

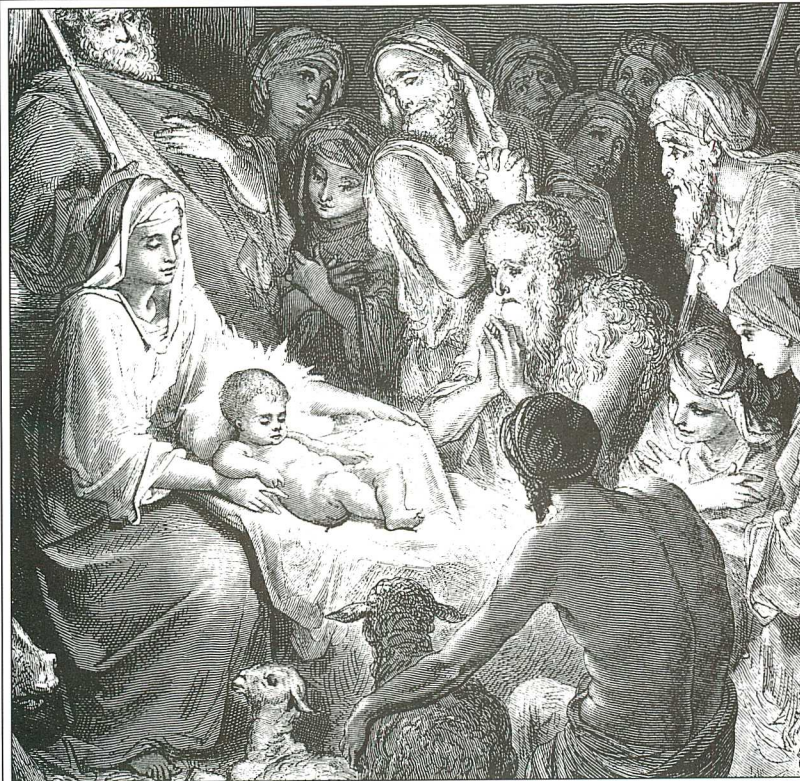
God with Us

Christ in all the Gospels

THE CRISES OF CHRIST: HIS BIRTH

by Desmond Ford

The birth of Christ teaches us that Jesus is holy and without sin, the unique God-human, and the rejected and suffering Savior who became sin for us



Dr. Ford's articles are taken from his lectures at the "God with Us: Christ in all the Gospels" Bible school. This was held in Auburn, California, May 7-9, 1993.

Audio cassettes are available from GNU, 11710 Education Street, Auburn, CA 95602-2499.

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T

o know how to live right, we must understand the gospel.

The gospel revolves around a correct understanding of three things: 1) The nature of sin, 2) The nature of Christ, and 3) The nature of the atonement.

There were seven crises in our Lord's life. 1) His birth. 2) His baptism. 3) His temptation in the desert. 4) His transfiguration. 5) Gethsemane. 6) Calvary, and

7) His resurrection.

Everyone one of these crises has a bearing on the three items listed above. 1) The nature of sin, 2) The nature of Christ, and 3) The nature of the atonement.

Holy Birth

Let's look at Jesus' birth. Luke writes:

And the angel said to her,
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,

and the power of the Most High
will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born
will be called holy,
the Son of God.” (Lk 1:35 RSV)

Dear friends, the Lord Jesus Christ is not
altogether ‘such an one’ as we are. Jesus was
born **holy**. He never needed to be born
again, as we need to be. David said,

“Surely I have been a sinner from birth,
sinful from the time my mother
conceived me.” (Ps 51:5 NIV)

Proverbs says,

Who can say, “I have kept my heart
pure;

I am clean and without sin”? (Prov 20:9)

Jeremiah says,

“The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9)

The King James Version translates ‘be-
yond cure’ as ‘desperately wicked.’ The
Hebrew word means, ‘incurably wicked.’
Who can know such a heart?

When the Bible talks of sin it is talking
more about the nature of the heart. That’s
because the law requires not just good be-
havior, but truth in the inward parts (Ps 51:6
KJV).

