

# Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION  
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105  
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path.

December 2023

## The Extraordinary Incarnation

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.*

Matthew 1:18-25

**I**N LUKE'S GOSPEL we see these events unfold from a different perspective. We see Gabriel visit Mary and tell her what will happen. Matthew shows us the perspective of Joseph.

Joseph and Mary were betrothed, or as we'd put it today, engaged to be married. Their customs were different than ours, but we can still imagine what it must have been like for Joseph. The woman he is betrothed to becomes pregnant; the obvious conclusion is that she has not been faithful. The tradition of the day would have been to call her out in front of everyone at the city gates and break the betrothal. But Joseph isn't a petty man; in fact, we're told that he is just. So, he resolves to break up with her privately. But God intervenes and tells him that the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is in fact Jesus, the promised Messiah. That his wife is the prophesied virgin who shall bear the Messiah, and it will be up to him and his wife to raise the son of God. This must have been quite the burden.

Church tradition holds that Joseph was quite a bit older than Mary, perhaps in his middle years at this point. This is

due to the fact that you don't see or hear from him again after the incident in the temple when Jesus was twelve. This is why Jesus, as the oldest, tells John to take care of Mary; He wouldn't have done this if Joseph was living.

In this text we see God working through normal people and normal events to bring about the extraordinary Incarnation. To enter into human flesh to redeem humanity. Our Emmanuel, God with us.



One of the hard things about Bible translations is that we miss out on some nuances in the text when we read it in English. The name Jesus means Savior, and some might argue that that's how it ought to be translated in English. In Hebrew the name is Yeshua, i.e. Joshua.

The name of Jesus is very significant because it shows that God had a plan for our salvation from the very beginning. He wouldn't let us remain in our fallen state forever, but would redeem us, would send a Savior. And that's exactly what He did.

*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

2 Corinthians 9:15  
God's peace.

# Christ Our King

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation 1:1-8

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

John 18:33-37

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:



and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Revelation 1:9-18

I WAS STRUCK BY THE contrast between Jesus in the judgment hall of Pilate and the Jesus Who John sees on the Isle of Patmos. Our king is not an earthly king who reigns for a period of time, but a King who reigns forever. He is a King who came to testify to the truth and that truth is embodied in Him. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He bore witness of Himself to the Jews and Pilate and they killed Him, or rather He laid His life down, for He says in Revelation, "I am the First and the Last, the Living One. I was dead but behold, I live forevermore."

Christ our King stands in the judgment hall of an earthly ruler and is sentenced to death. He dies the death that we deserve and is raised again to give us a life that we don't deserve.

John sees Christ our King in His Majesty and Power. John sees Him as He truly is, our God and King. John bears witness to what he saw and we now bear witness to the One in whom we believe. Christ is our King who reigns forever, He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! We are of all people most blessed as we live in Him. Take joy in Christ our King this Advent and Christmas season.

God's peace.

THEY THAT ARE HIS OWN have been commanded to comfort penitent souls with the assurance that their sins are all forgiven in the name of Jesus and in His precious atoning blood. To those who believe this, Christmas has arrived, for they received the greatest Gift of all: the King of Kings for their very own to keep, and through Him salvation full and free and a "lively hope" that one day they shall triumphantly enter with Him into the new Jerusalem to join the heavenly throng to sing the eternal Christmas hymn: Hosanna to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! Hosanna in the highest! Hallelujah, Amen!

