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2013 12 - The Condescension and Incarnation



Introduction

Has there ever been a time when there has been as much spiritual confusion and openness of aggressive atheism and humanist teachings? As it is, I wonder “How long before the Christmas Carols will be totally stopped being played in the malls?”, when those who have “manger scenes” will find objecting neighbors, and the only ones who get excited at Christmas will be children and store owners. We live in a world of falsehood and counterfeit, and perhaps the question comes: “Is there any light at the end of this tunnel?” Thank God we have a case history where things were just as black, and suddenly the Light beamed. That which I speak of is the era before the Lord came into this world.

The Darkness and Falsehood of The Ancient World

When our Lord was born there had been in recent centuries three major world powers, and a fourth was ruling. They was Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Under their domination, especially under Rome, there had been an attempt by Satan to counterfeit the person and position of Christ. Unwittingly, but under Satanic influence, there was an ongoing attempt to counterfeit the millennium when Christ will reign as the Governor among the nations (Psa. 22:28). Rome had created a one world empire which was centralized in one man, the emperor. The emperors had given themselves titles of deity and were foreshadows of the beast with his name of blasphemy (Rev. 13:1) and the scarlet woman (Rev. 17:3).

- a) Julius Caesar was called “God and Sovereign, Saviour of human life”
- b) Augustus was called “God’s Son”
- c) Domitian was called “Lord and God”
- d) Augustus, Claudius and Nero were called “Saviour of the world”

When these men wrote, their writings were called “gospels”, and when one of them arrived anywhere it was called a parousia and his visit an epiphany. The emperor was a false Messiah and false God. Yet God took this very system (for He is the sovereign God) and used it to fulfill His purposes. Rome gave a decree for taxation for the fulfillment of the scriptures as to where the Lord would be born (Mic. 5:2; Lk. 2:1-7). Rome also held the power of life and death (Jn. 19:10), and it was by the Roman manner of death the Lord died.

The Distinction Between His Condescension and Incarnation

The coming of the Lord into the world involved two “steps”. The first being His condescension and the second His incarnation. This is taught by Paul.

- a) When he wrote: “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7), that was His condescension.
- b) The following words: “Was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7), that is His incarnation.

It is impossible for us to grasp what was involved in either of these steps, but several years ago a very vivid illustration was given to me. I was working with some farmers in the canola fields and my “job” was to make sure the stalks fell into a huge basin in which there was a giant fast turning rooster which pulled the stalks up into another container. Suddenly I saw a little creature. It was not beautifully colored but gross looking. Then a thought came to me. What would it take for me to take its place, for me to become that little insect, for me to

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limit myself to its level, yet with the knowledge that in doing so, I would die in its place? I watched and in an instant it was gone. I had neither the ability nor the love to take its place. Christ had both the ability to become human and the love which caused Him to become a human being, to take my place, and suffer in my stead. That's love for "love seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. 13:5).

As I say, it is impossible for us to appreciate what He left, for when Paul was caught up to the third heaven and heard "unspeakable words", that is, human language could never describe that which he heard (2 Cor. 12:4).

When our Lord came from glory:

- a) He left a world of perfect government for a world of bias, and swaying of opinion because of friendships, associations, or personal ambitions.
- b) He left a world of purity of activity for a world of deceit and illegality.
- c) He left a world of unchanging perfection for a world where compromise was the norm.
- d) He left a world of settled purity for a world of upheavals due to the wickedness of the human hearts.
- e) He left a world of recognized worthiness for a world where he would be shamed, mocked, and treated with disdain.
- f) He left a world of immeasurable riches for to live in a world of poverty, hardship, and low class environment.
- g) He left a world of peace and harmony for a world of hatred, spite, and selfishness.
- h) He left a world of supreme fellowship for a world where He would experience animosity and aloneness.
- i) He left a world of life for a world in which He would know suffering and death.
- j) He left a world of joy for a world in which He would know sorrow and grief.

What this meant to Him, and what it cost Him, we shall never know.

