

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN PROPHECY

Isaiah 9:6, 7

Intro: Biblically there are three ways that we can consider the birth of Christ. In the OT we see THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN PROPHECY. In the Gospels we have THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN HISTORY. In the Epistles we learn about THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN DOCTRINE. In the OT we see how it was predicted long before it actually took place. In the Gospels we see those prophecies fulfilled when Christ was born. In the Epistles we are told what it means.

In this service I want to consider with you THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN PROPHECY. The first thing that we will do is to look at various passages which predict Christ's birth, and then, secondly, we will look at some of the lessons we can learn from those predictions.

In looking at these Scriptures let us keep in mind that what we are actually seeing are Scriptures which speak of the humanity of Christ, the Messiah. He was always the Son of God. He is the eternal Son. But He became Man in order to provide redemption for sinners. The Scriptures not only teach His humanity, but they teach His perfect humanity. If He were not God, that is, if He had a human father, then He could not be our Savior. He would then have needed a Savior Himself. So it is very important to note the OT predictions and to see that the OT teaches the perfect humanity of the Messiah.

I. THE PREDICTIONS OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

a. Genesis 3:14, 15.

This is the first prediction of Christ's birth when the Lord is referred to as the seed of the woman. How much Adam and Eve understood by this, we do not know, but it seems that, in view of the importance of the coming Redeemer, they would have realized the nature of the promise. We can see from the sacrifices that were offered by Cain and Abel that more was revealed and more was understood than we normally give them credit for knowing.

It is very significant that the One Who would destroy the works of the Devil was called the seed of the woman, and not the seed of the man, even though it was more in order with OT times to trace the genealogy through the father, and not the mother. But in this case the Christ would not have a human father. He could not have a human father, and yet be God.

B. Genesis 12:3.

What blessing did the Lord have in mind when He spoke these words to Abram?

If we were to go through the chapters of Genesis which contain the record of God's dealings with Abram, afterwards Abraham, we would find several times that the blessings are referred to. E.g., Gen. 22:16-18.

We might think that the Lord was simply speaking of the blessing that the nation Israel would be, but no such blessing has come from the nation as such. Instead, when we turn to the NT we find a passage in Galatians that helps us. Cf. Gal. 3:8, and then Gal. 3:16.

These verses mean that Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, would be a descendant of Abraham. He would be a Man. Thus, this also becomes a prediction of the birth of Christ into the human family.

C. 2 Samuel 7:15, 16.

These words contain God's promise to David regarding the kingdom. In vv. 18-29 we have David's response. See vv. 18, 19, and vv. 25-29.

David realized that the promise that was given to him went far beyond the life of his son who would succeed him. And he glorified God saying that he would never have been able to pray as he prayed in this passage if God had not made such a tremendous promise to him.

Therefore, we see in these three passages that the Christ would not only be the seed of a woman, but that He would be born in the family of Abraham, and also in the family of David. All three of these prophecies show that the Messiah was to be a man, a true human being.

But this does not exhaust the passages that we need to be concerned with. These we find in the prophetic books of the OT. I will not try to include them all; my main purpose is to establish the fact that the birth of the Messiah, and His humanity, are firmly established by the prophecies of the OT.

D. Isaiah 7:14.

Liberal theologians and liberal Bible "scholars" have tried to eliminate this passage not only because it

deals with the humanity of Christ, but because it establishes His Deity, but we only need Matthew's comment in Matt. 1:22, 23 to show that they are completely in error. Matthew said that the Lord would not only be born of a woman, but of a virgin. And both Isaiah and Matthew concur that our Lord's birth as a man would in no way alter the fact that He was still "Emanuel . . . God with us."

E. Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Here we see that "a child is born . . . a son is given." What is the difference, or do these two expressions mean the same thing? No, they are not the same. As a child our Lord was born to the virgin Mary; as the Son of the Living God He was "given" to be the final revelation of God, the Savior of sinners, and the rightful heir (see v. 7) of David's throne.

