God with us. Perhaps people thought it strange that God would promise a child, but that was it! We're not told any more, but that when the child came, he would be the Saviour of His people.

2. A King God promised that a new King would be born. Israel had lots of kings, some of them good, some of them bad; the promise was that one day a new king would come who would change the world forever. Not only would He be a King for Israel, but for the whole world, who would change the world and bring all kinds of new blessings to the world.

3. Light God promised that light would come to the world. There is light; we can see! But people lived in fear, people made mistakes, they rebelled against God, they went to war, they were frightened and lost their way. Darkness had a grip on the world. God promised that a day would come when light would come to world and all these fears would be taken away; forgiveness, hope, peace would come and people's lives would change for ever. The people longed for that day to come.

4. A Servant God promised that someone would come to be a servant; that doesn't sound too great, that part of the plan! There were lots of servants in the world. This servant would serve God and learn to do what God wanted; this servant would serve the people of the world. He would care for people in need; He would be humble and think of other people's needs before His own; he would suffer and die!

For hundreds of years, this was all people knew; they thought that something might happen in Bethlehem, but they're not too sure about that. They knew that God had promised a child, a king, light, and a servant, but not when this would happen; they had to trust God that He knew what He was doing and would keep promises.

18th December 2011

Then Jesus came. "You can trust God; He keeps His promises!" The picture is complete: the child, the king, the light, the servant – all Jesus. He is the special child, God w/us; He is the king for the whole world; He is the light of the world to save and set people free; He is the servant to care for us and to die. This is the whole picture; the picture is only complete with Jesus; with Jesus the picture makes sense! This is God's plan to save the world and Jesus is the centre; so we are to love Jesus with all our heart; to trust Him; to rejoice that Jesus has come. *"in these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son..."* (Hebrews 1:2)