

APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE INCARNATION

The historical events comprising the record of Jesus' birth are only recorded in Matthew and Luke. The 1st and 2nd chapters of Matthew (1:18-2:23, 31 verses), and the 1st and 2nd chapters of Luke (1:26-56; 2:1-39, 70 verses). In that record, there are several extended sayings. They are remarkable for their content and scope, confirming they were spoken by inspiration, and with succeeding generations in mind. In fact, they are what makes the account of our Lord's birth so significant.

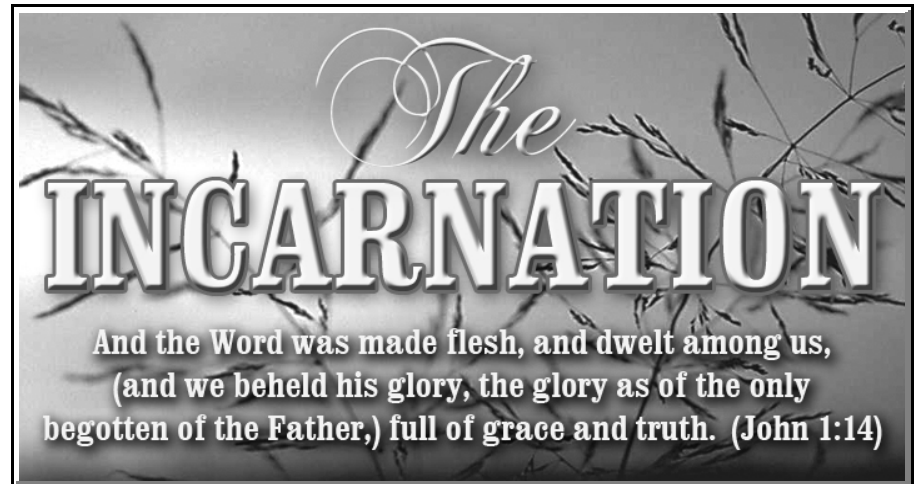
1. The word of Gabriel to Mary (Lk 1:28,30-33,35-37).
2. The response of Mary to Gabriel (Luke 1:38).
3. The angel of the Lord to Joseph (Matt 1:20-21; 2:13,20).
4. The angel of the Lord to the shepherds (Luke 2:10-12).
5. A multitude of angelic hosts to the shepherds (Luke 2:14).
6. The inspired word of Elizabeth to Mary (Luke 1:42-45).
7. The inspired response of Mary (Luke 1:46-55).
8. The chief priests and scribes relate the prophecy of Jesus' birth (Matt 2:5-6).
9. Simeon's response to seeing the holy Child (Luke 2:29-32).
10. Simeon's inspired word to Mary (Luke 2:34-35).

When it came to preaching, however, the **significance** of Christ's birth was the thrust. The facts of our Lord's birth are sanctified and empowered by the reason for it.

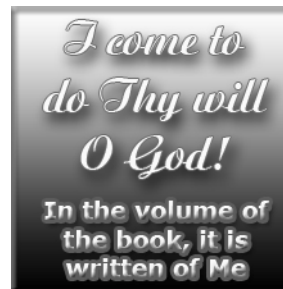
1. He was made the Seed of David according to the flesh – Rom 1:3.
2. God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh – Rom 8:3.
3. He came from Israel, and was God blessed forever – Rom 9:5.
4. The "Second man" was "the Lord from heaven" – 1 Cor 15:47.
5. God sent forth His Son, "made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" – Gal 4:4.
6. Jesus "made Himself of no reputation," taking upon Himself "the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7).
7. He was "found in fashion as a man" – Phil 2:8.
8. He is the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" – 1 Tim 2:5.
9. He was "God manifest in the flesh" – 1 Tim 3:16.
10. God brought His "Firstbegotten into the world" – Heb 1:6.
11. He was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" – Heb 2:9.
12. He partook of flesh and blood that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" – Heb 2:14).
13. He took upon Himself "the seed of Abraham" – Heb 2:16.
14. He was "made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins" – Heb 2:17.
15. He came to do the will of God, knowing that God had never been pleased with sacrifices and offerings for sin offered under the Law – Heb 10:5-10.
16. In the capacity of a Man, He was the "manifested" "Word of life" – 1 John 1:1-2.
17. God send "His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him" – 1 John 4:9.
18. God sent His Son into the world "to be the propitiation for our sins" – 1 John 4:10.
19. Because He is a man, Christ has been appointed as the one through whom God will "judge the world in righteousness" – Acts 17:31.

When we consider the birth of our blessed Lord, we must not allow carnal notions of infants and melancholy to fill our minds. While there are surely tender scenes associated with the entrance of Jesus into this world, the greater affectation is realized through the reason for that entrance. The world can readily receive a harmless and non-threatening infant – but that is only because they do not see the significance of Jesus in His infancy. Herod did see some of that significance, and was moved to hostility because of it. Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon and Anna saw the same significance, and rejoiced in the Spirit.

