

DESTINY BULLETIN



A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

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Dear "Special Friend" of Christian Destiny,

December 2000

GOD AND MAN AT BETHLEHEM

There was a night nearly two thousand years ago in which a little city south of Jerusalem became the scene of the greatest miracle in the history of the universe. Whatever unusual things have ever transpired, none of them can compare to the intersection of humanity and divinity which took place in that little town. What was that miracle? The answer is found in the statement of Matthew, "*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*" (Matt. 1:23).

The virgin birth of Christ was, of course, truly a miracle. The virgin birth, however, had hidden within it the true, even more amazing miracle, implicit in the word "Immanuel." So important did God consider the meaning of the word "Immanuel" that He Himself described it in Scripture. Immanuel means "*God with us.*"

Yes, in the birth of Christ, there happened that great intersection between deity and humanity, as a consequence of which the world could never be the same again. "*God with us*" means that the Lord of heaven has conjoined Himself with humanity and has condescended to be a part of our low estate.

Never again, therefore, can any human being, whatever might be his condition, ever claim that God does not understand. Nor can he claim with the Deists that God is a distant being who never touches man, works no miracles, and sends no Savior. God in Christ joined the human race so that no man can ever again claim that God is the unknown and the unknowable.

For how long did God become man? Was the life of Jesus Christ simply a temporary sojourn into humanity? Following His earthly ministry, did Christ then disengage Himself and revert to a preincarnate condition? No, a thousand times no! Christ became man and is a man forever. He is even today the man in the glory. The everlasting commitment of Christ to humanity is one of the most moving facts of eternity.

There is a second and even more intimate relationship between God and man which grows out of His incarnation and then His death on the cross. In His incarnation, Christ is joined with humanity. However, in His death and resurrection, Christ offers to individual men the most astonishing gift imaginable, His very life within them. Of this the Apostle Paul speaks, calling it "*Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:26,27).

Christ *in you*, the hope of glory! Who can conceive of such a thing? Here, the promise is

that the eternal God comes actually and really to live within you, me, and all of those who receive Christ as personal Savior. The personal presence of the indwelling Christ--what an amazing, wonderful relationship with God the Christian has.

Every day that we live we should remember this. This remembrance will keep us from sin (a needed admonition in these days) and will fill our lives with a sense of His glory. As the hymn writer said, "Oh what a salvation this, that Christ liveth in me."

In these days, we must also remind ourselves as Christians that God is not only *with* us, *in* us, but in addition, He is *for* us. Paul expresses his own astonishment at these things by saying, "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Rom. 8:31,32). Clearly then, the Christian has an incalculable advantage in this world in that he has God Himself on his side. Everything, therefore, that the Christian does is weighted in favor of victory, accomplishment, and spiritual success! This because he has God working on his behalf. Many times the world may seem so strong, so inevitable, that we despair of seeing success in our feeble little efforts. It is a great mistake to think this way. Rather, because God is for us, we are the people whose plans are inevitable. One faithful Christian, with God on his side, is clearly in the majority.

In declaring that God is for us, the Bible then gives us the promise that contains all others. Because God did not spare His son, but delivered Him up for us all, it is now as nothing for God to freely give us all things. Yes, the riches from the treasure house of heaven are and will be ours. They constitute an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away.

Yes, Christ is with us, in us, for us, which truth is a wonderful part of our present experience. Let us then remember also that Christ *awaits* us. Our present experience with Christ is a foretaste of glory divine. At the portals of heaven, He looks for our arrival. As we are faithful, He will administer an abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom. Our translation from earth to glory will bring to our astonished ears His wonderful "Welcome home!"

We must not miss a final reminder. The Lord Jesus, who came the first time to save us from sin, will return to take us home to be with Himself. He promised His disciples and all of us who have subsequently believed, "*I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you to Myself*" (John 14:2,3). In this Christmas season, we thank God again because we have received the greatest of all gifts, the gift of Jesus Christ Himself. "I am His and He is mine" is not tinsel, it is fact. The message that came from heaven that first Christmas morning is for us who know Christ--the gift that will last for all of eternity.

THE TRIPLE CURE

When we think about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world, we are instantly forced to travel the road north from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. There, we can stand and gaze through tears of both sorrow and joy at a lonely hill called Calvary. There, with the eyes of faith, we see Jesus not as the eternal child in the arms of His mother, but as the Christ of Calvary. A moment's thought about what happened there (and we should think about this every day) reminds us that the essence of our faith centers around the Lord of history and what He did for us on that cross.

In the hymn “Rock of Ages,” the songwriter Augustus Toplady suggested that there was a double cure available from the wounded side of Jesus Christ. Actually, however, the work of Christ on the cross produces “the triple cure” in which we may rejoice.

