

THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

"For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

– Luke 2:11,12.

WHY WAS THIS BABE EXPECTED?

WHY WERE all men in expectation of Him at the time of His birth? What was to be peculiar about Him to lead Israel to expect His birth? The answer to this question is that God had made a certain promise centuries before and the promise had not been fulfilled. This promise contained the thought that a holy child would be born, and that in some way, not explained in the promise, this child would bring the blessing the world needed. Therefore every mother amongst the Israelites was very solicitous that she might be the mother of a son rather than a daughter, that perchance she might be the mother of this promised child. Thus the matter went on for years until, finally, the child was born.

The promise back of the expectation was that which God made to Abraham, saying, "*In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*" From that time forward Abraham began to look for the promised Seed – the promised child. He looked first of all to his own children, and was finally informed that it would not be one of his children direct, but that through their children, at some remote date, this child should be born – the Seed of Abraham. From that time onward, all the Israelites were waiting for the birth of the child that should bring the blessing.

But why was a Messiah necessary? Why wait at all for the birth of the child? The answer to this question is that sin had come into the world; that God had placed our first parents – holy, pure and free from sin – in the glorious conditions of the Garden of Eden with every

favorable prospect and everlasting life at their command if they continued in harmony with God. But by reason of their disobedience they came under Divine displeasure and sentence of death. This sentence of death has brought in its wake aches, pains, sorrows, tears, sighing, crying and death – all of these experiences as the result of sin.

Our heavenly Father said to our first parents – and this was the first intimation that He gave them of a deliverance – that "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head." The *serpent* in this expression means *Satan* – all the powers of evil, everything adverse to humanity, everything adverse to the blessings which God had given them, and which they had lost by disobedience. But the promise was vague and they understood little about the "Seed of the woman" and "bruising the Serpent's head." It merely meant in an allegorical way a great victory over Sin and Satan, without explaining how it should come.

So mankind continued to die; they continued to have aches and pains and sorrows; they continued going down to the tomb. They realized that what they needed was some Savior to come and deliver them from the power of sin, to deliver them from the death penalty of sin – a Savior who would be, in other words, a Life-giver. They were dying and needed new life. This is the meaning of the word *Savior* in the language used by our Lord and the Apostles. They were hoping and expecting that God would send a *Life-giver*.

It was on this account that they were so greatly concerned regarding the promise made to Abraham – "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" – they shall be granted a release from sin and death. In no other way could mankind be blessed. It would be impossible to bless mankind except by releasing them from sin and death. Hence, the Scriptures tell us of God's sympathy; that God looked down from His holy habitation, and beheld our sorrow, and heard, figuratively, "the groaning of the prisoners" – humanity – all groaning and travailing under this penalty of death – some with few aches and

pains, and some with more aches and pains; some with few sorrows, and some with greater sorrows, but all groaning and travailing in pain.

But God's sympathy was manifested; and we read that, "He looked down and beheld that there was no eye to pity and no arm to save" and with "His own Arm He brought salvation." This is what was promised to Abraham – that one should come from his posterity who would be the *Savior of the world*; and because this promise was made to Abraham and to his Seed, they were marked out as separate from all other nations and peoples. To the Jewish nation alone belonged this great honor – that through them should come this salvation. Hence, from that time onward the Jews spoke of themselves as God's people, the people whom God had promised to bless, and through whom He would bring a blessing to all others. Therefore, all other people were called *heathen* (or *nations*, which the word means). Israel was thus separated because God's Covenant was with them, and not with the others. But God's Covenant with Israel was for the blessing of all the others: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now, we have the "Why" of this wonderful babe's being born. [R4964 : page 44]

HOW WAS THIS BABE PECULIAR – HOLY, HARMLESS, UNDEFILED?

How could He be a Savior? In what way could He be different from any other babe? Why not use some other babe as the one through whom salvation should come? The answer of the Bible is that salvation could not come to mankind unless there should be a satisfaction of Justice on account of *Original Sin*. That must be the first consideration. The penalty, "Dying, thou shalt die," pronounced against the first man, must be met before the world could be blessed.