May this season be a time of profitable reflection for you – a time when you see the remarkable extent to which God has gone to save us. May you see something of what was involved in the Word become flesh and dwelling among us.



By Given O. Blakely, 12/2003



"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."
(Genesis 3:15)

INTRODUCTION

If men live in a time of spiritual decline, or when there is a certain obtuseness concerning the things of God, it is particularly difficult to maintain a proper perspective of the things relating to the salvation of God. There is a social and religious environment that emits a fog that obscures truth and lulls the human spirit into complacency. During such times, and in such places, the children of God must exert themselves to "fight the good fight of faith." That involves maintaining spiritual vision and understanding, particularly regarding the "great salvation" provided in Christ Jesus.

Traditionally, *Christmas* is a festive occasion, associated with family, joy, gifts, and generally wholesome activities. This is evidence of the sanctifying effects that Jesus has, even upon souls who are not knowledgeable of Him. Whatever Jesus touches does not remain the same, whether it is a person, a city, or a day. Notwithstanding this circumstance, there is a certain eroding effect that *holidays* can have upon ones perception of the truth. This is because the world has poured a lot of itself into such occasions, and the world always tends to dominate, never wanting to assume a subordinate position.

Some, sensing this competitive influence, take a legalistic view of holidays such as *Christmas*, insisting they are not mandated by God, and are therefore unlawful. It seems to me that a more proper approach is to use these occasions to polish the jewel of redemption, and refresh our perspective of the event that is traditionally celebrated – in this case, the birth of Jesus. This is the incarnation, when "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14), and Deity, in all of its "fulness," was poured into a bodily form (Col 1:19; 2:9). This brief review is intended to sanctify this season with spiritual freshness and encouragement.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING A HUMAN SAVIOR

There are a variety of prophecies relating to the humanity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His humanity began when *“the Word was made flesh,”* coming from heaven in a bodily form, and entering into the decaying and cursed arena of flesh and blood. This occasion was the greatest display of condescension, and led to the most outstanding humiliation ever experienced – death on the cross, upon which Jesus was cursed by God (Phil 2:8; Gal 3:13).

- **From woman** – The woman’s Seed would bring an end to the devil’s reign – Gen 3:15.
- **From Abraham** – The Seed of Abraham would be the means through which the world would be blessed – Gen 22:18.
- **Like Moses** – God would raise up a Prophet from among the people of Israel – one of them. He would be similar to Moses, except the people would give heed to Him – Deut 18:15-19
- **From David** – God would raise up a King from the lineage of David. That King would establish God’s Kingdom and build a house for His name – 2 Sam 7:12.
- **From Judah** – The *“Chief Ruler”* would come from the tribe of Judah – 1 Chron 5:2; Matt 2:6.
- The Savior would be begotten by **God**, not man – Psalm 2:7; Heb 1:6.
- The Savior would **volunteer** to enter the world, lay down His life, and take it up again – Psa 40:7-8; John 10:17-18; Heb 10:5-9.
- The Redeemer would be born of a **virgin**, and would know how to refuse evil and choose good – Isaiah 7:14-16; Matt 1:23.
- **Associated with Israel** – The Savior would come as a Son **given to Israel**, and the government would be placed upon His shoulder – Isa 9:6a.
- His glory and effectiveness are heralded in His name: *“Wonderful* (Source of glory), *Counselor* (Source of wisdom), *the Mighty God* (Source of power), *the Everlasting Father* (Source of the new birth), *the Prince of peace* (Source of peace and reconciliation)” – Isa 9:6b
- The increase of both His government and His peace would never end – Isa 9:7.
- **From Jesse** – He would come from the lineage of Jesse, David’s father – Isa 11:1.
- A *“Man”* would be established as a hiding place from the tempest brought on by sin and transgression – Isa 32:2.
- He would be *“formed from the womb”* to be God’s Servant – Isa 49:5.
- God would raise Him from David’s lineage. He would be a *“righteous Branch,”* and *“a King,”* and would prosper and execute judgment in the earth – Jer 23:5.
- **Born in Bethlehem** – The birth of the Messiah would take place in Bethlehem, even though it was *“little among the thousands of Judah”* – Mic 5:2.
- **Make God known** – The Savior would make God known to the brethren with whom He was identified – Psa 22:22; Heb 2:11-12.
- **He would have children** – Although the Savior would have no fleshly offspring (Isa 53:8), He would be given children of another order – Isa 8:18; Heb 2:13-14.
- **A Foundation Stone** – He would be placed as a Foundation Stone upon which lives could be effectively built – Isa 28:16.
- **Source of nourishment** – The Savior would feed His flock, gather His lambs, carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those with young – Isa 40:11.
- **Equipped to intercede** – The Savior’s humanity would equip Him to be an effective Intercessor – Isa 53:12; 59:16.
- **Salvation** – The presence of the Savior would be equated with salvation – Isa 62:11.