So again we see these clear predictions of THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

F. Isaiah 11:1.

This verse, which is clearly Messianic, speaks of our Lord as "a rod out of the stem of Jesse." Jesse was the father of David, and Jesse was also a man. So, for the Lord to be of that root meant that He, too, would be a true human being.

Let me mention just one more verse:

G. Micah 5:2.

Some might feel that this does not prove the humanity of Christ since it only says that the one spoken of here would come forth from Bethlehem and from Judah. But again, when we turn to the Gospel of Matthew, we see in Matt. 2:4 when Herod asked the chief priests and the scribes where the Messiah "should be born," they answered from Micah 5:2. And we have their answer in Matt. 2:5, 6.

So it is a clearly established prophecy throughout the OT that the Messiah would be born, that He would be a man, that He would not have a human father, but His mother would be a virgin, that He would be of the family of Abraham, and of the family of David. And this is traced in detail by Matthew and Luke in their genealogies, giving both our Lord's legal right and His blood right to the throne of David, and the One through Whom the

promises given to Abraham would be fulfilled.

But all doctrine certain has some practical significance for us. What reasons can we give for such a revelation in the Word of God?

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE PROPHECIES.

There are some things that we can see in the NT following the birth and life and death and resurrection of Christ, but I am thinking now of just the OT revelation of this great truth concerning the humanity, the perfect humanity, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. They help us to see the underlying purpose of God throughout the Scriptures.

Cf. Luke 24:27, 44.

- B. They help us to understand the trustworthiness of Scripture. What was prophecy has now become reality. If God has been faithful in doing as He purposed, and strong enough to accomplish it in every detail, then we have in the Word and in our God a strong basis for our faith. If God is faithful in this, the greatest of all matters, then we know that we do not need to worry about those lesser matters that often trouble us.

- C. They portray for us one of the greatest evidences of the love of God and of Christ, as well as the grace of God and of Christ. Paul cited the incarnation of our Lord as the first step in His amazing humiliation which ultimately led Him to the Cross. Who can know of this and not marvel at the grace and love of God and of Christ?

This was certainly typified in the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham.

It was God Who took the initiative in providing salvation for man, not man who sought salvation from God.

- D. It surely should make us bow in worship before a God Who could accomplish such a miracle.
- E. We can see that we do not have to be able to explain everything that we find in the Scriptures in order to believe them, and to profit from them.

Concl: What a great and wonderful God we have! And what a

wonderful Book He has given us! As we approach this Christmas Season again, and focus our attention on the birth of Christ, let us think of how it glorifies God, how it confirms the Word of God, and so confirms that as we are trusting the Lord for our salvation, as well as for the supply of our needs each day, we do not trust Him in vain.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN HISTORY

Luke 2:7

Intro: When we look at the teaching of Scripture concerning the birth of Christ, we can see that there is a threefold emphasis. The OT foretells His coming. The Gospels give us the record of His coming. And, in the Epistles, we have the fuller significance of His coming set forth.

We can express this in other three ways:

- 1) The birth of Christ in prophecy.
- 2) The birth of Christ in history.
- 3) The birth of Christ in doctrine.

Today I would like to direct your attention to THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN HISTORY, or THE RECORD OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

And for our consideration of THE BIRTH OF CHRIST I would like to take you to Luke 2:7 where we find these words: (Read.)

My outline is very simple, and I think that you can easily see it in my text. It is this:

- 1) THE BIRTH OF CHRIST: "And she brought forth her firstborn son."
- 2) THE BIRTHPLACE OF CHRIST: "And wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."
- 3) THE EXPLANATION FOR THE BIRTHPLACE: "Because there was no room for them in the inn."

Let us start with that first statement which gives us:

- I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST: "And she brought forth her firstborn son."