Andrew Mickelsen; December 1961 CM

# The Virgin Birth

Paul Kretzmann

**F**OR ABOUT EIGHTEEN CENTURIES after the ascension of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church the fact of the virgin birth was not called into question and the comforting doctrines drawn therefrom were universally accepted. Throughout the Christian Church the words of the Apostolic Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," were confessed and believed. But the era of rationalism, of believing only what reason admitted to be true, ushered in a new conception of Bible criticism, and this played havoc with our doctrine. One critic attacked the idea of a supernatural origin of Jesus and tried to find a natural explanation of the event. Another declared that Joseph was the father of Jesus. A third calmly treated the stories of Christ's nativity as myths. In this manner, the entire Bible account was soon discredited, both the fact of the virgin birth and the doctrine of the necessity of the sinless birth of the Savior being denied. It is stated that the modern world cannot believe in, and therefore has no place for, miracles. This standpoint evidently overthrows the entire Bible and the history of the Church, both of which are replete with miracles. Some have maintained that the virgin birth has no doctrinal significance anyway, not the physical basis of Christ's existence, but the moral and spiritual character of His personality being involved in redemption. But such statements reveal the fact that they are very well aware of the vital connection between the doctrine of the virgin birth and faith in the divinity of Christ. A third class of critics favors the mythological explanation, declaring that legends and myths have ever sprung up in connection with the development of all religions. Unfortunately the critics themselves disagree, some of them assuming a Hebrew, others a Greek, others an Indian origin of the story. Besides, their examples are poorly chosen, a divine paternity by carnal intercourse being assumed in the majority of cases. And a recent writer has shown all these theories to be untenable and not analogous, besides referring to the fact that the heathen myths in connection with such stories are of an incredibly vile and immoral character, while nothing can equal the simple, chaste, convincing language of the Bible narrative. The final argument of the critics that historical and textual criticism has proved consecutive editing of New Testament stories and the presence of material foreign to essential Gospel sources, reveals the intention they are anxious to put into execution, namely, to destroy the faith of Christians in the truthfulness of the Bible story.

Let us, in combating these attacks, rely upon the weapon which Christ Himself indicated to us, namely: "It is written." It is plainly written, Isaiah 7:14, that the Messiah should be

born of a virgin, for the Hebrew word there used, both according to its etymology and according to usage, designates not merely a "woman of marriageable age," but a virgin, a maiden that has not known man. Dr. Stoeckhardt has proved this meaning even in the passage Proverbs 30:18-20. The virgin birth is most decidedly taught in the passage above, Matthew 1:20-25, as well as in Luke 1:34-35. It agrees, moreover, with the prophecy, Genesis 3:15, where the Seed of the Woman alone is named as the crusher of the Serpent's head. It finds its final confirmation in the fact that St. Paul refers to it in the most self-evident way, when he speaks of the Son of God as having been

made of a woman, Galatians 4:4. In the light of these plain passages we have every reason to say: "Therefore these learned men and critics are the falsifiers, visionaries, and writers of legends, not the apostles and evangelists. Their historico-critical research is plain fraud. From the view-point of their unbelief, indeed, they cannot do otherwise. Theirs is the experience of the Jews: With seeing eyes they see nothing, and with hearing ears they hear nothing, and they have their reward. The devil thanks them for it." We shall retain the doctrine of the virgin birth as a necessary part of our faith. We believe that it is



essential for a full appreciation of the supernatural, the divine character of the Savior. "In order to constitute a divine-human personality, the divine Being had to enter into the procreative depths of humanity and select and assume a human nature of His formation and purifying, and unite Himself personally with it. It must be bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, soul of our soul, in order to be organically connected with the human race; but it must be our nature lifted out of itself, separated, purified, transmuted—a human nature that, strangely and mysteriously enough, could be 'tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.'" Christ "indeed is become a real, true, natural man, but not conceived and born in sins, as other children of Adam. For that reason His mother had to be a virgin whom no man had touched, in order that He might not be conceived and born under the curse, but without sin, and the devil might have no right or power over Him... Such mercy we celebrate today in order to thank God that He purified our unclean, unholy conception and birth through His holy conception and birth, took the curse from us, and brought the blessing upon us. We by nature have a filthy, sinful conception and birth, but Christ has a pure, holy conception and birth, and through His holy conception and birth our unclean nature, flesh, and blood are blessed and sanctified." The fact of the sinless humanity of Christ, guaranteed to us by the virgin birth, made His being placed under the Law, His perfect fulfillment of the Law, and thus His entire work of redemption possible.~

# Jesus, the Best Christmas Gift

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Christmas greetings to you!

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace, good will toward men.**

Luke 2:14

That was the wonderful first greeting proclaimed by the many angels to announce the special birth after baby Jesus was born.

It is the Christmas season when we once again celebrate our Savior's birth. My heart rejoices when I think of what happened so long ago in that humble stable.

Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth and had to go to Bethlehem because the ruler of the land said all people were to go to the town of their birth to be counted. Joseph took Mary and they began their travel to Bethlehem.

