

## Two Virgins and a Baby—The Irony and the Gift of Christmas

Due to her condition and a treacherous journey, it was probably very late on a dark, cool night when Joseph and Mary arrived in the crowded town of Bethlehem. In fact, the crowd was so great that they had to make their beds in a lowly livestock stable because there were no rooms for them at the inn, nor were there homes that had space to take them in. Every bed in the town was already taken when they arrived.

There they were, with no wealth, no notoriety, no room in which to stay, no place to eat, engaged to be married, making their beds in a dirty animal stall. Two virgins, yet that night she would give birth to her firstborn, who was not conceived by Joseph or any man! Two virgins giving birth to a baby! How ironic is that?

Even more important and ironic, is that the baby being born in such poor, humble, lonely and harsh conditions was and will forever be the King of kings and Lord of lords—Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world! God in the flesh, who created and sustains everything that is, coming to mankind in human flesh as a helpless baby, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born in the lowliest of conditions, to the strangest of parental relationships, being born for the specific purpose of giving up His life; yet He was the greatest gift of love the world has ever known. This was the setting and background for the first Christmas and the basis for why we still celebrate Christmas today. (Matthew 1-2, Luke 2, John 1).

Jesus came willingly from Heaven to earth, from riches to poverty, from Spirit to flesh, from Kingship to servant hood, from innocence to being accused, from immortality to giving His life in the most torturous and shameful manner. Why would Jesus do such a thing? Why would God the Father not only allow, but intentionally 'send' His only Son to do such a thing, on our behalf, if it was not an absolute necessity? The answer is He would not!

The Bible teaches that we are all sinners, separated from God, owing a debt we cannot pay. The penalty for our sin and rebellion against God's law is physical death, spiritual destruction and an eternity in hell. That is the eternal destination of everyone alive today or who will ever be born; no matter who you are, where you live, what you own, how good or how bad you are, or even how 'religious' or 'spiritual' you may be. But Jesus, God in the flesh, came to us so that we could know God and see His love lived out. We celebrate the birth of Jesus because through Him, God came to us, to be like us, so He could shed His blood and give His life to save us from our sin and give us eternal life and so much more. He is the gift of Christmas. He is the gift of love. Only the shed blood of God could pay our debt, cleanse our sin, and set us free to live forever with Him. He loved us enough to come to us and give His life for us, so we could have life to the fullest for all eternity. What greater gift could He give than Himself? (Romans 3:23, 6:23, John 14:6).

In John 3:16-18, Jesus explains to us why He came to us and how we have to come through Him, to the Father, to have life eternal: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already..."

Though we will all indeed stand before God and His son Jesus to give an account for sins and for every deed done in this life, whether good or bad, (Romans 2:16, 2Timothy 4:1, 2Corinthians 5:10), He did not come to condemn us. In fact, just the opposite is true. Jesus came to shed His blood and give His life as a gift of love and mercy, the only gift capable of washing away our sin and reconciling us to God. There was

and is no other way for that to happen except for Jesus to be born in the flesh, to die in the flesh, and to rise from the dead! (John 10:17-18, John 14:6).

I realize that it is the Christmas season and I am including the death and resurrection story of Easter, but Christmas would have little meaning were it not for the Easter story. It is the facts that Jesus was born in the mortal flesh, willingly laid down His life for us in the mortal flesh, and then rose from the dead in the 'immortal' body, defeating death and sin forever, that give Christmas meaning. Because He lives, we too can live forever even though our bodies will die (John 11:25).

Unless Jesus comes back first, all of our bodies will surely die one way or another. We will all face death personally, whether by sickness, accident or other means, but our souls will live forever in eternity either in Heaven or in Hell. Jesus came to us so that Heaven could be an option—so that we could have a choice!

We do not have to do anything to go to Hell because that is where we are already destined because of our sin. That is why Jesus said in John 3 as we read before that: "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe in Him stands condemned already because He has not believed..." Unless we have are willing to turn away from our sin and personally follow Christ, putting our faith and trust in Him alone to save us, we are already condemned to death and eternity in Hell, but Jesus came to give us abundant and eternal life. This is the gift of Christmas! His name is Emmanuel (God with us), His name is Jesus!

What good is a gift if it is not accepted by the recipient? Lisa and I love to give of ourselves and our possessions to bless others and show them God's love. But what do you do when you pay the price, purchase the gift, but the one you bought it for rejects it? It is your gift that you bought just for them for their enjoyment and benefit, but is useless to them unless they accept it. That is the way it is with Jesus, THE gift of Christmas. Our forgiveness and salvation are paid for and given as a gift of love, but we have to personally accept the gift of Jesus to receive Him and His salvation.

May you this Christmas season, accept the gift of Jesus as your own and share Him with others.  
Merry Christmas!