All of these prophecies required the humanity of the Savior – none of them could be fulfilled by an angel, or *“the Word”* when He was *“in form of God”* (Phil 2:6). This could not be a human form in appearance only – such as an angel appearing as a man (Gen 18:2 ^{TO ABRAHAM}; 32:24 ^{TO JACOB}; Dan 8:15 ^{TO DANIEL}). The Messiah had to take upon Himself the same frame and disposition as those He came to save (Heb 2:17). This was necessary for at least two reasons. First, He was really born to die, not to live (John 10:17-18). Second, His genuine humanity would enable Him to be an effective Intercessor (Heb 2:17-18; 4:15). It is the humanity of Christ that is the critical factor in our salvation. That humanity must never be taken for granted because of what it cost Jesus Himself.

PERSONALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BIRTH OF JESUS

There are a number of personalities and places, both good and evil, that are associated with the entrance of Jesus into the world. Some of them are made known **ONLY** in the birth of our Lord. No other infant was ever afforded the attention given to the Savior of the world.

- The city of Bethlehem – Matt 2:1.
- The city of Nazareth – Luke 1:26.
- The city of Jerusalem – Matt 2:1; Luke 2:22.
- The country of Judaea – Matt 2:1.
- The region of Galilee – Luke 1:26; 2:4.
- The nation of Egypt – Matt 2:13-19.
- A *“manger,”* in which the Savior was laid – Luke 2:7.
- The *“inn,”* with no room for the Savior – Luke 2:7.
- A *“field”* – Luke 2:8.
- Treasures of *“gold, frankincense, and myrrh”* – Matt 2:11.
- *“Heaven,”* from whence the angels came, and to which they returned – Luke 2:13,15
- The Temple in Jerusalem – Luke 2:27
- The people of Israel, of whom Jesus was the glory – Luke 2:32b
- The Gentiles, who would be given light by the Savior – Luke 2:32a
- Gabriel the angel – Luke 1:26-45.
- Mary – Luke 1:27-55. Her magnificent response – Lk 1:46-55
- Elizabeth, who bore witness to Mary – Luke 1:36-45. Her prophecy – Lk 1:42-45
- Joseph, a *“just man”* – Matt 1:20-24; 2:13,19
- Caesar Augustus, who levied a tax at the time of Jesus’ birth – Luke 2:1
- Cyrenius, governor of Syria at the time of Christ’s birth – Luke 2:2
- Shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night – Luke 2:8-18.
- The *“angel of the Lord,”* announcing the birth to the shepherds – Luke 2:9-12.
- A multitude of the heavenly host praising God – Luke 2:13-14.
- *“All people,”* declared to be the intended recipients of *“good tidings”* – Luke 2:10,31.
- Those to whom the shepherds bore witness, who *“wondered”* at their words – Luke 2:17-18.
- Herod the king, threatened by the birth, decreed the death of infants – Matt 2:1.
- Wise men from the East who came to worship Jesus – Matt 2:1-9.
- All Jerusalem, troubled at the report of a newborn king – Matt 2:3.
- Chief priests and scribes who identified where the Messiah would be born – Matt 2:4-6.
- Children in Bethlehem and surrounding coasts, two years and under – Matt 2:16.
- The mothers of the slain children – Matt 2:17-18.
- Simeon, just and devout, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel – Luke 2:26-35.
- Anna, a prophetess who departed not from the Temple – Luke 2:36-37.
- Certain in Jerusalem who *“looked for redemption”* – Luke 2:26.

All of these places, things, and people have been impacted by the entrance of Jesus into the world. Impersonal things like *“the inn,” “a manger,”* and *“gold, frankincense and myrrh”* have been sanctified by their association with the *“holy Child.”*

Ponder the remarkable scope of personalities related to Christ’s entrance into the world. Young Mary and aged Elizabeth – a virgin and a barren woman, a betrothed woman and a wife of many years. The younger Joseph and the aged Simeon – both just and devout. Anna, an aged widow and prophetess who knew to whom the news of the Redeemer needed to be reported. Humble shepherds heard from heavenly angels, and wise men from the East saw a heavenly star – *“His star.”* While one mother rejoiced in the birth of her Son, the Savior of the world, other mothers lamented at the loss of their sons. What caused the wise men to rejoice, greatly troubled Herod and *“all Jerusalem.”*

While heaven was giving, the earth was taxing. Wise men had to ask where the King was born, while those for whom He was born knew but did not care. Joy was experienced in a field, an inn, the Temple, and a city. An inn had no room for a King, but a place where beasts were housed did. In the same city, some were troubled at the birth, while others rejoiced to hear that the redemption for which they were looking was at hand.

We should not be surprised that mixed reactions are still found where the Savior of the world is made known. He is heaven’s line of demarcation that unveils all hearts.