



Christmas, A Promise From God

How could Mary be pregnant if she was a virgin? The answer is that she wasn't pregnant in the usual way.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." ~ Isa 9:6-7

The sentence is a double one, but it is not a needless repetition. The reader soon discovers a distinction --and it is a distinction with a difference. "Unto us a child is *born*, unto us a Son is *given*." Child *born*, Son *given*. Jesus Christ, as a child in his human nature, is born; begotten of God, born through the virgin Mary. As a child, he started at birth and worked his way through all the stages of human development. He is as truly born as any other child that has ever lived upon earth. He is, in his humanity, a child born!

However, the Bible tells us that Jesus was born through a virgin; there is a difference here. The difference is, that Mary was still a virgin after the birth of Jesus. Theologians always concern themselves with technical problems. So, to protect Jesus from receiving the "sin nature" by heredity from his mother Mary, in December of 1854 they declared that the "virgin Mary, from the first moment of conception by the special grace of almighty God in view of the merits of Christ, was preserved from all stain of original sin." They called their new doctrine the "immaculate conception."

You see, the Bible says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). There is the problem they dealt with --how to protect Christ from original sin, yet allow him to enter the human race. Sin is passed down from generation to generation.

"Unto us a child is born." I believe there was another theologian who gave us the answer as to how this child could be born into the human race, while at the same time, be protected from the very nature that each of us "received by inheritance from our fathers." This theologian was Charles Wesley. Wesley wrote: "Adam's likeness now efface, stamp thine image in its place; Second Adam from above, reinstate us in Thy love. Hark! the herald angels sing, 'Glory to the new-born King!' Wesley proposed that you could enter the human race by the first Adam which would link you to the sin nature of the human race (each coming from the other), or by the second Adam (which would require a virgin birth, since it is natural birth that connects us all to a flawed past). The second Adam did not come from the first Adam and is, therefore, spared the sin of the first Adam. "Second Adam from above reinstate us in thy love."

Wesley saw the difference as being between being an *ordinary conception* and being *born through a virgin*. As all of the human race came from the first human; all of the *renewed human race* came from the second human. "And so it is written, the first man Adam was a living soul; the second Adam was made a quickening spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47). There are only two men --the first and the second. We are all here as a product of the first man Adam. We are renewed as a product of the second man Christ.

Mary gave birth to this second man from heaven, providing a place of incubation and development; but as for his origin, it was from heaven. So we hear Christ praying, "A body you have prepared for me" (Hebrews 10:5). Mary's womb was not the source of Christ; it was only the vehicle by which Christ entered the human world.

Again, why was Jesus born of a virgin? Because he *became* flesh and dwelt among us. You cannot *become something different* unless you are already something to begin with. Ordinary conception is the *beginning* of life. The coming of Christ was not the beginning of a life (He has existed from all eternity); so, he had to be born of a virgin. That is to say, Jesus was not the result of the ordinary cohabitation that ends virginity. Mary was still a virgin when Jesus was born. The point, as Wesley makes it, is not that non-virginity is sinful, for it is not sinful; the point is, Mary's virginity makes the statement that Jesus came to us as the "second man from heaven," and not from the ordinary source of earth at all. All normally conceived children hail back to the first Adam --Jesus did not.

The virgin birth shows the pre-existent nature of Christ. The virgin birth is not the story of the cohabitation of God with a human being, producing a half-God, half-man. The Presbyterian theologian, James Oliver Buswell said this: "Note that whereas the miracle was wrought by the Holy Spirit, no group of people claiming to believe the Bible, no sect or heresy in church history, has ever regarded the Holy Spirit as the father of Jesus." The virgin birth is the incarnation of pre-existent deity --not the beginning.

Now, there is another consideration. There are those who hold that the virgin birth was essential because, they say, regular procreation is sinful in itself. The notion that human cohabitation is sinful led to the doctrine of celibacy in the church. Marriage, itself, was thought to be some kind of concession to the weakness of human nature --on a distinctly lower moral level than the celibate life, in the eyes of some.

It must be said with the greatest possible emphasis, that the notion that the marriage relationship and the begetting of children is, in itself, any way sinful is a notion which is entirely contrary to the Bible. The feeling is not infrequent, that if Jesus had been born of ordinary human cohabitation, that fact in itself would have made him sinful. Such a notion is entirely absurd. If Jesus had been born by ordinary means, he would have been a sinner, not because human cohabitation is sinful, but because those who are born as a result of it are genetically and personally represented in the first Adam in the original sin which took place at the foundation of the human race. Those who come from Adam, must inherit Adam's likeness, as we all have. **Jesus is the only person who chose to be born.** I didn't choose to be born --did you?

"For unto us a child is born." There is nothing wrong with being born.

Secondly, we note, that as God's Son, he was not born, but given. "Unto us a Son is given." It is all there in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to the world."

Now, I would like to concentrate on those two words, "unto us."
"Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

Is it really so? Is it so? --Unto us? That is, is it so in our own case? Is the child born unto you --given unto you? You see, this child is not born unto you, unless, you are born to this child. The gospel writer, John, calls

this kind of birth, the "new birth," or being "born again." If the child is born unto you, then you must be born to the child. If the Son is given unto you, then you must receive the Son.