Mary at this time was very near to having a baby, this baby being the Son of God. They had to travel about 100 miles which was a long way to go on foot, or on a donkey as Mary probably did. It was a long weary trip for Mary. When they finally reached Bethlehem, the town was already full and Joseph could find no place for them to rest. At last they were offered a place in someone's stable where animals were kept and fed. That does not seem like much of a place to sleep, but Joseph and Mary not only slept here but Mary gave birth to her baby boy. Imagine that, this little baby, the Messiah, being born in the stable and His bed was the manger. The manger was a box from which the animals ate their food.

The Bible does not tell us much about Jesus as a young child. He lived with Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem for about two years and then in Egypt for about one year. Then they went back to Nazareth because the Bible says in *Matthew 2:23*: *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

In Luke 2:41-50, we read about Jesus being in the temple, asking and answering questions with the priests. He was just twelve years old. Jesus was a very special baby, a boy whose life was to be lived like most children of His day, but yet He was quite different because He was doing God's business at an early age. He grew into a young man who gave all of Himself so that He could do His Father's will. At the end of His life, He gave His life to save mankind from sin. **John 3:16** says: **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

You and I and all believers can thank our God for giving us His only Son. When we hear the name of Jesus, we can be comforted because this man named Jesus loves us and forgives us freely. We can tell God even this Christmas season, "Thank You for the gift of Your loving Son. God, You have given us the very best of gifts and please help us to share this gift with others."

Although I did not tell *the* Christmas story, you children be sure to have your parents read it to you. If you don't have a story book, you can always find it in the Bible in Luke 1 and 2. I love the Christmas story and never get tired of hearing or reading it.

I pray that God will again be with each of you this Christmas season and bless each of you with even more love for Jesus. We cannot love Jesus enough. Jesus is coming back one day, and those who believe in Him will be whisked up to heaven to live forever. It's hard for us to imagine that, but God's Word doesn't and cannot lie. It's all going to be very, very good, because God does all things well and good. I pray you all have a very blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Here is a favorite children's Christmas song about Jesus' lowly birth. This was always one of my childhood favorites, too.

In a little stable  
Far across the sea,  
Was a little baby  
Just like you and me.  
Not a bed or cradle,  
Not a pillow deep,  
But a lowly manger  
Was His place to sleep.

How I love this Jesus,  
Born in Bethlehem.  
And I know He loves me,  
Little though I am.

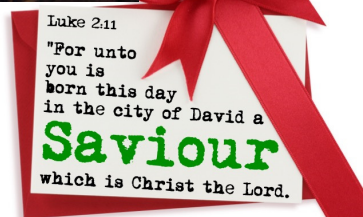
God's peace.



God watched over them, and I am sure that they were as comfortable as could be expected. God knew that His Son Jesus would be born in such a lowly place. Jesus' birth was a very special gift to us, the best we could ever get. Without faith in Jesus, we have no hope and would remain empty.

We in America give each other gifts at Christmas time, but none even compare to the gift of God's Son.

Just think, God gave us His only Son as a baby. Then He grew to be a man and preached to the people about His Father in heaven, and then He died to save all people, including you and me, from our sins.



# The Message of the Angel

Martin Luther

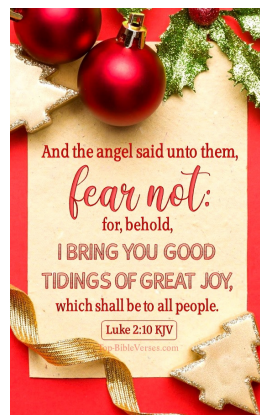
**Y**OU HAVE HEARD today the story from the Gospel of St. Luke of how it came to pass that our Lord Christ was born and then also the message of the angel, who announced who the boy was who was born. Now we shall go on and take up the message of the angel. So for today you have heard only that the child was born and that he is the Lord and Savior. Thus we spoke of the story, how it unfolded, and who the persons in it were. This article is so high that even today it is believed by only a few. Nevertheless, God has preserved it even through those who have not believed it...

It is a high article to believe that this infant, born of Mary, is true God; for nobody's reason can ever accept the fact that He who created heaven and earth and is adored by angels was born of a virgin. That is the article. Nobody believes it except he who also knows this faith, namely, that this child is the Lord and Savior.

