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GOD IN A CRADLE

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I Timothy 3:16

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory".

God in a Cradle! Does this seem irreverent or strange? It is strange, but not irreverent. God was manifest in flesh and flesh can lay in a cradle. Here is a mystery too great for human comprehension. Not only a mystery, but a miracle of condensing grace.

A little girl was admiring a beautiful sunset. Her teacher suggested that she try to put it on canvas. The little girl replied, "Oh, I can't draw glory." It is forever beyond human wisdom to explain the mighty transition by which the Creator of the universe, the Maker of heaven and earth, became a helpless babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. That babe, however, lying in a manger was the mighty God wrapped up in humanity.

We have here a veritable quiver of paradoxes - apparent contradictions: The eternal One had a beginning; the Ancient of days became an infant; the mighty God resting in a woman's arms and drawing nourishment from a woman's breast; He who filled all space was confined to a cradle; the eternal Son became a child born. He who holds all things together was held in the arms of a woman.

"The babe of Bethlehem, whose every muscle was a pulley divinely swung, was the light - God seen. This babe, with no language but a cry, was the Word - God heard. This babe, whose life incarnated God's heart, was the life - God felt." R. G. Lee.

God in a cradle! Look at those chubby hands! One day they will be outstretched to touch the eyes of the blind and make them see. One day a dying leper will feel their touch and be made whole. One day Peter's mother-in-law will feel that touch and get well of the fever. The daughter of Jairus will feel their touch and rise from the dead. Those hands are destined to make a whip of cords and drive the money lovers out of the Father's house of prayer.

God in a cradle! Listen to the cooing of that baby voice! What could be sweeter? Where is there such a symbol of helplessness? But one day that voice will speak and demons will flee. At a word from that voice and the angry sea will lie still.

God in a Cradle! Do you see those tiny feet? One day those feet will walk the highways bringing blessings to men.

God in a cradle! It all means that God has come down to men who could not go to God. The Son of God became one with the sons of men that through Him the sons of men might become sons of God.

BORN IN A STABLE

For an earthly monarch they would have opened

the doors of a mansion; for the King of Glory they opened the doors of a barn. For an earthly monarch there would have been a bed of down; for the Son of God there was a bed of straw. The music to celebrate His birth was furnished by the heavenly choir; He came unto His own and His own would not even receive Him.

There was no room for Him in the inn. That inn is a symbol of the human heart. No room for Christ in the hearts of men. Room for pleasure but no room for Christ. Room for gold but no room for the Creator of gold. Room for sin but no room for the Saviour from sin. Room for business but no room for the gift of God. Room for religion but no room for the Saviour. The birth of Christ in the human heart is as much a miracle as His birth in a barn of a virgin.

BORN A SAVIOUR

The purpose of His birth had to be announced by an angel. He was in the world and the world was made by Him, but the world knew him not. The angel said to the shepherds: 'For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

The angel brought good tidings. He announced the birth of a Saviour, not a dictator, not an adviser, not a reformer. Beloved, that is what this poor old sin-sick world needs today -- a Saviour!

This world has had dictators and they have brought the world to the verge of ruin. The world doesn't need advisers; it has too many already. Politicians with their little pills for the world's ills. Like the woman who suffered many things of the physicians and was none the better, this poor old world is about to be doctored to death. What a drowning man needs is not a lecture on the art of swimming. He needs a life guard to plunge in and lift him from the watery grave. A sin king sinner needs a Saviour and this is the purpose of God in a cradle.

SALVATION A COMPLICATED WORK

Salvation is no job for an amateur; it calls for a specialist. A true picture of the sinner's condition will show how complicated salvation is.

1. The sinner is guilty under the law of God and the curse of a holy law has been pronounced against him. The sinner cannot deny guilt, for God has seen every sin he has committed. The sinner cannot satisfy justice by any works of his hands, "for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in my sight", saith God. The sinner need not throw himself on the mercy of the court for God's court calls for justice to be done - sin must be punished. Therefore, a Saviour who can remove the guilt and set the sinner free is the sinner's desperate need. This is why the child was born. He removes guilt by assuming it. He redeems us from the curse by being made a curse for us. He was made to be sin for us that we might be made righteous in Him. Here is the way to test

every Gospel: Does it provide the just removal of my guilt. Does the Saviour it proclaims meet my needs as a guilty and condemned sinner?