The "she" in our text was Mary, and her "firstborn son" was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 11 in our chapter also gives this announcement, where the angel of the Lord spoke to the shepherds as they were tending their sheep out in the field. These are the angel's words:

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Verse 16 tells us that they "found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." In verse 20 we see how the shepherds returned to their sheep "glorifying and praising God" that they had found the babe just as the angel had told them. I point all of this out so you can see the testimony that we have in Scripture that the birth of Christ actually took place in history. This was not a myth, nor some kind of a fairy tale. It really took place. There was a baby boy born in Bethlehem in a

barn almost 2,000 years ago whose name was Jesus.

Matthew, the writer of the first Gospel in the New Testament, stated it like this. He said simply that Joseph

. . . knew her not
till she had brought forth her firstborn son:
and he called his name JESUS (Matt. 1:25).

Matthew also told about the wise men who
saw the young child with Mary his mother,
and fell down and worshipped him (Matt. 2:11m).

John Mark did not record our Lord's birth, but his Gospel leaves no doubt but that he was writing about the same Person about Whom Matthew and Luke wrote.

John gave us the record of the birth of Christ in these words, calling the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Word":
And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
(and we beheld his glory,
the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)
full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

So the birth of Christ is well-documented! The time came when the Lord Jesus Christ was born!

There never has been a birth of greater significance than the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is true not only because of the publicity that had been given to it in the Scriptures, nor because of His miraculous conception, but also because of Who He is and what He had come to do.

A. Prophecy fulfilled.

In that moment, when our Lord Jesus Christ was born, prophecies dating back some 4,000 years, and continuing on throughout most of those 4,000 year, were suddenly and completely fulfilled in every detail. There was not a single prophecy concerning the first coming of the Messiah that was not satisfied in its entirety.

Now rather than wait to the end of my message to make some applications, I am going to do it as I go along.

What does this statement about the prophecies concerning the birth of Christ tell us about the Bible?

Let me point out what I mean by reminding you that

this year many people were expecting the world to come to an end because a book had been written predicting it. What happened? Nothing. Many people were frightened for no reason at all. What does that tell you about the book and the person who wrote it? It tell you that the writer was a false prophet, and so the book was a phony.

But what do the fulfilled prophecies of Scripture tell you about the Bible? It is one of the greatest proofs that we have that the Bible is the very Word of God, and that, if its prophecies are trustworthy, so are its promises, and all of the rest of its teaching!

For ever, O Lord,
thy word is settled in heaven (Psa. 119:89).
"Settled" means that it stands. It will never change, nor will it pass away. Nothing that happens on earth can possibly affect it. And so we have it as a sure foundation for our faith. There is nothing more permanent or secure that we have than the Word of God.

But let us look at . . .

B. The One Who was born.

1. His miraculous conception.

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ did not have a human father. This was all explained to Mary by the angel of the Lord in these words:

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,
and the power of the Highest
shall overshadow thee:
therefore also that holy thing
which shall be born of thee
shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

The birth of Isaac was miraculous. The birth of Samuel was miraculous. The birth of John the Baptist, But none of these could begin to compare with the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only truly human, but, in every sense of the words, He was as He always had been: the Son of God.

But the birth of Jesus Christ was unique in another sense. And this had to do with . . .

2. The purpose of His birth.

It is stated many places in Scripture, OT as well as NT, but let us look at what we have here in Luke 2, verse 11. The angel said to the shepherds,

For unto you is born this day
in the city of David, a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord.

What a tragedy this is that most people will never hear this as the message is given out again this Christmas season in word and song. Or they will put another meaning on it from that which the Scriptures intend. Christ was born to be a Saviour, the only Saviour, and a complete Saviour. He is a Saviour of sinners from the judgment they are under because of their sins. Surely, if we will stop for a moment to think of what actually was taking place on that day when Christ was born, we will realize that there must have been some very important reason for such a birth, some purpose which could not be accomplished in any other way. And that is true! He came to suffer and to die because there was absolutely no other way for man to escape divine judgment. And it behooves every one of us to make sure that our faith is in Christ, not in ourselves, not in a church, not in any works that we have done, nor in any money that we have paid. Salvation is only through trusting in Christ and in His sacrificial death. Is He your Saviour? You may be a very fine person, but your goodness is not enough. You and I need Christ!

