

Miracle on A Street in Nazareth

THE FIRST AND BEST OF ALL CHRISTMAS STORIES

And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

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Every year about this time our television programming begins to include three classic movies: *White Christmas, It's a Wonderful Life and Miracle on 34th Street*. They are wholesome, refreshing, greatly entertaining and marvelous preludes to the joyous season we Christians still label Christmas. But there is another vital story that needs to be told and re-told regarding the divine, once in a lifetime miracle known to all Christendom as the Incarnation; the time when *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:14)*. That miracle occurred inside the body of a young lady in her home town of Nazareth.

The "Word" who "became flesh" is the 2nd Person of the God-head, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom John also referred when he penned these words; *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. (John 1:1-2)* He, the eternally existent, God the Son (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, infinite and limitless in all of His attributes) accepted the challenge from God the Father and entered our space time continuum in the finite form of a human being. Paul the apostle described that impossible to comprehend event as follows: *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8)*. Retaining all of His Divine attributes except ubiquity, Christ the Messiah became Jesus the man and always obedient to His Father's commands, walked the roads of Palestine for thirty-three years; the latter three being devoted to His ministry of Truth and His ultimate, substitutionary death on a cross.

For centuries, people have posited various theories as to how that Incarnation came to pass. One such erroneous notion is that the Holy Spirit impregnated one of Mary's eggs. That theory arose from a misinterpretation of passages in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Matthew's first chapter one reads; *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, **she was found to be with***

child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because **what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 1:18-20) The faulty assumption was that the Holy Spirit assumed the vicarious role of her future husband in the conception process. In Dr Luke's account we read; *But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."* "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.** (Luke 1:30-35). Again, the term "Son of God", meant to some that God the Holy Spirit had fertilized one of Mary's eggs.

That scenario (of the Holy Spirit fertilizing one of Mary's eggs) has two major problems; one being anthropological and the other theological. The anthropological dilemma arises when one considers that Jesus would have been a demigod, half human (possessing 23 chromosomes from the egg of Mary) and half divine (presumably receiving 23 chromosomes from the Holy Spirit). The term "**demi god**", meaning "half god", is used to describe mythological figures whose one parent was seemingly a god and whose other parent was a human being. A few examples of demi-gods include the Celtic hero Cúchulainn, the Sumerian king Gilgamesh, an ancient-Germanic "woodsman" Ansel and the mighty Greek hero Heracles. The theological conundrum arises when one considers that Jesus was born sinless. That innate purity was unlike all other humans that have come upon the earth since Adam and Eve's children, who have all been born with original sin. David wrote in Psalm 51:5; *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.* This tells us that we have a sin nature from the moment we are conceived, when we become a stem cell and our soul has been implanted in our single celled body; *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)

The Roman Catholic Church seeing this sin dilemma established what has become known as The Immaculate Conception; so that Mary's ovum (egg) would not have been tainted by sin. According to Roman Catholic Dogma, the conception of the Virgin Mary occurred without any stain (*macula* in Latin) of original sin. It is one of the four dogmas in Roman Catholic Mariology; the others being her alleged perpetual virginity, her Assumption into heaven (a dogma ordered

by Pope Pius in 1950 describing the bodily translation of Mary into the heavenly realm much like that of Jesus in Acts 1:9) and Mary's intercession for believers (prayers made through her to God). Under the sinless birth dogma Mary is sometimes called the *Immaculata* (the Immaculate One), particularly in artistic contexts. The doctrine states that, from the first moment of her existence, she was preserved by God from the lack of sanctifying grace that afflicts mankind, and that she was instead filled with divine grace. It is further believed by Catholics that she lived a life completely free from sin. Her immaculate conception in the womb of her mother, through sexual intercourse, should not be confused with the doctrine of the virginal conception of her son Jesus, known as the Virgin Birth. The Roman theologians have failed to explain how Mary's mother's egg would not have tainted her (Mary) with sin. The feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated on the 8th of December, was established as a universal feast in 1476 by Pope Sixtus IV. He did not define the doctrine as a dogma, thus leaving Roman Catholics free to believe in it or not without being accused of heresy; this freedom was reiterated by the Council of Trent. The existence of the feast was a strong indication of the Church's belief in the Immaculate Conception, even before its 19th century definition as a dogma.