2. The sinner is not only guilty, he is hopelessly stuck up in moral filth. He is ruined in disposition. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The mind is in a state of moral darkness. The sinner does not even know how bad he is in the sight of God. He boasts of a good heart when God says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: and then He adds, "Who can know it"?

The moral nature of the sinner will have to be worked upon if he is to ever see his desperate need for a Saviour and come to know that Jesus is the Christ and Lord. The sinner does not naturally love God. He must be born again in order to love God. The sinner does not naturally repent; he must be wrought upon by the Holy Spirit in order to repent. The sinner does not naturally believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour; he must be wrought upon by the Holy Spirit in order to have faith. The sinner does not naturally love the word of God and if he is to delight in fellowship with others in the word of God he must be born of the Spirit.

Christ on the cross met the sinner's need as to guilt and condemnation.

Christ through the Holy Spirit meets the sinner's need as to a ruined nature. The new birth is the specific for moral pollution. The new birth gives the fatal blow to the sin that is in us. The sinner is never the same anymore. The rest of his days upon earth is the period of convalescence.

Redemption from the guilt of sin is the work of Christ on the cross. Conversion to a new life is the work of the Spirit.

Redemption keeps us from hell; conversion starts us toward heaven.

Redemption is the legal side of our salvation; conversion is the experiential side.

Salvation is a gift. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." - Romans 6:23.

God will justify the sinner that believes in Jesus. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses". Acts 13:38-39.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David". Isaiah 55:1-3.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.

"Let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man His thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord; and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord". Isaiah 55:6-8.

PREACHING ATTENDANCE

BY

C. D. COLE

EPIDEMIC SWEEPING THE COUNTRY! Doctors have no cure for it. The name of the disease is "MORBUS SABBATICUS", or SUNDAY SICKNESS.

ITS SYMPTOMS:

1. It does not interfere with the appetite. The patient never misses a meal.

2. No doctor is ever called, for nobody afflicted with it wants to get well.

3. It never lasts longer than 24 hours at a time, but is of frequent recurrence.

4. It never interferes with anything but church going.

5. The patient is particularly allergic to the Word of God.

THE ATTACK:

The attack comes on suddenly on Sunday morning. No symptoms are felt on Saturday night. The patient sleeps well and wakes feeling in the best of health, eats a hearty breakfast, but about church time the attack comes on and continues until about noon. Then the patient feels much better and eats a hearty dinner. In the afternoon he is able to take a long motor ride and then comes home and reads the newspaper. He eats a hearty supper, but about church time he has another attack and thinks it best to stay away from the evening service. He wakes on Monday morning refreshed and able to go to work and does not have any symptoms of the disease until the following Sunday.

THE REMEDY:

One good dose of regeneration -- an inward experience that begets faith, love, and hope in the human heart. For after all it is a heart ailment.

Church attendance, particularly the preaching service, is a voluntary matter. If I had the influence with the City Council and could have an

ordinance passed making it unlawful for any person to miss a single service at my church, I would not use it.

REASONS FOR CHURCH ATTENDANCE:

1. It is a divine command, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching", Hebrews 10:25.

2. You cannot have a church without attendance. The word "church" means assembly. The church building is not the church. Shut the church doors, let the saved stay at home and never get together, and you could have no church. It is physically possible to have 100 people in a community and yet have no church. Suppose a community of 100 or more people (saved people) would stay in their homes or go about their business, they have no contact with one another in a religious way, they ignore the bible, they have no fellowship in the Word of God, they never meet to pray or sing or hear the Word of God, would they constitute a church? Of course not, for a church is a called out company having fellowship in the Word and work of God.

While it is physically and theoretically possible to have saved people in a community without a church, it is not morally and practically possible. Love for God and for one another will bring saved people together. "Birds of a feather flock together".

3. We need to attend to learn. The church is a school and the believers are disciples or pupils. The pastor is to be apt to teach. A church meeting is a school for spiritual instruction.

We get alarmed about our day schools when the attendance is too much out of proportion with the enrollment. We expect a boy to grow up to be a numbskull if he misses about half the classes. We ought to be alarmed about the matter of church attendance. I doubt if the average church ever has more than one third of its members at any preaching service.

One of the most difficult tasks for the pastor is that of teaching. It is easier to exhort or even to rebuke than to teach. The people do not wish to learn, they are satisfied with what they know, or rather with what they do not know.

MIRACLE

Seems it strange that thou shouldst live forever? Is it less strange that thou shouldst live at all? - This is a miracle; and that no more.