

Newsletter December 2011

As this Christmas season begins with all of its bustling shopping trips, bright lights, colorful decorations, and festive parties, which are engaged in by believers and unbelievers alike, it would be well that we focus our thoughts here on the real meaning of the yearly celebration for a redeemed Christian. The following are brief excerpts taken from Book I, Chapter 4.1, *The Birth of the Messiah*:

“The critic has denounced the possibility of a virgin giving birth. However, we are not talking about a natural conception, but a unique supernatural conception brought about by God Himself. While the birth of Christ was quite natural, the conception was not. The critic has attempted to interpret the word “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 as “young woman.” Surely, many young women had borne a son and had called his name “Immanuel” in honor of the promise by the time Jesus was born. Therefore, how could a “young woman” giving birth be called a sign since that was (and is) a common occurrence (Is.7:14)? There can be no doubt about what Isaiah meant by his prophecy since he said a virgin giving birth was to be a unique sign. Whether or not one chooses to accept the fact of the virgin birth of Christ, there can be little doubt about what the Bible teaches. The explanation of the virgin birth by the angel to Mary as related by Luke simply cannot be misunderstood by any rational means (Lu.1:35). We surely realize that Luke was a physician, and he therefore knew exactly what he was saying.

The Christian must not overlook the profound significance of the virgin birth. Not only does that of necessity fulfill prophecy, it is also a sign that Jesus was not born as an ordinary man. The miracle of the virgin birth has been attacked heavily by Satan, because if Mary conceived of a man, then Jesus would have been only a man, born under the curse of death, and would have been unable to redeem himself, let alone provide an atonement for the sins of all mankind. Our faith and hope for eternal life would disintegrate into ashes. We must understand that Jesus did not inherit the fallen nature of man.

The significance of the event that took place that night in Bethlehem is not the birth of another child into the world. Nor was it just the birth of an important man who would say marvelous things and perform great miracles. The true significance is found in the fact that in that marvelous moment God became man. God took on Himself the pitiful weakness of man’s flesh by setting aside all of the glory of his deity. The significance of Jesus’ birth is found in the incarnation, as the Son of God also became the son of man in the flesh. God brought Himself down low to walk in the same earthly plane as his creation; God was suddenly living in our midst! We should not merely celebrate the birth of a baby or even of a great man, but we should instead celebrate the wonder of God identifying Himself with man by taking on the form of human flesh. Therefore, Jesus was not “born” in the usual sense that day in Bethlehem because He (being God) is eternal having no beginning or end. While unto us a child was born, it is still more important for us to understand that unto us God’s Son was given (Is.9:6).

If by one man’s fall all could be condemned to death, so by one perfect man’s death could all be raised again to eternal life (Ro.5:17,18,19). When Adam sinned, he condemned the entire human race to death. Only if a perfect man satisfied the penalty of death could eternal life be restored. Nevertheless, such a one could not be born of human parents, because he would carry the seed of destruction within him, yet he must be human to satisfy God’s justice. Considering this dilemma, man could never redeem himself. Therefore, began the long process of God preparing man for the coming of the deliverer who would stand

perfect before Him. As a woman (Eve) played a part in the transgression, so a woman (Mary) would also play a part in the salvation of mankind thus redeeming women as well as men (Ga.4:4). For that purpose, Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Lu.2:11).

If God had created a second "Adam" from the dust of the ground to replace the first Adam, he would have been the head of an entirely new creation which would have replaced the old Adamic race, not redeem it. He could not have died a substitutional death for the old race of which he was not a part. Jesus, the second Adam of our race, being born of Mary has inherited the human and physical nature of the old Adamic race, but without the sinful nature of Adam. While Eve played a part in the original sin, in that Satan deceived her, Adam was the responsible person for he sinned knowingly. The seed of destruction is carried through the seed of the man, not that of the woman. Therefore, God quickened the seed of Mary through the Holy Spirit so that the sinless man begotten from her womb was both man and God.

We must see that if Jesus had been only human, he would have been as all other men, and being unjust before God could not have offered himself for us. If Jesus had been only God, how then could sacrifice for mans' sin have been offered of God to Himself? God demanded and required satisfaction from the flesh of man for mans' act of disobedience (Ge.2:17). Only man could atone for his own sin. However, God could accept nothing less than a perfect sacrifice that fallen man could never provide though generation after generation would come and go. There was no other way but for God to descend to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh in the form of his only begotten son, Jesus (Ro.8:3). Thus was the sacrifice prepared; the just would die for the sins of the unjust at the appointed time.

Therefore, we should see that overshadowing the incarnation is the specter of the cross. The two events cannot be separated. We cannot truly see the wonder of the incarnation unless we also understand the agony of the crucifixion. While men are often drawn to the advent of the Son of God into the world, they often shrink from his exodus through death. Yet, the first was for the purpose of the second. Christ was born into the world in order that He would be slain by the wicked hands of sinful man as a final sin offering. All of that was to be carried out "...by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Ac.2:23). God prepared the perfect sacrifice that He required, having given Christ to mankind through the incarnation and then accepting the sacrifice from man through the crucifixion." May the true joy of redemption in Jesus Christ be yours this season and throughout eternity. *Arthur J. Smith December 2011*