Secondly, if this child is born to you, then, you must become a child. And the question is raised, "Are you a child?" Jesus said, "except you be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Being a child means that you must give up some of your adult ways. **You must** give up cynicism, **you must** trust again, **you must** become teachable, **you must have "good will toward all men,"** **you must** depend upon the Heavenly Father, **you must** seek humility, **you must** play with all the other children, **you must** seek fun and happiness and the best in all things. If we are not children in that sense, then this child is not born unto us at all. Adults could become more adult by becoming more child-like.

Third, If the Son is given to us, then we must be sons ourselves. "But as many as received him, to them He gave the right **to become the sons of God.**" You are only a son, by receiving the Son. Christ became a Son, that all might be made his brethren. We are to be children of God together.

Fourth, if the Son is given to us, then we must be given to the Son. Are you given to the Son? If you are not, then how is the Son given to you. What does Christmas mean, if the child is not born to you, and if the Son is not given to you? How do you look at Christmas if it is not unto you? What is a Christmas gift, if not accepted?

If it is so, what then? Why do you question; if it is so? If it is so; why do you doubt? If it is so, can you not say, "I know that my redeemer lives; I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him"? If it is so, why not realize the fact and live in its trueness? If it is so, why not be hopeful, rather than discouraged? Hallelujah! It is "Unto us a child is born." It is "Unto us a son is given." Not just a child born or a Son given --but "**unto us.**" Here is the "peace on earth, good will toward all men." You won't find it any place else.

This is our deepest hope. There shall be peace on earth because "the government shall be upon His shoulders (not ours), and of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end." If you don't believe in God, then your hope is in man. The reality is that man has never brought peace to the earth, and he is farther from it today than ever. There was a time when the oceans formed boundaries to protect us from one another. There was a time when we could say wicked and mean things about one another and the words would never arrive. Now, hard words travel fast They travel in "tweets" –they travel at a million "tweets" a second. What chance do we have. In this age of the information highway, the "cool down time" for "hot words" is down to zero. Think before you "click."

Take a good look at some examples of how man typically brings peace: Cuba had a cruel government under Batista; so, they had a revolution and killed a lot of people so they could have Fidel Castro --who killed a lot of people and sent arms, guerrilla soldiers, and revolutionaries all over the world.

Ethiopia had a corrupt regime; so, they had a coup, dragged Haile Selassie off to prison, killed 59 officials, and in the next year killed 30,000 people to get a nice, clean, righteous government.

The Shah of Iran was a "wheeler-dealer" who spent too much money on himself, and apparently, from time to

time, stooped to an assassination. So they had a revolution, killed a lot of people, so they could have Ayatollah Khomeini, who had large public executions rather than cowardly, sneaky, assassinations. People got the idea that you should go along with the government. They have no crime, no drugs, no juvenile delinquency, no promiscuity. People don't steal because they don't want their hand cut off. Yet, when I think of peace, I don't think of Iran. Need I go on and on and on?

What is wrong with putting our hope in man? What keeps men from peace?

First, man is ignorant. We never know the full story. Will Rogers once said, "All men are ignorant, only on different things." It is not enough to be sincere. Even sincere Christians are ignorant.

Secondly, men are governed by feelings. It is impossible for man to forget about past wrongs done to his family. History reminds him. This is, of course, where Christian forgiveness comes in; though not everyone shall ever embrace it --including the Christians.

Thirdly, men are not altogether "on the level." Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Treaties and laws are kept in effect only so long as they are convenient --only so long as it is to one's own profit. It is something like, "We'll give you the Bad lands --unless, we find gold in them." Nothing is completely "on the level" with men.

Fourthly, man is judgmental. We could call it self-righteous; man thinks that he is good, while it is always others who are bad (and they may bw).. He is smart, others are stupid. We tend to know that other people are wrong and stupid (We can judge, but we probably can't do a better job).

We Americans are especially good at judging people of other lands. Take Palestine, for example; who does the land belong to? Well, the British had it in the 1940's. But, they got it from the Turks --however, they got it from the Arabs, and they got it from the Sultans, and they got it from the Romans, who got it from the Greeks. How far should we go back to straighten the world out anyway? You could start by giving your house and lot to a Native American, and paying back wages to the slaves. **How far back is far enough?** And, even when people claim to have a "contract with God," you have to ask, "Yes, but did you keep you're part of the contract?" Probably not. Well... we know not!

This world has never seen peace; if our hope is in man, then, there is no hope. Sure, we must work on these things; but, we always come up short --and short is never enough. It is Christ who is our hope. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Son of Man - Son of God. No Christ - no hope. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness." Put your hope in Christ –not, Netanyahu. Netanyahu is just more of what the world has already tried, and tried, and tried.. No Christ –no hope.

Christmas is our promise from God. Take it seriously; it's not as though God is going to fail! "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given. His name shall be call, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:6,7). In case you didn't get it, "He's not about to "give up." "No end." He will not stop. **–And, he can "outlast the worst of the worst."** That, is who I'm counting on. **That is who I'm counting on.** Christmas Peace to all!