So there is a lot for us to contemplate as we think of the One Who was born, how He was conceived, and why He came to this world.

But let me move on to the second part of this verse:

II. THE BIRTHPLACE OF CHRIST: "And wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

Many of you who are listening to me today are parents. And all of us have parents. Lucille and I have had four children, but not one of them was born in a barn. But that is where our Lord Jesus was born---in a barn, and after He was born, He was placed in a manger: a trough where food was placed for cattle and horses. What a place for the Son of God to be born! What a place for royalty to be born (because He was destined to be the King of kings, and Lord of lords)! The Lord of creation was born among those lower than men. No sterilized

delivery room. Not even in the comforts of the home of Joseph and Mary. But in a barn, and then placed in a manger for his cradle.

But let us not blame Joseph. He had been ordered by the government of Rome to go to Bethlehem at this inopportune time. He would have wanted Mary to have the best of conditions, and the greatest possible care, but this is where Mary's baby was born. Why? "Because there was no room for them in the inn." I want to say a word about that in a moment.

But what do we see in the conditions under which our Lord was born? We see that this was all a part of the humiliation which He suffered in coming to this earth as a Man. He was not born in a palace among the greatest of men, but in a barn among the lowest. His cradle was where the cows and horses ate.

But there is one thing that ought to encourage us, and bless us, about this scene. Luke said that our Lord was "wrapped . . . in swaddling clothes." Mary swaddled her Child, which means that she lovingly wrapped him in a covering of some kind in order to keep him warm. You and I do not believe that Mary was Deity, as some people do, but she surely had to be one of the most wonderful of all women, perhaps the most wonderful, to have been chosen by God to be the mother of our Lord. And she loved her Baby. And Joseph love Him. And, although they could not find a warm, clean place for Him to be born, they did what they could, "and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

As you think about this, our hearts should be overwhelmed at this twofold sight: (1) the lowly circumstances of our Lord's birth, and (2) the love that was showered upon our Lord by those two lowly people, the poor of the earth, but surely the elite of heaven.

Will you take that word, swaddled, with you today? What are you doing to show your love for the Lord Jesus Christ? You and I may not be able to do all that we would like to do, but let us be like Joseph and Mary: they did all that they could do. The Roman world and the Jewish world had no conception as to what was taking place in that barn and manger. But God knew! And how His heart must have been moved at that scene when His Son was born as a Man on the earth!

How do we show our love for the Lord? By our obedience to His Word. The world may scorn such a life, but it is a delight to God's heart--now as it was then!

But let me point out my last point:

III. THE EXPLANATION FOR THE BIRTHPLACE.

That needs explaining, doesn't it? I have already referred to explanation, but let me say another word or two about that last clause of my text: "BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN."

We know why that was the case. Many other people had come from all over Israel for the same reason that Joseph and Mary were there. The government had required it for the tax registration. There were so many people there that there were no accommodations for many of them--and Joseph and Mary were among that number. Perhaps it was due to the kindness of an innkeeper that they were given the accommodations they had in the barn, or perhaps it was a stable.

But it was certainly symbolic of the reception that the Lord Jesus Christ would receive on earth. The Jews did not want Him. The Romans wished that they had known what to do with Him. But they were not interested in His message.

Our Lord was speaking of Himself when He told the parable of the nobleman whose citizens hated him, and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14).

How many people are there whose hearts will be stirred by the story of the baby Jesus who was born among cattle, and placed in a manger, and yet they have no room for Him in their hearts? Our Lord, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord of glory, came to this earth, but Isaiah prophesied long before what His station in life would be:

He is despised and rejected of men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
and we hid as it were our faces from him;
he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isa. 53:3).