The first cure, the first aspect of the salvation purchased for us on Calvary is that we indeed “*shall be saved from wrath through Him*” (Rom. 5:9). The eternal penalty of sin is hell and then the lake of fire. The temporal penalty of sin is the wrath of God which will be especially poured out upon the world during the days of the Tribulation. From these penalties, we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. When I believe the Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I am instantly and eternally saved from the wrath of God. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 8:1). Salvation from divine wrath is immediate and eternal when I believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross, trusting Him as my Savior.

The writer of the old hymn also prays, “Make me pure.” This reminds us of the second aspect of salvation, the second cure, in that I am saved not only from the penalty but also from the power of sin. To every Christian the Bible says, “*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace*” (Rom. 6:14). Knowing Christ saves us, therefore, from the legal dominion of sin over our lives.

In the matter of Christian purity, we must be careful to remember that salvation from the active involvement of sin in our lives is, first of all, progressive. It also demands that our wills be exercised in cooperation with the will of God. Salvation from the power of sin is built on Christian determination and action. “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (II Cor. 7:1). The progressive perfection of the life of a Christian is a very wonderful thing. It must be intensely practiced by each of us every day that we live. Alas, the lack of pursuit of a holy life has damaged too many Christians and too many Christian leaders in our time. The second cure--the pursuit of holiness--produces progressive sanctification and great spiritual capability.

When thinking of this, we happily announce that there is a third cure, a third aspect of salvation. We are saved from the penalty of sin by the death of Christ. We are saved from the power of sin by the life of Christ. One day, however, we shall be saved from the very presence of sin, and that by our departure to be with Christ or Christ returning for us. At the moment of this translation, we shall see fulfilled the hope “that all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.” In heaven, we shall be free from all temptation and all spiritual subversion. Being reminded of this, each one of us looks up with bright anticipation to that glorious day when Christ shall return. He shall return, first of all, to take us home on the occasion of the Rapture of the Church. Then, He shall return “with His saints” in power and great glory. At that time, we shall be part of that army which conquers the world, the Antichrist, and the Devil himself.

What a day that will be! Yes, there is coming a time when the world will be past, thrown away like an old, worn-out garment, and God will bring to pass a new heaven and a new earth. In that marvelous paradise of God, we will rest from our labors, we will be reunited with loved ones who have gone before, and we shall be with Jesus Christ. There, we will experience the fullness of the promise of “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (I Pet. 1:8).

From the vantage point of heaven, we will also look back at the things of earth and rejoice in the triple cure. No one of us will ever forget the day when salvation delivered us from the eternal penalty of sin and then progressively worked that we might be delivered from the power of sin. This, we then shall recall, made possible our giant step from earth to heaven in which time we were delivered from the very presence of sin. In heaven, we will be in the place of no more sorrow, no more pain, no more death, no more insoluble problems, but rather, we will fully possess the mind of Christ and be in His living presence. Daily, we will rejoice because on Calvary's cross Jesus Christ made it all possible. There He produced for us the triple cure.

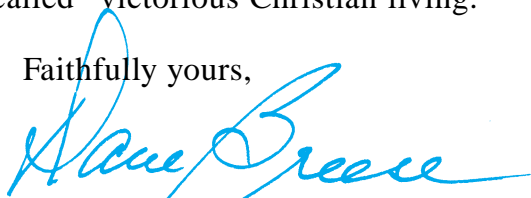
Even in these days, we rejoice because every person on earth is invited to go to heaven one day by believing in Jesus Christ. The greatest gift which God ever gave to man was purchased for all men when Jesus died that sinners might live. What is that greatest gift? It is the gift of God which is eternal life. Not one who receives that gift will ever perish, but will rejoice forever in what Christ has done for him at Calvary.

Finally, we should mention that one of the sources of confusion among Christians in our time is a lack of understanding of the three aspects of salvation. Through insufficient attention to the Bible, many do not recognize that there is a difference between being saved from the penalty of sin and being saved from the power of sin. In fact, many are totally saved from the penalty of sin but as yet, only partially delivered from the power of sin. In fact, when we think about it, we realize that this is true about every Christian. It is, therefore, presumptuous to insist that, because a person is a Christian, he will live a perfect life. When we accept Christ, we are "perfectly saved" from the penalty of sin. This because our standing before God is "positional"--dependent upon not personal but imputed righteousness.

At the same time, we "are being saved" or are "imperfectly saved" from the practice and the power of sin. This because salvation from sin's power is not a matter of imputation from God but, rather, it is moral achievement on our part. The degree of moral achievement is different with each Christian and less than perfect in every Christian, including the Apostle Paul. He said, "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*" (Phil. 3:12). The Christian who does not understand this will be subject to many a confusion and the assurance of salvation will always escape him. He risks slipping into the easy subversions of Lordship Salvation, thereby becoming further confused.

The difference between imputed righteousness and personal righteousness is important to understand. It is one of the paramount truths of Christianity and the confidence which is often called "victorious Christian living."

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David W. Breese". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

David W. Breese, President
Christian Destiny, Inc.