Why not let any man die? Because all were under the sentence of the original condemnation, and none could be a Ransom-price or a substitute. Hence the necessity for a specially born babe, different from any other babe. In what way was this One differently born? The Bible

explains to us very distinctly that He was not begotten of an earthly father. Although Joseph was espoused to Mary, yet this child was not the child of Joseph. The Bible explains that this child was specially begotten by Divine power, in the mother, though she was still a "virgin" when she brought forth the child.

This is the Scriptural proposition; and while it may not seem clear to some, yet the Word of God standeth sure. If the Redeemer was not perfect then He could not be the Savior of the world. The promised redemption implied that Jesus would be perfect; it implied that He would be as the first man was before he sinned. "For since by man came death, by man shall come also the resurrection of the dead"; "As all in Adam die, even so shall all in Christ be made alive."

So this one must be, as the Apostle declares, "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26.) He must be entirely distinct and separate from humanity so far as sinful features were concerned. If we had time it would be interesting to go into the scientific features – of how a perfect child could be born from an imperfect mother. If we can have a perfect life germ we can have a perfect child from an imperfect mother. If a breeder of stock wishes to raise the standard of his stock, he selects a fine bull, a male goat, or a male ram, and thus he improves the entire herd. And so, if we had perfect fathers, we would soon have a perfect race. But there is no father who can produce a perfect child. Hence it was necessary in this case (and the Scriptures declare it was accomplished) that God should beget this Son by power from on high. Therefore, that which was born of the "virgin" was separate and distinct from all humanity. His life came not from an earthly father, but from His Heavenly Father.

WHO WAS HE THUS BORN?

It is written that before He became flesh Jesus had an existence; as He declared, "Before Abraham was, I am." Again, in one of His prayers He said, "Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory that I had with Thee before the world was." The Revelator tells us that "He was the

beginning of the creation of God," and Paul says that "by Him all things were made." And so our Lord Jesus was not only the beginning, but also the active agent of the Father in all the creative work in the angelic world and in the creation of humanity, and in all things that were created.

The whole matter is summed up by the Apostle John. We will give a more literal translation of "In the beginning was the Word." [This expression, *Word*, in the Greek is *Logos*. The thought behind the word *Logos* is that in olden times a king, instead of speaking his commands directly to his people, sat behind a lattice work, and his *Logos*, or messenger, or word, or representative, stood before the lattice work, and gave the message of the king to the people in a loud tone of voice. The king himself was not seen by the people – the *Logos* was the one seen. So this is the picture the Scriptures give us of how Jesus was the express representative of the Heavenly Father, the One through whom the Heavenly Father made Himself known – the Word, or the *Logos*. So we read in the first chapter of John], "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with *the* God, and the *Logos* was *a* god. The same was in the beginning with *the* God. By Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made."

In other words, Jesus was the direct Creator of all things. He was the Divine Power, Agent, Word, Messenger, the *Logos* of Jehovah. He did all the great work of creation; but He Himself was the first of God's direct creation, the First-born of all creatures, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence – the first place.

When the time came that our Heavenly Father made known His great purpose that He would bless the world, He gave opportunity to this First-begotten One – this One begotten of the Father – to be the servant in this great work He intended to accomplish for mankind. Consequently, the Scriptures state that "for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame." And now He has sat down at

the right hand of the Majesty on high. He has this great reward because of His obedience even unto death, the death of the cross.

The Apostle speaks of Him as having been rich, but for our sakes becoming poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. He tells us how He left the glory which He had with the Father and humbled Himself to the human nature. Why? Because, as already stated, it was necessary that some one should become man's Redeemer; an angel could not redeem man, neither could an animal redeem man. The Divine law is "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; a man's life for a man's life." This was to teach us a great lesson: that perfect *human life* having been condemned to death, it would require a *perfect human* life to redeem it. It was therefore necessary that Jesus should become the "Man Christ Jesus," in order "that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for every man."

WHAT RESULTS HAVE FOLLOWED?

The results that have followed have been that He Himself proved His own faithfulness. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" – the most ignominious form of death. It pleased the Father thus to prove Him, not only by Death, but by the most ignominious form of death – dying as a culprit, being crucified between two thieves. What a terrible ignominy to die thus!