What is this but a commentary on the hearts of men? Man never seeks God; it is always God Who seeks men. Man did not ask for a Saviour; God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Man is guilty, but God has been gracious in sending His Son. Man is a rebel, but Christ is the Redeemer. Man never chooses God, but God has His chosen ones among men. And when God calls, men come. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). But in order to save, He had to die, to die as a Substitute for all of those whom the Lord sent Him to save. Let us recognize that in our case, and in the case of every sinner who has ever come to Christ for

salvation, we see, not the wisdom of men, not someone who is different from others. But we see the triumph of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And to Him belongs all of the glory!

Concl: Today I have tried to tell you about Christ, about man, about salvation. I have tried to picture for you from THE HISTORY OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST something of what it cost the Lord to provide salvation for sinners. Now let me ask, Where are you in all of this?

You see, this is not something that you can be indifferent to except to your eternal loss and eternal damnation. The very fact that the Lord has given us another Christmas season is evidence of His grace. The Scriptures will be heard again by people who never hear it at any other time during the year. The carols are sung, and many of them clearly present the Gospel of Christ. But people will not hear, and they do not want to hear. Oh, let me warn you, if you have not trusted in the Christ Who was born almost 2,000 years ago, that you plead with God to give you eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand. Unless He enables you to hear, you will never hear. Unless He enables you to see, you will never see. Unless He enables you to understand, you will go on into eternity in your ignorance--and then you will learn that it is forever too late.

If you know the Lord, I am sure that I do not need to urge you to praise Him for His grace to you. You and I do not deserve to see what we have seen, nor to hear what we have heard, nor to understand what we understand. It is all of God, and we need to praise Him today with renewed zeal that the Lord Jesus Christ came, that He died for our sins, that He awakened us to our need, and then drew us to Himself. That is what grace is.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that, though he was rich,
yet for your sakes he became poor,
that ye through his poverty might be rich
(2 Cor. 8:9).

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN DOCTRINE
Hebrews 2

Intro: When I say that my subject is, THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN DOCTRINE, what do I mean? I have in mind the teaching in the NT, especially in the Epistles of the NT, as to what was accomplished by the birth of Christ. What teaching do we have in the Epistles as to what was made possible by the miraculous birth of the Son of God into the human family?

We all know, or should know, the story of His birth. That is the history. We also should have some idea as to some of the major predictions in the OT concerning the birth of the Messiah. That is what we call prophecy. But what was the purpose of it all? What light do the NT Epistles throw upon the purpose of the birth of Christ?

Again this Christmas I have heard, as I am sure you have, various people expressing themselves as to why Jesus Christ was born. One person will say that Christ came to do away with war. Another will say that Christ came to do away with racial hatred. Still another will say that Christ came to do away with poverty, or crime. The answers seem to be centered upon the many terrible problems that we are facing in our world today. And, there is an element of truth in what is being said, if not for the world at large, at least for individuals in the world. And if these things were not accomplished by our Lord's first coming, they will at His second coming--but not in the way that most people think!

The big question is this: WHERE ARE WE TO GO TO FIND THE TRUE ANSWER? WHY WAS JESUS CHRIST BORN? I would like to write those questions in the sky--along with the answer. There is only one place where we can go for the answer, and that is to the Book that gives us the prophecies, to the Book that contains the historical record. THAT BOOK IS THE BIBLE!

The birth of Jesus Christ was the most important birth ever to take place in any nation and at any period in the history of the world. When Jesus Christ was born we have the living evidence that God's Son had become a Man. The One Who was the eternal Son of God, and Who therefore had no beginning as God, did have a beginning as a Man. But why should such an unbelievable thing take place? I take you to the NT, and to the Book of Hebrews in particular, to chapter 2, for our answer.

Here we have three answers. They are not all of the answers that we find in the NT, but they are enough to get us started on the right path, and to help us see some of the main reasons for the birth of Christ. The writer of the Book of

Hebrews did not state it like Matthew and Luke did, but the meaning is the same.