No Room In The Inn - The Outside Place

Luke wrote and informs Theophilus that the baby would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger (Lk. 2:7, 12), and it would be a sign! The angel says: "this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:12). Those of us who have had anything to do with new babies know that almost immediately after they are born they are snugly wrapped giving them the sense of security, and keep them warm. So what was so special about the baby wrapped in swaddling bands, and lying in a manger? What was it a sign of? Luke does add a statement which perhaps gives a little light: "there was no room for them in the inn" (Lk. 2:7). To my understanding it was a sign of that which was to come. He and those associated with Him would always be on the outside, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (Jn. 1:11). He would forever be on the "outside" place, thought of as one out of His mind by His family (Jn. 7:5); the attitude of the leaders would be: "Come, let us kill Him" (Mk. 12:7); those who associated with Him were to be cast out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:35). Finally, the writer of the Hebrews informs us that He: "suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12), and encourages us to: "Go forth therefore unto him without the camp" (Heb. 13:13). Sometimes people can make an individual feel utterly worthless and not wanted. It is exceedingly hurtful to be made to feel uncared for and despised. For One who cared and loved as the Lord did, longing to gather the people under His wings, and it was not just that they would not, but hated Him, that must have deeply hurt. When I was a little child I was taught a little hymn:

No room for the baby in Bethlehem's inn, only a cattle shed
No room on this earth for the dear Son of God, nowhere to lay His head.
Only a cross, did they give to my Lord, only a borrowed tomb
Today He is seeking a place in your heart
Will you still say to Him, "No room".

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It was a dreadfully sad state of ignorance when people in Bethlehem were unaware of what was happening just a short distance away. Humanity totally oblivious that the greatest event in human history was taking place so close to them. In that stable a baby boy was born, and that baby was the Hope of Israel (Acts 26:6); the Consolation of Israel (Lk. 2:25); the Desire of all nations (Hag. 2:7); the Governor who will rule (shepherd) My people Israel (Matt. 2:6); the Dayspring from on high (Lk. 1:78); Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23); the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), and the second man (1 Cor. 15:47). They did not even know it. He was outside the inn, rejection consciously or unconsciously was to be His life's experiences.

The Swaddling Clothes

To me the swaddling clothes have profound truths. I am reminded of the other time His body was wrapped (I know it is a different Greek word but my thought is on the fact of wrapping), it was when he was prepared for His burial (Matt. 27:59; Mk. 15:46; Lk. 23:53).

Again when I think of the swaddling, it reminds me of the words of God to Israel: "I swaddled you" (Lam. 2:22; Ezek. 16:4). What a glorious reality this is. The God of glory who had seen Israel as a new born babe had been cast out, concerning them God says: "Thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed with water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field" (Ezek. 16:4-5). Then God took them up and made them beautiful (Ezek. 16:6-14). The swaddling God became the swaddled baby!

Down from His Glory
Ever living story
My God my Savior came
And Jesus was His name
Born in a manger
To His own, a stranger
A Man of sorrows, fears and agony

Without reluctance
Flesh and blood His substance
He took the form of man
Revealed the hidden plan
Oh, glorious myst'ry
Sacrifice of Calv'ry
And now I know Thou wert the great "I am"

The Earthly Beginning of The Fulfilling of The Divine Counsels

When the Lord came into this world possessing the body prepared for Him (Heb. 10:5), the communications in the counsel chambers of heaven began their first active step on earth for the fulfilling of those purposes.

Christ said: "I come to do Thy will" (Heb. 10:9). It is a beautiful picture of one who, having been called, is standing ready to serve, then speaking to another says: "Here am I". Isaac said this to Abraham (Gen. 22:7); Moses to God (Ex. 3:4); Samuel to the Lord (1 Sam. 3:4); and Isaiah to God (Isa. 6:8). However, when these men said: "Here am I", they did not know what lay ahead, and whither they would be able to fulfill that which lay ahead. The Lord knew what lay ahead and yet He stood in readiness and said: "I come to do they will". He was fully committed to it and this was the first earthly step.

How glorious is the miracle which enabled Him to become human, and yet never ceasing to be the fulness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9). Or who can comprehend the wonder of His living life and never using His deity to assist in

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any activity, always submissive to the will of God and dependent on the Holy Spirit, never to use His deity to anesthetize any physical pain or suppress the severity of any temptation. Paul summed it up by saying: "Love seeketh not her own, suffereth long and is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4), and as the glory of this dawns on our hearts then the automatic response is:

Oh, how I love Him
How I adore Him
My breath, my sunshine
My all in all
The great Creator
Became my Savior
And all God's fullness
Dwelleth in Him.

. . . *Rowan Jennings*