But for whom was He born and whose Lord and Savior is He? The angels declare that He was born Lord and Savior. The Turks, the pope, and the scholars say the same thing, but only to the extent that it brings in money and honor. But that anyone could say, "to you is born," as the angel says, this is the faith which we must preach about. But we cannot preach about it as we would like to do. Indeed, who could ever grasp [the full meaning of] these words of the evangelist; "a Savior, who is the Lord," and, "to you"! I know well enough how to talk about it and what to believe about it, just as others do. So there are many who have this belief and do it, just as others do. So there are many who have this belief and do not doubt this first belief that Christ is the Lord, the Savior, and the virgin's Son. This I too have never doubted. But if these words are planted no higher than my thoughts, then they have no firm roots. We are certain that this was proclaimed by the angel, but the firm faith does not follow. For the reason does not understand both sides of this faith, first that Christ is a man, but also the Savior and Lord or King. This needs to be revealed from heaven. One who really has the first faith also has the other.

Who, then, are those to whom this joyful news is to be proclaimed? Those who are faint-hearted and feel the burden of their sins, like the shepherds, to whom the angels proclaim the message, letting the great lords in Jerusalem, who do not accept it, go on sleeping. Beyond the first faith there must be the second faith, that Christ is not only the virgin's Son, but also the Lord of angels and the Savior of men. The words anyone can understand, antisacramentarians, fanatics, sectarians, and Turks; but they do not proceed from the heart they come only from hearing and go no farther than hearing. This is not faith, however, but only a memory of what has been heard, that one knows that he has heard it. Nobody ventures upon it, so as to stake goods, life, and honor upon it. And yet we must preach it for the sake of those who are in the multitude to whom the angel preached.

This is our theology, which we preach in order that we may understand what the angel wants. Mary bore the child, took it to her breast and nursed it, and the Father in heaven has His Son, lying in the manger and the mother's lap. Why did God do all this? Why does Mary guard the child as a mother should? And reason answers: in order that we may make an idol of her, that honor may be paid to the mother. Mary becomes all this without her knowledge and consent, and all the songs and glory and honor are addressed to the mother. And yet the text does not sound forth the honor of the mother, for the angel says, "I bring to you good news of great joy; for to you is born this day the Savior." I am to accept the child and His birth and forget the mother, as far as this is possible, although her part cannot be forgotten, for where there is a birth there must also be a mother. Nevertheless, we dare not put our faith in the mother but only in the fact that the child was born. And the angel desired that we should see nothing but the child which is born, just as the angels themselves, as though they were blind, saw nothing but the child born of the virgin, and desired that all created things should be as nothing compared with this child, that we should see nothing, be it harps, gold, goods, honor, power, and the like which we would prefer before their message. For if I received even the costliest and the best in the world, it still does not have the name of Savior. And if the Turk were ten times stronger than he is, he could not for one moment save me from my infirmity, to say nothing of the peril of death, and even less from the smallest sin or from death itself. In my sin, my death, I must take leave of all created things. No, sun, moon, stars, all creatures, physicians, emperors, kings, wise men and potentates cannot help me. When I die I shall see nothing but black darkness, and yet that light, "To you is born this day the Savior," remains in my eyes and fills all heaven and earth. The Savior will help me when all have forsaken me. And when the heavens and the stars and all creatures stare at me with horrible mien, I see nothing in heaven and earth but this child. So great should that light which declares that He is my Savior become in my eyes that I can say: Mary, you did not bear this child for yourself alone. The child is not yours; you did not bring Him forth for yourself, but for me, even though you are His mother, even though you held Him in your arms and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and picked Him up and laid Him down. But I have a greater honor than your honor as His mother. For your honor pertains to your motherhood of the body of the child, but my honor is this, that you have my treasure, so that I know none, neither men nor angels, who can help me except this child whom you, O Mary, hold in your arms. If a man could put out of his mind all that he is and has except this child, and if for him everything—money, goods, power, or honor—fades into darkness and he despises everything on earth compared with this child, so that heaven with its stars and earth with all its power and all its treasures becomes nothing to him, that man would have the true gain and fruit of this message of the angel. And for us the time must come when suddenly all will be darkness and we shall know nothing but this message of the angel: "I bring to you good news of great joy; for to you is born this day the Savior."