First I want to call your attention in this chapter to:

I. THE THREE REFERENCES TO THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

A. The first: Heb. 2:9a.

We know that this speaks of the incarnation because in the 7th verse the writer of this book was quoting from the 8th Psalm, describing the creation of man, and he used David's definition of man's creation: He was made "a little lower than the angels." That was man's place when he was created--lower than the angels, although greater than animals, or birds, or fish, or any other living creatures. "Jesus" became a man.

B. The second: Heb. 2:14a.

We speak of people as being "flesh and blood." That comes from the Bible. So, if the Lord Jesus Christ became "flesh and blood," partaking of our "flesh and blood," this means that He became a man.

C. The third: Heb. 2:16, 17a.

If the Lord Jesus were to be "the seed of Abraham," He had to become a man because Abraham was a man.

So we have these three statements referring to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) He was made lower than angels.
- 2) He partook of flesh and blood.
- 3) He was made of the seed of Abraham.

But now if you look at what follows those three statements of the birth of Christ, you will see that the writer of Hebrews has given us three reasons for the birth of Christ--three reasons why He was made lower than angels, three reasons why He took on Himself flesh and blood, and the seed of Abraham. And these are what we want to consider and, hopefully, to understand, as we meet together on this Christmas morning.

And so let us examine:

II. THE THREE REASONS (given here) FOR THE BIRTH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A. The first reason: Heb. 2:9b -- " . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

It is very clear in Scripture that Jesus Christ was born to die!

But remember: We are speaking of One Who was, before His birth, the absolutely holy Son of God, and Who continued to be after His birth, the absolutely holy Son of God. His birth did not lessen nor change His Deity in any way. He did not have a human father like all of us have had; He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Why then, since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), was the Lord Jesus born to die?

Notice what our verse tells us. Jesus Christ was born as a man in order that He might "taste death for every man"! He died as a substitute. He died to take upon Himself the guilt of others. He died for sins that He did not commit in order that those who committed those sins might be forgiven by God. That is the first reason that the writer of Hebrews gives us for the death of Christ.

The angel of the Lord told Joseph before the baby Jesus was born that "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

You see, this is the reason that the angel of the Lord also told the shepherds in the field,
 For unto you is born this day
 in the city of David A SAVIOUR,
 which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11).

Jesus Christ was born to save sinners from the terrible penalty that was upon them because of their sins.

And, although I do not have time to deal with each verse in this chapter, look at verse 10. When Jesus Christ died, He died to bring "many sons unto glory," unto heaven, unto absolute perfection, and it was as "the captain of their salvation," it was for them, every one of them, that the Lord Jesus shed His blood as He died upon the Cross.

But, if you are thinking at all about what I have been saying, you will ask the question, Why would the Son of God die for human sinners? Why would He become a man to suffer as He did on the Cross, taking the judgment which sinners ought to have?

Obviously it had to be because there was no other way for sinners to be delivered from the judgment of God. God, being a righteous God cannot just excuse nor forget the sins of men. Their penalty has to be fulfilled. God sent His Son to do all that was necessary to bring His many chosen sons to glory.

But notice the words, "by grace." If you say that no sinner deserved such a Saviour, you are right! The incarnation and death of Jesus Christ are the greatest of all evidences of the grace of God!

But let us go on to:

B. The second reason: Heb. 2:14b, 15.

You might even say that there are two reasons here, but they are so closely related that we will deal with them as one. In doing the first (which is mentioned in v. 14), He did the second (which is mentioned in v. 15).

"The children" that are mentioned here are, according to v. 13, "the children which God gave" to His Son. And again it was for them that the work of redemption had particular meaning. What did their salvation require?

It required deliverance from the Devil and his power. It was the Devil who tempted the woman, and who brought the whole human race under divine judgment. But he did not stop there. He continued to hold sinners in spiritual bondage.

Jesus Christ, by His death, broke the power of the Devil, and delivered His people from death, from the fear of death, and from the bondage which such fear causes. The Devil, which means Accuser, Slanderer, has the right to demand the death of every sinner. But our Lord by His death rendered meaningless the Devil's claim by satisfying the righteousness of God, and setting His people from the power of the Enemy. He has the right to demand the death of every sinner, but in the case of the redeemed, the chosen ones of God, that claim means nothing since all charges against the accused have been satisfied, and dropped!