Truth in the heart, truth in the mind, truth
in the loves, truth in the motives, truth in the
drives—that’s what God’s law requires. The
rest is just outshining, or ebullience, or efflu-
via.

The law speaks to the essence of my
heart, my mind, the **real me underneath**—
not the paint on the wood.

Our Lord was born holy.

God-Human

Luke’s phrase, “The Holy Spirit will come
upon you, and the power of the Most High
will overshadow you” is an allusion to Gen-
esis 1:2. “The Spirit of God was hovering
[brooding, moving, lingering] over the wa-
ters.” The Holy Spirit was not the father of
Christ. Nor was Joseph, nor any man. The
Lord Jesus Christ was not a new being. A
Being who had existed from all eternity came
into the world and added a nature to him-
self—a human nature.

From then on he was one Person with
two natures. “Just as though all God, and not
at all human; just as though all human, and
not at all God.”

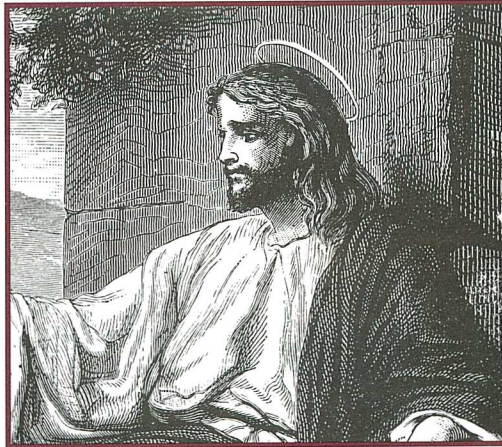
What happened in Mary’s womb was
the result of the same creative power that,
in the beginning, brought light out of dark-
ness (Gen 1:3). That creative Life took the

elements of Mary’s womb and created the
human nature of Christ. Yes, created. For
Jesus’ human nature was the product of the
creative power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35).

Jesus Christ is the God-man, the God-
human. He is one Person with two natures.

Not First Our Example

This is important, because many unhappy



Christians look upon Christ, first, as their
example. Only second do they look upon
him as their Savior. That is upending things,
turning them on their head.

If Jesus is first of all my example, he
condemns me more than Sinai. Which of us is
like Jesus?

Jesus loved his enemies and prayed for
them even on the cross. Jesus was always
gentle, always tender, always understand-
ing, always pure, always true, always God-
centered, never selfish.

Oh, my friends, if he is first of all my
example—I am of all people most miserable,
because I am not like Jesus!

I **want** to be like Jesus. It is my dearest
desire. But I am a million light-years from him.

But! If Jesus is first my **Savior**—I have
hope!

The Savior came into the world to save
sinners. I qualify! That’s **why** he came. To
save sinners like me and you.

The New Testament does not primarily
portray Jesus as our example. If that were his
task, he would have lived until he was an old
man. Where is Jesus an example for anyone
over 33?

If he were only an example, he would
have had to be a man and a woman. Women
cope with some things men don’t. Men cope
with other things women don’t. Jesus, to be
example for both, would have to be both. He
wasn’t.

Jesus didn’t come primarily as our ex-
ample. If he did, we need to know a lot more
about him as a boy, as an adolescent, as a
young man, and as an employee. The New
Testament emphasis is that he came to be the
Savior of the world.

Jesus Came to Die

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for
us, so that in him we might become the
righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). There’s
the essence of it. “One died for all” (2 Cor
5:14). That’s why he came.

Jesus came to die. That wasn’t the rea-
son we came. Death is involved inevitably in
our coming, but it’s not the reason we come
into the world.

Martyrs choose between dying early or
dying later. Jesus chose between dying or
not-dying. He was born to die. So, he is, first
of all, the Savior. Our Savior. My Savior.

People who think Jesus is, first of all, their
example, think, “Well, if Jesus kept the law
perfectly, then I must. I’ve had it if I don’t.”