Unfortunately for the Roman theologians, the Bible makes it patently clear that Mary herself recognized that she was a sinner in need of a Savior. That is why her egg was never used by God to bring Christ into the human realm. In her gracious song of humility, known to the Christian world as the *Magnificat*, Mary sang these words: *My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in **God my Savior**, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed.* She is truly revered as the most blessed of all women having been chosen to be the instrument that God chose to carry His Son for the nine months of His human gestational period. However, by her own admission, her need of a Savior implies her own acknowledgment that she too was, like all the rest of us, a sinner in need of saving grace.

In the book of Hebrews the author tells of the events just prior to and during Christ's incarnation and the account relays His conversation with His Father as His soul/spirit left the courts of heaven to enter the stem cell that the Father had created and the Holy Spirit had just placed in the womb of the young teenager called Mary: *Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but **a body you prepared for me**; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am—**it is written about me in the scroll**— I have come to do your will, O God.'* (Hebrews 10:5-7) The "scroll" of which He spoke was the Old Testament. It told of the Incarnation and the only Sacrifice that would

eventually satisfy God. In Isaiah we read of both the former (Incarnation) and the latter (Sacrifice). *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel-which means "God with us."* (Isaiah 7:14) The Incarnation assured that God would be with us for a brief time in the flesh; of course as the omnipresent God the Father and the Holy Spirit who lives within every believer, He continues to be with us and always will as Jesus intercedes for us at the Father's right hand (Romans 8:34). In Isaiah 53 we read of the only sacrifice (sin offering) that would please the Father. *Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

How is it that we can know that this body, which was prepared by God the Father and placed in the womb of Mary by God the Holy Spirit, actually began as a stem cell? It is because that is how all human beings began; with the exception of two: Adam and Eve. Adam was directly fashioned from the organic and inorganic elements in the earth and provided with a soul from Yahweh. In Genesis 2:7 we read: *the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.* The soul was that which God breathed into Adam. Eve on the other hand was made from the genetic material found in the rib of Adam (probably from his bone marrow that is replete with stem cells). But we humans have all, ever since, developed from a combination of genetic material that derived from each of our parents; 50% from Dad via a sperm and 50% from Mom by means of an egg. When the 23 chromosomes from Dad joined with the 23 chromosomes from Mom, the 46 chromosomes that would comprise our single celled body (stem cell) were supplied with a soul given by God and that began our earthly life. That replicating, cellular body, eventually growing to a fully developed human over nine months of gestation, would be the vehicle in which our soul would be transported for the rest of our earthly life and then upon physical death, *the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*

(Ecclesiastes 12:7).

But the birth of Jesus was not going to happen in the exact manner as those births of all other humans. He had to come into this world in sinless perfection. That is why God the Father prepared a body for Jesus of Nazareth, one stem cell large, the way we all began; the difference

in His body being that all 46 chromosomes were derived from God the Father. This too was written in the "scroll" we know as the Old Testament. ***The LORD will create a new thing on earth— a woman will surround a man.*** (Jeremiah 31:22) The "new thing" was that stem cell into which the soul/spirit of Christ entered at the moment it was placed by the Holy Spirit into Mary's womb and immediately the woman surrounded the man who was then a mere one cell in size; He was the God-man who would become the Lamb of God; a sacrifice more pleasing to God the Father than the blood and burnt offerings of ancient Hebrew history. The apostle Paul described the natal event to the church at Galatia with these words: *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, **born of** a woman, born under law* (Galatians 4:4) The Greek word for "born" in this verse is *ginomai*, which translated means "made from nothing" (ex nihilo). The Hebrew word is *bara*, which was used in Genesis 1:1 and meant "created from nothing." That word in Galatians 4:4 refers to the first 46 (23 pairs) of chromosomes ever made from nothing; the "new thing" that God the Father said He would create; as recorded in the book of Jeremiah. Jesus did not come out of anything that was formerly part of Mary's genes. His one celled body was uniquely prepared (created) by God the Father, then placed in the womb of Mary by God the Holy Spirit, essentially, expressly and exclusively to house the soul/spirit of God the Son. The text reads He was "born of" the woman. The Greek word for "of" is *ek*. That tiny word implies that something was in another place but is now separate from the other location in respect to time, place and origin. Christ was utterly spirit, in a timeless eternity, enjoying fellowship with His Father and the Holy Spirit prior to the Incarnation and at the point and place of His birth, also written about in the "scroll," He was beginning His earthly life in a hostile place that would lead eventually to the Cross. The prophet Micah wrote in "the scroll" about that Christmas event and the place where it would occur: *But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.*" Micah 5:2. The miracle that began on a street in the little town of Nazareth was completed in a very natural way in the little town of Bethlehem. It far surpassed the significance of *The Miracle on 34th Street*.