So the death of Christ has delivered the saint from the charges of the Devil, and from the bondage of sin in daily life. They are free--not free to sin, but free from sin, from its tyranny and bondage.

We still have one more point:

C. The third reason: Heb. 2:17b, 18.

The first reason showed us Christ as the Suffering Saviour. The second as the Mighty Conqueror. In this third reason we see Christ as our Great High Priest.

All three, while speaking of His birth, speak also of His death. In the first we see the death of Christ in its relationship to the sinner. In the second, the death of Christ in its relationship to the Devil. In this final one, we see the death of Christ in its relationship to God. The high priest ministers Godward. He is concerned about satisfying God. That is the reason it is important to know that the word "reconciliation" in v. 17 should be, propitiation. And the main idea in propitiation is satisfaction.

However, when we speak of the effect of the work of Christ upon the sinner, upon the Devil, and upon the Father, these are not effects which stand by themselves in each case. There is an inter-relationship which cannot be ignored. And we see it here in these last two verses.

It was our Lord's objective to be "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." His humanity put Him in a special relationship to man where His heart was filled with mercy. Remember that mercy has to do with human misery. Ultimately the cause of all human misery is sin. Sickness is traceable to sin. Death is traceable to sin. Problems that people have with each other are traceable to sin. And our Lord in the flesh was one who was filled with compassion toward sinners in their misery. There were ways, which we cannot understand nor explain, in which our Lord could enter into sympathy with us because of His humanity, and because of His trials here on earth. How thankful we can be for the mercy of God. They are new every morning. And they are from everlasting to everlasting.

But our Lord is also "a . . . faithful high priest." He is faithful to God, first of all, in doing all of the will of God, doing everything He required for the salvation of His people. And He did just that! He left nothing that needed to be done. But the Lord has also been faithful to us in the sense that He is a priest that we can trust. We will never find out that we have done wrong in placing our hope for

salvation upon Him. He is the true Saviour, the only Saviour, the sufficient Saviour. He has completely satisfied God concerning our sins. God will remember them against us no more. They are forgiven and forgotten.

But that is not all that the writer of Hebrews had to say about the incarnate Christ as our Great High Priest.

The Lord does not stop by bringing us into salvation. He continues to "succour" us, to help us. Although we have been saved from sin's penalty, and from sin's power, we still sin. Our final deliverance from sin will not come until we are in heaven. And so we continue to need the Lord's help every day as we face our temptations, our trials, our needs, and our weaknesses. In all of these the Lord, our Great High Priest, is the greatest Helper we have. Matthew Poole wrote,

Now sensibly made fit by his own sorrows, temptations, and sufferings, he is powerfully inclined to help us; subjected he was to all of them, to make him feelingly, tenderly pitying of us (p. 819).

Cf. Heb. 4:14-16.

Concl: Let me ask you: Do we have a sufficient Saviour? Do we need anyone in addition to Him?

He died to save us from sin's penalty. He has defeated our Enemy, the Devil. He has satisfied God completely. He is with us from day to day, helping us, protecting us, guiding us, delivering us in our times of need. The result: There is no question but that we will be in heaven some day.

But remember: None of this would have been possible if our Lord had not become a man. The person who does not believe that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh does not have a Saviour. If He had remained as Deity alone, He could never have died for us. If He were only a man, with a human father as well as a human mother, then He, too, is a sinner, and under the same judgment as we are. But we know that He is the Son of God, one with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, Who became truly man, who suffered and died as a Substitute for our sins. This is the meaning of Christmas.

Dear Christian, what is your need today? Christ is your Saviour, He is your Sovereign, He is your Succourer. God is our Father, Christ is our Elder Brother, the Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, our Comforter. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all . . ." (Rom. 8:32).