

December 20, 2009 AM

## BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF GOD

***“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)***

God’s one agenda is to glorify Jesus Christ and making His name known to all of God’s creation. It is the great mystery of the incarnation that is the crux and the core of the gospel message. It is a mystery over which the rationalists stumble and the humanists are offended, and honestly the world is bewildered by. The natural mind is not equipped to grasp this truth which transcends human wisdom. Paul, after reasoning with the Greeks, who majored in knowledge, and with the Romans who majored in justice said, ***“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles believed on in he world, received up into glory.” (1 Timothy 3:16)***

### I. The mystery of divine condescension.

***“...The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”***

Man always aspired; God above condescends. God did not merely become “a man.” Rather He took upon Himself humanity. The body God prepared for Jesus became, not only a body of deity, but the vehicle of divine expression. ***“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’” (Hebrews 10:5-7)*** Man had no eternal hope. At best, sacrifice of animals could postpone judgment, but could not forever resolve the problem of being separated from God because of sin.

In Christ God expressed the revelation of himself.

### A. The incarnation is a scriptural fact.

1. It is the promise of prophecy.

2. It is the song of the Psalmists.
3. It is the hope of the disciples.
4. It is the theme of the Epistles.

**\*NOTE** Christ's coming in the flesh, His invading the world with the manifested presence of God, His identifying Himself with sinful man, is the most significant fact of history. Nothing in all history compares to it. ***"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14)** It is the greatest love story that could be conceived. The promise is that God would tabernacle among men. So John writes that in the fullness of time was come, ***"...The Word became flesh and dwelt (literally tabernacle among us) ..."*** What humility, what condescension, what matchless love! ***"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not inputting their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."* (2 Cor. 5:19)**

Man bound by sin was incapable of coming to God, so God in love and mercy came down to man to redeem His creation. ***"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."* (Hebrews 1:3)**

#### **B. This incarnation is a historical fact.**

1. Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem.
2. Christmas is not about a baby in a manger, but about God coming in person. ***"For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us."* (Isaiah 9:6)**
3. The reason why the child is born and the Son is given is because the Son already existed before the child was born. ***"And the government will rest upon His shoulders."***
4. Jesus came to run things, to transform men's heart and lives. He came to take the government of your life off your shoulders.

We gripe about how the federal government is unfit; it looks great compared to your ability to run your life.

- He is our Wonderful Counselor.
- He is our Mighty God.
- He is our Eternal Father.
- He is our Prince Of Peace.

Every time you look at your calendar you are reminded that Jesus' coming is an historical fact. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You can't see that spiritual birth, like you can't see the wind, but you will know it." Those truly born again have signs of life.

**C. The incarnation is an experimental fact.**

1. Paul said, "***Last of all he was seen of me.***" (1 Cor. 15:8)
2. Jesus not only lived, He still lives.
3. Paul said, "***Christ in us, the hope of glory.***" (Col. 1:27)
4. He came to man; He died of men, and He lives in men.

Every time a person receives Christ as Savior, God in the person of the Holy Spirit, takes up residence in his heart.

**II. The miracle of divine operation.**

**A. A sinless birth.** *"But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>21</sup> And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:20-21)

**B. A supernatural birth.**

1. The virgin-born baby was God in human form.
2. The angels came to the fearful shepherds saying, "***Fear not, I bring you good news.***"

**\*NOTE** As a soldier, the holidays are the worst days of being separated. The loneliness and need for your family is almost overwhelming. In my locker door I had pictures of my wife-to-be and my family. I remember wishing they could step out of that frame and be with me. That is the story of man. For centuries men wished God would step out of the frame and at Bethlehem that's exactly what He did. Jesus Christ was a visitor from outer space and time.

3. God took the form of a servant.
4. He was made in the likeness of mankind.
5. He identified Himself with the problems of the human race.
6. What a difference He has made:
  - The educational system he has inspired.
  - The social reform his teachings have instituted.
  - The transformation of lives that is the result of His example and indwelling power.

### **III. The marvel of the divine revelation.**

The cry of man's hearts through the ages is to see God. Job comforted himself that, "***In the last days I shall see my redeemer.***" Moses was only allowed to get a glimpse of God as he passed by, the greatest prophet Elijah was only allowed to hear the still small voice, but in the fullness of time, "***The Word became flesh...***"

#### **A. The beauty of the divine expression.**

***"...The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth..."***

1. Jesus' life was an expression of both God's grace and His truth.
2. God's grace is seen as he looked at the woman caught in the very act of sinful behavior. "***Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.***" (***John 8:11***)
3. In that same story we see God's truth and justice. "***He who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.***"
4. To the woman he said you're forgiven; go and sin no more.

## **B. The blessing of the divine intention.**

1. Christ, not only lived in the flesh, but He can live in you.
2. You can be the abode of God.
3. He can be incarnate in your heart. He can tabernacle in your life.

Dr. Tony Evans tells a true story of a couple having a party to celebrate the birth of their baby. So people gathered into the couple's home. As the people arrived they helped themselves to a bedroom and put their coats on the bed and joined the celebration of food and conversation. The mother felt it time to go get the newborn baby for everyone to see. She went into the bedroom only to discover with horror that the guests had thrown their coats on the sleeping infant and the baby had been smothered.

The tragedy of Christmas is in the midst of celebrating the Advent of Christ, His story and message is smothered out. Jesus is hardly mentioned; conversations are about buying gifts for people, parties to attend, expected days off work, and meals to prepare. While there is nothing wrong with these things; that is not what Christmas is about. If I give you a test today, could you even detail the Christmas story?

4. Jesus came to where we are in order that we might rise to where He is.

Jesus' birth changed a religion into a relationship and no man can come to God except coming to Jesus Christ. If we are saved, we are saved "In Him." It says in Ephesians 1:3, "***In Him you also trusted after you listened to the word of truth...***" Jesus is the word made flesh. He is God's final message to us; there is no other. "***He who has ears let him hear.***"

What we do instead of listening to God's final message:

- 1) We romanticize the message.
  - We have our shows and get the warm and fuzzies.

- We have the same feelings when we watch “It’s A Wonderful Life.”
- We put the Christmas story right up there with the story of Santa Claus.
- We just enjoy the message.

2) We resist the message.

The story of the baby is good but let’s not take it any further. He’s God’s son and our Savior, but being Lord and master of our life is a totally different deal.

3) We rebel against the message.

Like religions that stumble over the message or the non-religious who count it as foolishness. **“...but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,<sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God... For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24; 18)** I believe what I believe because I know more than God knows. Some will go through another Christmas as empty as it began, and wonder why there was nothing more.

4) We respond to it.

I have listened if I respond. If I were to say you left your lights on your car, how do I know if you listened? There is action taken. Response to the Christmas message is, “You believe.”

What does it mean to believe?

- Saving faith involves a turning from your sin, your false faith about good works. I used to think: \_\_\_\_\_
- Faith has to be rightly placed. Not in faith or an organization, or a religious ritual, but in Christ that He is the Messiah; God invading earth in the person of Jesus Christ.
- A total commitment to Jesus alone.