When beginning this short essay I mentioned two other popular Christmas cinemas: *White Christmas*, starring Bing Crosby and *It's A Wonderful Life*, starring Jimmy Stewart. From a biblical standpoint, if you have never received Christ as Lord and Savior of your life, this can be a time when you can ask for forgiveness of your sins and invite His Holy Spirit to fill your soul and direct your life. It will make your Christmas "white" in a way you have never imagined. God has offered this invitation and made the following promise to everyone who has decided to do just that: *Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they*

shall be as **white as snow**; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” (Isaiah 1:18) Therefore, even if the ground in Northeastern Ohio is not covered with fresh fallen snow this Christmas, you can rest assured that your heart is sparkling clean and glistening brightly in the eyes of God; as though it had been covered with a new blanket of the whitest of snows. For he would then be seeing you as an utterly holy person. That is a promise recorded by Paul in his letter to the Colossian church. *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you **holy in his sight**, without blemish and free from accusation—* (Colossians 1:21-22) You see, when Christ lived in His physical body He did so perfectly. By living that consummately obedient life Jesus (already being divinely righteous) gained a human righteousness that is impossible for us to attain. When we pray to receive Christ, He imputes that righteousness to us and it covers each of us like a robe. One prophet put it this way: *I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and **arrayed me in a robe of righteousness**...* (Isaiah 61:10)

God has also promised a “wonderful life” with Him in heaven to all who receive Christ as Lord and Savior and an abundant, fulfilling and spiritually productive life here on earth as well. Jesus commenting on the latter said; *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* (John 10:10) Yahweh (Jehovah God) gave Joshua this promise regarding his earthly life that was predicated upon knowing God’s word and living according to its commands: *Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may **be careful to do everything written in it**. Then you will be **prosperous and successful**.* (Joshua 1:7-8) Giving us a glimpse of the “wonderful life awaiting us in heaven Paul wrote these words: *No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Jesus had previously promised: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* (John 14:1-3)

The miracle on that street in Nazareth, that new thing that God the Father created, that single stem cell into which the spirit/soul of the 2nd Person of the God-head entered, brought Jesus the God-man into the world to die in our place on the cross of Calvary. He was not a demi-god

(50/50) like those of Sumarian, Greek and Roman mythology, He was and is 100% man and 100% God, and that is a miracle by an infinite God impossible to comprehend by our finite minds. But an even greater miracle occurred 33 years later in Jerusalem when the crucified Christ rose from the dead to fulfill His promise of eternal life to all who have believed in and trusted Him, proving that trust through attempts at living an obedient life. Jesus once said: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.* (John 11:25-26)

The Incarnation and the Resurrection are the Christmas and Easter gifts that our infinite, personal, loving and gracious God has given to us and if you have believed them to be true and have received God's gift of eternal life through faith in Christ, no matter what is happening in our time in this world, we have cause to rejoice with exceedingly great joy. Look at this wonderful promise: The apostle Paul assures us *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead**, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.* He capped that off by averring, *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* (Romans 10:13) Call upon Him now, if you never have before, and though every angel in heaven already has wings (unlike Clarence, the one who followed Jimmy Stewart's character George Bailey around in the movie) your guardian angel (Hebrews 1:14) will rejoice that you have finally trusted Christ Jesus as your Savior and Lord and have begun your Wonderful Eternal Life.

Merry Christmas to all; and to all God Bless you.

Soli Deo Gloria