

## Christmas Is A Miracle to Believe

The other day I started downtown to Erlanger Hospital and made the mistake of going down Lee Highway. I got into one of the most horrendous traffic jams that I have ever experienced in Chattanooga. People were trying to turn into Brainerd Village Shopping Center, into Eastgate, into McDonalds, and trying to turn into everyplace! While all of these people were trying to turn, everybody else was trying to go straight ahead!! Finally, there was an accident. The police were there and an ambulance came. It was difficult. Everybody's tempers became short! What caused all this? All of that big traffic jam was caused by a little baby that was born half way around the world nearly 2,000 years ago! What a baby!!

Christmas is truly a miracle to believe. In the gospel of Matthew, it is stated like this, "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." The chapter closes by saying that Joseph had no relations with Mary until after Jesus was born. In other words, the Bible calls upon us to believe this miracle — Mary was the first surrogate mother in the history of the world!! There was no human father in connection with the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary was a virgin! The gospel of Luke presents this amazing miracle in the following words: Luke 1:26-35, "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, name Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man named 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 so, Luke gives us the information that the seed that was implanted within the womb of Mary was done in a miraculous way by the Holy Spirit of God. The gospel of John explains this miraculous miracle like this: John 1:1 and 14, "In

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was 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.”

At the very heart of Christmas there stands the most amazing prodigious miracle of all times. The birth of Jesus Christ stands at the very heart of Christmas. That event represents the most remarkable occurrence, the most unbelievable happening in the entire history of this planet earth.

**I. I cannot understand how anybody has any trouble believing the virgin birth.** Barclay is one of the greatest of all writers about the Bible. He has written an amazing set of commentaries on the Bible. My own father loved to read Barclay above all other writers. But, as brilliant a man as Barclay was and as marvelous a set of commentaries that Barclay has written, he stumbles over the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the scriptures that cannot be questioned. It just boils down to this, you're either a believer or you are an infidel. Jesus was either born of the virgin Mary or else Mary was a fornicator and Jesus was an illegitimate from some immoral relationship. I believe with all my heart in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and I don't know why anybody would even question it. God spoke the world into existence. If God could do all of that, and He did, then it was no problem for God to take a seed and implant it in the virgin Mary's womb and bring forth His only begotten Son into this world. I believe it!!

**II. Christmas is the miracle of incarnation.** God came to earth in human flesh! That is an amazing and an astounding miracle. It is amazing to me that God even loves us. I can't understand why He does love us as sinful as we are. Even more amazing is that God loved us so much that He came down here on earth to visit us. That is an amazing miracle! II Corinthians 5:19 puts it like this: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” The apostle Paul declared that the message of the manger was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

God called us according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. God's great plan was selected and ratified in heaven before Bethlehem was even a spot on the globe.

There are many, many legends about kings and rulers who have traveled incognito in order to taste the life of their people. But, Jesus came not incognito in order to taste, feel, touch, and smell the temptations of each one of us. Not only did God come to see what man's life was like here on earth, but God came to show us what He was like!! The scriptures say that He became flesh and dwelled among us and we beheld His glory.

For most of us death appears as something black and bleak and ugly, but not to Jesus. Repeatedly, Jesus pointed to the cross, "I am the good shepherd", He said, "and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." The manger, then, meant death. Bethlehem is spelled CALVARY. Any fair reading of the New Testament scriptures brings us to the fact that God came down as flesh for the purpose of dying.

During the earthly ministry, He used His divine power only to help others. Can you ever think of an instance when Jesus used His divine power to help Himself escape the hardships of life? I cannot. Always, He used His divinity to help others. So far as His humanity was concerned, He lived just as we live. He accepted all of the limitations of the flesh. He became hungry, tired, hurt and disappointed, and His heart was broken and He suffered rejection and finally the great miracle of allowing Himself to be nailed to the cross. This is the miracle of the incarnation that we are to believe at Christmas time.

**III. God is involved with us personally.** God loves us so much and He so much wanted to identify with us so that He might have sympathy for us in all of our problems. The great hymn writer, J. Lincoln Hall has expressed this miracle in these words.— "Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and songs? As the burdens press and the cares distress and the way grows weary and long, does Jesus care when my way is dark with

the nameless dread and fear as the daylight fades into deep night shades, does He care enough to be near? Does Jesus care when I have tried and failed to resist some temptation strong, when for deep grief I find no relief though my tears flow all the night long. Does Jesus care when I have said goodbye to the dearest on earth to me and my sad heart aches until it nearly breaks? Is it aught to Him, does He see? Oh yes, He cares. I know He cares. His heart is touched with my grief. When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares." This is the miracle to be believed at Christmas time.

Twenty-five years ago Louis Cassells wrote a modern Christmas parable.

Once upon a time there was a very kind and decent man, generous to his family, upright and honest. But he didn't believe the Christmas teaching that God became man. He said, "It doesn't make any sense to me." On Christmas eve his family left for church without him. "I'd feel like a hypocrite, I'd much rather stay at home." He settled into his chair to hear a thudding sound at his window. He found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in a storm and tried to fly through his window. "I can't let these poor creatures lie there and freeze." Then he remembered the barn, it would provide a warm shelter. He trampled through the snow, opened the door and turned on the light but the birds didn't come. Food will bring them, he thought, so he spread bread crumbs in a trail to the barn. They simply flopped helplessly in the snow under his window. He tried shooing them into the warm barn. "They find me a strange and terrifying creature," he said to himself, "and I can't think of any way to let them know they can trust me." "If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety."

Just then the church bells rang out the glad tidings of Christmas. Then he sank to his knees in the snow. "Now I understand," he whispered, "Now I see why you had to do it."

