

Condescension of God; the Incarnation

Luke 2:1-7

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. NKJV

Have you ever been in one of those situations where you are a part of something that happens. But it doesn't seem clear as to what just happened. And you find yourself asking, "What just happened?" This is one of those times. No one at the birth of Jesus that night was fully aware of what had just happened. Even Mary, the mother of Jesus would not fully understand all this until many years later. Yes she knew that this was a special child. She knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah. She knew in a very real sense that this child was the Son of God, but she could not fully understand all that that meant at that time.

Only an infinitely wise God could conceive of a plan so elaborate that would finally reconcile the entire creation to Himself. A plan that would amaze all mankind and confound the devil.

Paul in his epistles explains this wonderful plan. Mary and Joseph lived it out but Paul helps us understand it. Each year, at least, we once again go over the story of the birth in Bethlehem of the Christ child. Each year we marvel at the lowly birth in a stable, and God being laid in a manger. Each year the children act out the scene in costume and with song. But do we really understand what just happened? Let us try this morning to put this all together.

I. What Child Is This

A. This is no ordinary child.

1. Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; NKJV
2. Col 2:9 For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, NLT

B. This is the Son of God, God of very God

1. Luke 1:32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest NKJV
2. Matt 1:22-23 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." NKJV

C. The creator of all that is

1. Col 1:15-16 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all

creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. NKJV

D. The one in whom all the treasure wisdom resides

II. From Whence He Came

A. Later when the Jews were trying to discredit Him they said He came from Galilee.

1. That was only partially true.
2. For He was born in Bethlehem as Micah 5:2 had predicted.
3. But John shows us His ultimate origin.

III. Emptied Himself

A. Paul gives us even greater insight.

1. Phil 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NKJV
2. Phil 2:6-8 6 Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, 7 But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. 8 And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! AMP

B. That Jesus being equal with God did not hang on to that position but laid it aside willingly.

C. That when Jesus came to earth He emptied Himself, laid aside some of those attributes that distinguished Him as God.

D. That instead, He took on Him the form of a Servant and became obedient the the will of the Father even to His death.

IV. To Be Made Like His Brethren

A. But this was no spiritual apparition

- B. He was fully human, tempted in every way we are yet never giving in to sin.
1. Heb 2:5-12 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, NKJV
- C. He became like us so He could die for us, in our place.
1. Dwight L. Moody told of the young man who did not want to serve in Napoleon Bonaparte's army. When he was drafted, a friend volunteered to go in his place. The substitution was made, and some time later the surrogate was killed in battle. The same young man was, through a clerical error, drafted again. "You can't take me" he told the startled officers. "I'm dead. I died on the battlefield." They argued that they could see him standing right in front of them, but he insisted they look on the roll to find the record of his death. Sure enough, there on the roll was the man's name, with another name written beside it. The case finally went to the emperor himself. After examining the evidence, Napoleon said, "Through a surrogate, this man has not only fought, but has died in his country's service. No man can die more than once, therefore the law has no claim on him." Two thousand years ago, Jesus went to a cross to bear the penalty that rightly belonged to us. He died in our place. And through Him, our names are written in the book, with His name written beside ours.