# The Mystery of the Incarnation

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.*

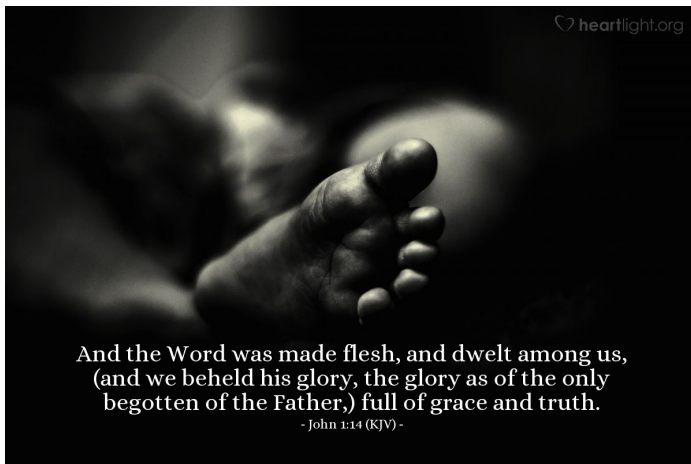
John 1:1-14

**A**T THE CENTER OF THE celebration of Christmas is a great mystery. With the birth of Jesus, the Divine becomes human. In his Gospel, John speaks of this event as the Word becoming flesh. In the past, God spoke to us through the spoken word and the written word. But now, God communicates His great love for mankind through the living Word, Jesus Christ. Instead of sending another ordinary messenger, God comes and speaks to us in person. The writer of the book of Hebrews echoes a similar thought:

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; 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; Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

Hebrews 1:1-4

This passage teaches us that God took on human flesh not only to say that He loves us, but to demonstrate His love for us. Christ came for the express purpose of offering Himself as a sacrifice for sins. Not only did Christ cleanse us from sin by His blood, but He also conforms us into His own image. We now walk in newness of life, because of the death and Resurrection of God's Son. To paraphrase the church father St. Athanasius, "He became what we are, so that we might become what He is."



May God grant us grace to believe in the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation and celebrate the *...good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)*

Yours in Christ.

## Christians, Awake!

Christians, awake, salute the happy morn,  
Whereon the Savior of the world was born;  
Rise to adore the mystery of love,  
Which hosts of angels chanted from above;  
With them the joyful tidings were begun  
Of God incarnate and the virgin's Son.

Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,  
Who heard th'angelic herald's voice: "Behold,  
I bring good tidings of a Savior's birth  
To you and all the nations of the earth;  
This day hath God fulfilled His promised word;  
This day is born a Savior, Christ the Lord."

He spake, and straightway the celestial choir  
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire;  
The praises of redeeming love they sang,  
And heav'n's whole orb with alleluias rang;  
God's highest glory was their anthem still,  
Peace on the earth, and unto men good will.

To Beth'hem straight the happy shepherds ran,  
To see the wonder God had wrought for man;  
And found, with Joseph and the blessed maid,  
Her Son, the Savior, in a manger laid;  
Amazed, the wondrous story they proclaim,  
The earliest heralds of the Savior's name.

Oh, may we keep and ponder in our mind  
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind!  
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,  
From His poor manger to His bitter cross.  
Tread in His steps, assisted by His grace,  
Till our imperfect state God doth replace.

Then may we hope, th'angelic hosts among,  
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song;  
He that was born upon this joyful day  
Around us all His glory shall display;  
Saved by His love, incessant we shall sing  
Eternal praise to heav'n's almighty King.

John Byrom

# The Trinity at Christmas

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

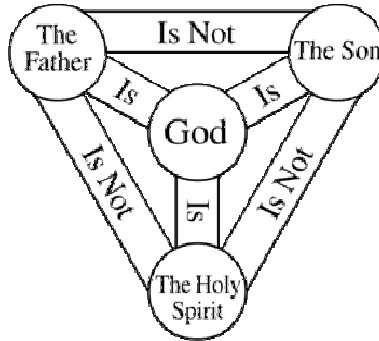
The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a teaching of the Christian Church regarding God. We worship the Christian Godhead as one God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We don't worship three different gods, but we worship one God who has always existed in three distinct, but equal, Persons.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all God, but they are different from each other. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. But each Person is still God!

And is the Trinity involved at Christmas?

**T**HE THREE PERSONS of the Trinity are very active in the Christmas Story! God the Father sent God the Son to Earth and He became Incarnate by the power of God the Holy Spirit. The true God was born in a human body! God the Son, Who had existed forever with the Father, would come to Earth in human flesh to be the Savior of the world. Let's hear about it from the gospel of Luke.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. **He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:** and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, **The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.** And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. **For with God nothing shall be impossible.** And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-39)



Adore the Father and the Son,  
And God the Spirit all divine;  
Who are distinct and yet but One,  
And only One in their design.