I know of no more depressing doctrine
under the sun than that.

Dear friends, the law requires that every
thought should be as good, with as perfect a
true sense of priorities, as Adam’s **before** the
Fall.

We do many stupid things. Half my
prayers are asking the Lord to forgive my
stupidities, as well as my sins. We’re addled
in the head as well as the will.

The law requires that I do **everything**
right. Yet I don’t do **anything** right. I’m an
imperfect husband, imperfect father, imper-
fect minister—imperfect in everything I’ve ever
done.

I’ve never done anything altogether right.
My only comfort is, neither have you!

But we have a Savior who came to seek
and to save that which was lost. And I’m lost!
I’m like the man who falls out the fiftieth story
window. He’s doomed, unless someone takes
hold of him who’s going the other way! That
Someone is Jesus.

Birth and Death Compared

Let’s think more about Jesus’ birth.

Mary was engaged to Joseph and
traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was
soon going to have a baby, and while
they were there, she gave birth to her
first-born son. She dressed him in baby
clothes and laid him in a feed box,
because there was no room for them in
the inn. (Lk 2:5-7 CEV)

I want you to think about the relationship

between the A and the Z, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. We will compare the birth of our Lord with his death.

He is born naked, and wrapped in swaddling clothes. He dies naked, and is wrapped in linen burial clothes. Just before he dies he has on a white linen garment.

At his birth, wise men come from the East. At his death, a wise man from the West, Simon of Cyrene, shouldered the cross of Christ and became his follower.

At Jesus' birth there was a death decree from Herod. At Jesus' death there was a death decree, and it was carried out at Calvary.

At his birth, church and state unite against him. Hostile Herod asks the religious scholars where the Messiah is to be born. At his death, Caiaphas the high priest, delivers Jesus to Pontius Pilate for crucifixion.

At his birth is Mary, with her virgin womb. At his death he is laid in a virgin tomb. There is a Joseph who cares for Mary with the virgin womb, and a Joseph who cares for Jesus in the virgin tomb.

Forty days after leaving the virgin womb, Jesus is presented at the temple. Forty days after leaving the virgin tomb Jesus ascends to the heavenly temple.

Jesus Became Sin for Us

There are four groups of people at his birth.
1) The wise men seeking him. 2) The religious people seeking to live by the letter of the law.
3) The people seeking to kill the embodiment of the gospel. 4) The people willing to die to protect the gospel. It doesn't take too much thinking to identify the same four groups at his death.

Myrrh is mentioned in connection with Jesus' birth. Myrrh was put in his grave clothes as he was laid in the tomb.

There was a heavenly sign at his birth—a star. You don't expect a star at his death, but there was a heavenly sign. There was blackness and darkness over the whole land.

At his birth, there was no room for him in the inn. At his death, there was no room for him anywhere. No room on earth, no room in heaven. We find him suspended between the two. The cross elevates him above the earth. The people of earth don't want him. "Throw him out!"

Heaven cannot take him, for he is sin incarnate. God made him to be sin for us. No room at the inn. No room in this world. No room in heaven. All this so there might be room for you and me up yonder. ❀

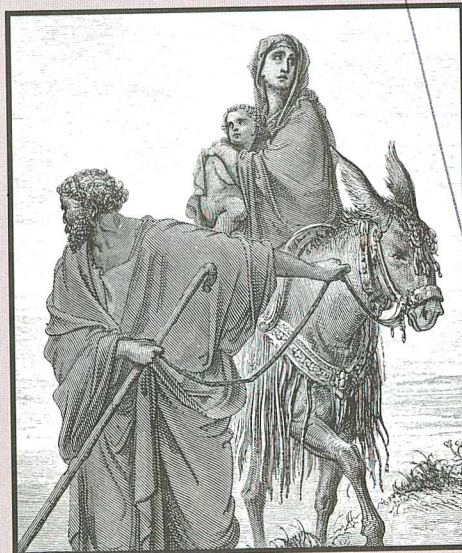
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