It would be ignominy enough for *us* in our *imperfection*, but for *Him*, perfect, "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," it must have been a cause for deep and poignant sorrow. Having completed the laying down of His life, at the end of the three and a half years, He cried, "It is finished!" What? Not His work, for much of that lay before Him! He merely finished *this part* of the work, finished laying down His life a ransom-price.

What next? After His death came His resurrection; and we read that "God raised Him from the dead on the third day." According to the

Scriptures He was raised up from death a glorious being – "sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spirit body"; "Wherefore God hath highly exalted [R4964 : page 45] Him and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth; that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." – Phil. 2:10.

But we see not yet all knees bowed to Him. Why not? The Scriptures tell us that before He begins His great work for the world of mankind, He first does a work for the elect, the Church, those who desire to walk in His footsteps, to gather out of the world a Bride, to be co-workers with Him in all the great work of the Father. This is the only work yet in process of accomplishment, and this has been going on now for over eighteen centuries. We see how He gathered out the saintly ones from amongst the Jews, "Israelites, indeed, in whom there was no guile." Not finding enough to make the desired number, He proceeded to gather them from all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples.

The Apostle tells us that when this Bride class is united with Him they shall be parts of the Seed of Abraham; as we read, "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs of the promise." (Gal. 3:29.) This statement relates to the promise made to Abraham, that through him and his Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Thus we see the work that Christ is accomplishing now.

The invitation to become the Bride of Christ is a very special invitation and those who would be His must walk in the "narrow way." If they will sit in His Throne, they must suffer with Him. If they suffer with Him they shall also share His glory. So "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that shall follow," were not only to be accomplished in our Lord Jesus, personally, but He was an example for *all the Church* who are justified through faith in His blood. They have a share with Him in His sufferings, and will share in His glory; they have also

a share in the First Resurrection; as the Revelator declares, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the First Resurrection, on such the Second Death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." – Rev. 20:6.

Saint Paul says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," "that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection" (the special resurrection) to the divine nature. How? By being made conformable to His death; for, "If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him."

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

All the families of the earth are to be blessed, as originally promised in Eden: "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head." Also, as St. Paul states in the 16th chapter of Romans, "The very God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." So, then, the next thing in order in the outworking of God's Plan will be to bruise Satan and destroy sin. **[R4965 : page 45]**

When and how will this be done? Just as soon as this Age shall end; because this Age is merely for the development of the Bride class; then will come the promised Free Grace to all the families of the earth. Messiah's Kingdom shall come. He has promised that when He shall reign, all His faithful shall reign with Him: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I overcame and am set down with My Father in His Throne." All the Church will be associated with Him in His great Messianic Kingdom; and "He shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth"; and "Unto Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father"; "The knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth." The whole earth will become as the Garden of Eden. Paradise Lost will be Paradise Restored. The Divine Image lost in Adam will be restored to man. Human nature will be brought to perfection. But the glorious reward to the Church will be the divine nature, to be like her Lord, to sit at His right hand, and to bless the world of mankind. Man will

become not only perfect, having all that Adam had, but will have additional knowledge and character; and there is every evidence that this shall be an eternal blessing.

SHALL NONE BE LOST?

Yes, the Scriptures tell us that some will be *lost*, and that the loss they shall sustain will be loss of *life*, and therefore all the pleasures of life. "*They shall be as though they had not been*"; "They shall be destroyed from amongst the people." St. Peter says, "They shall be destroyed as brute beasts." – Acts 3:23; 2 Pet. 2:12.

When? When the eyes of their understanding shall have been opened to see the Lord and to understand His glorious character, and they shall have had opportunity to appreciate and enjoy His blessing. When such intentionally reject the grace of God, they shall die the Second Death, from which there is no resurrection, no hope of recovery. But, thank God, there shall be no knowledge of suffering for them; they shall be destroyed as brute beasts.

In proportion as we believe in this Babe of Bethlehem shall we rejoice today. In proportion as we believe He was manifested on our behalf; in proportion as we believe He died for our sins; in proportion as we recognize Him as the glorified Savior; in proportion as we have surrendered our hearts to Him and seek to do the things well pleasing to him shall we have the peace of God.

Our hope on behalf of mankind in general is that in God's due time His blessing shall reach all – not the same as that for the Church, but as St. Peter tells us in Acts 3:19-21, "Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must retain until the Times of Restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy Prophets."