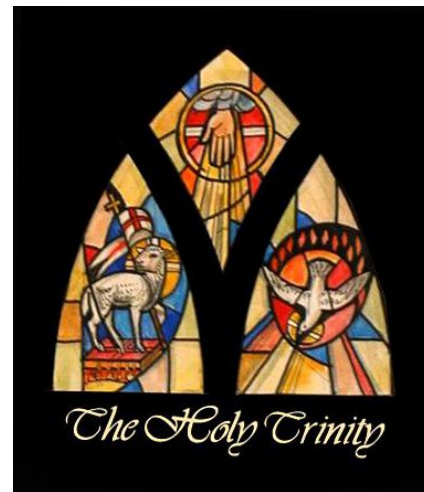
In His own Son, the Father shone  
In rays of majesty and light;  
In Him, the Deity came down,  
Man with the Godhead to unite.

Almighty Spirit, glorious God,  
To You our humble notes we raise;  
Your quick'ning grace we'll sound abroad,  
While we have breath Your name to praise.

So we'll adore the sacred Three,  
From Whom our whole salvation came;  
And still through vast eternity,  
Your endless grandeur loud proclaim.

*Psalms and Hymns (1834)*

The Apostle Paul blesses the people with a Trinitarian benediction at the end of Second Corinthians. He writes: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14)* The blessed Trinity is not dry theory, but the God of love in whom we have life now and forever. Praise to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that You give Your Church Your very life! Amen.



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## The Good, the Beautiful, and the True

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

**H**ARD-WIRED INTO EVERY human being is the desire for certain things which transcend our lives and experiences. That is to say things that are what they are, regardless of how things may go in our lives. We seek them out in many and various ways, only to find that when we catch glimpses of them, rather than being satisfied we crave them even more. These are what philosophers and theologians throughout the centuries have come to call the three Transcendentals: The Good, the Beautiful, and the True.

And we do catch glimpses of these. When we see a mother tenderly holding her baby, nurturing, loving and caring for her, any person with even the slightest sense of reality will recognize that they are beholding something inherently good. If we stand before a majestic waterfall as its waters cascade with a thunderous roar and see the perpetual rainbow appearing in the spray below, the only sensible reaction is to declare it to be beautiful. Confronted with a painting by one of the great masters of the craft, where we are drawn into the feeling and emotion of the scene, it would be unthinkable not to render the judgment that what it conveys is essentially true.

It's hard not to notice that each one of these entails the others. Something which is beautiful is necessarily also good. Nothing could possibly be true without the acknowledgement that it is marked with beauty. Yet, in all of these examples, we must admit that though they are good, beautiful, and true, they also do not fully fulfill our internal desire for them. If anything, being exposed to them only increases our desire for them, as if there is ultimately something more for which we have been made.

So, hard-wired into each one of us is the desire for these transcendental things, of which we can only catch glimpses, and which are all interrelated. And there is only one place where we find the fullness of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True:

*O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. (1 Chronicles 16:34)*

*Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty... (Isaiah 33:17)*

*Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. (Psalm 31:5)*

The glimpses of these things that we catch in this life are glimpses of God's nature reflected in His creation. And when we know what God has done to save us in Jesus Christ and we acknowledge Him as our Savior, we experience now by faith what we will one day experience in fullness... that God is our Goodness, our Beauty, and our Truth. ~

## The Second Advent

**W**E PREACH NOT ONE ADVENT only of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the former. For the former gave a view of His patience; but the latter brings with it the crown of a divine kingdom.

For all things, for the most part, are twofold in our Lord Jesus Christ: a twofold generation; one, of God, before the ages; and one, of a Virgin, at the close of the ages: His descents twofold; one, the unobserved, like rain on a fleece; and a second His open coming, which is to be. In His former advent, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger; in His second, He covers Himself with light as with a garment. In His first coming, He endured the Cross, despising shame (Hebrews 12:2); in His second, He comes attended by a host of angels, receiving glory.

We rest not then upon His first advent only, but look also for His second. And as at His first coming we said, "Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord," so will we repeat the same at His second coming; that when with angels we meet our Master, we may worship Him and say, "Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord."

Cyril of Jerusalem (c 313-386 AD)

