

extra special in herself that she should be chosen as virgin mother of Jesus.

The Roman Catholic Church wrongly teaches and promotes in connection with Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, that she herself had an immaculate conception and that she was and remained without the guilt of original sin as a result. They teach too, contrary to Scripture, Mary's perpetual and eternal virginity. They even teach and promote also as official teaching what is called the bodily assumption of Mary, meaning they say that Mary too actually ascended into heaven even as Jesus did. They make Mary as a co-mediator or additional sideline redeemer whom people may worship and call upon and look for help from in seeking mercy and salvation from God. But such is all so much false teaching which takes away the spotlight on Christ alone, putting glory and merit on sinful human beings instead. It is a twisting of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Who God would be for us in and through His Son come to be so great a Saviour of sinners. Mary herself would be so appalled with this blatantly false and wrong focusing on her, as if she in any way at all contributed to the hope of the gospel for us. The message of Jesus' conception by the Spirit and His birth of the virgin Mary is meant rather to so underscore salvation is of the Lord, indeed gloriously, graciously and most wondrously so. To Him be all the glory now and forever, to Him alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Reflecting on Jesus' wondrous conception and birth and how mind boggling and marvelous is surely practical for it teaches and reinforces what a Saviour of sinners God gave us in Christ Jesus and how true it is that there is no other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Are you calling out to Jesus Christ and trusting in Him alone to save also a sinner like you? As we at this time of the year especially think on Jesus' first coming in so special a way, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, to seek and to save sinners, be sure to find refuge with Him before His second coming in majestic glory and almighty power one day, Who knows how soon now? True joy and peace comes in knowing and trusting Jesus the Saviour now while it is yet the day of grace and calling out to Him also to cover for your sins and sinfulness. Even so, and only so, can it be said truly, 'a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year to you'! Jesus' birth as Saviour is something mind-boggling and most marvelous indeed. "Come, let us adore Him!" Amen.

Hans Overduin, Radio Pastor

December 23, 2007

Publication No.342

BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



JESUS' BIRTH AS SAVIOUR

Jesus' wondrous conception and birth is the subject today. The gospel message also very much in this Christmas season is about the Gift of all gifts, God giving His only Son, sinners to save, and the way He came. We are told in Luke 1:35 that the angel Gabriel explained to Mary, who was still a virgin, the miracle of Jesus' conception and birth. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing [holy One] which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." [Luke 1:35]

There are just two points I wish to highlight in connection with Jesus' wondrous conception and birth, namely, what a mind-boggling truth and what a marvelous gospel truth we have here. It is mind-boggling in the sense that here is a gospel truth that surpasses all our understanding and no one can fully explain nor grasp the wonder of Jesus' birth. Jesus' conception is something wonderfully unsearchable, and actually comfortingly so, as I will make clear in a moment.

With Jesus coming to this earth from heaven, miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, it means He was born as one Who is and remains totally God, but also becomes and remains totally human. And included in this miracle is the fact that Jesus also was born of the seed and house of David and that He was like His brethren in all things, except for being guilty of any sin whatsoever. The miracle of His holy conception by the Holy Spirit overshadowing the Virgin Mary includes all these glorious facts, most wonderfully so! The Scriptures say repeatedly how Jesus' conception and birth is something mind-boggling indeed. Notice from Luke 1:37 with whatever questions Mary might have had about the whole wonder of Jesus' conception in her womb, to be born as "the Son of the Highest", the angel says, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Listen to how Paul speaks of this wonder stating in I Timothy 3:15, "And without controversy, [beyond all question] great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh!"

The wonder of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity coming as Saviour God made like unto us in all things, sin excepted, is something so awesome that it must be just received in faith and not explained away by us. It is not truth unreasonable but it is truth way beyond our reasoning! In the history of the church there have been those who have

with human reasoning tried to grasp it all, but then in some way denying all the facts about it. There were the Arians who denied Christ's deity, making Jesus just another human being though very special, something like the Jehovah Witnesses so wrongly do today still. You have the Apollinarians who denied Jesus' humanity, but they were and are wrong, for Jesus is truly man even as He remained truly God. Then there were and are those who confused the two natures of Christ, denying the distinction between them and trying to make Jesus into some sort of human-like god or divine-like human or others who said Jesus was actually really two persons. But Jesus' miraculous conception and birth bring out the gospel fact of a Saviour with two natures in one Person. No one can ever fully explain this unfathomable mystery and wonder of Jesus' birth, being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. It is simply an astounding supernatural work of God that we need ever to be in awe of. 'O come let us adore Him!' as the one Christmas carol puts it.

Yes, for having emphasized now that this is simply a mind-boggling gospel truth, Jesus' holy conception by the Spirit in the virgin Mary, let me say yet how this truth is of such practical value. How so, you ask? Well, it proves so clearly that our God is a great God, far greater than anyone of us can ever imagine. You and I can be so encouraged with the tidings of Jesus' miraculous conception and birth because it is such a vivid reminder of God being truly the God over all, the infinitely majestic, glorious, wonderful, awe-inspiring God! Do you want a god you can easily explain everything about, a god of man's own making, or a lifeless dead idol image for a god that can't hear or speak or do anything? The God Who is great and greatly to be praised is the God of the Bible as revealed in Jesus Christ, Whose greatness is unsearchable in all His works and ways! It makes so much sense to trust and follow the incomprehensible infinitely great God, this one only true God. The mind-boggling truth of Jesus' miraculous conception and birth gives all the more reason really to trust and follow Him above all else.

Even more so is this the case when you realize too with the truth about Jesus' wondrous conception and birth that God gave Him and sent Him as He did out of such infinite salvation care and loving provision for such sinful people as we are left to ourselves. In Jesus Christ the infinitely immeasurable, incomprehensible God makes Himself known to us as a God so out to save helpless, hopeless, guilty, undeserving sinners like we are, left to ourselves. And He provides in Jesus Christ the exact, perfect, fully equipped Saviour of sinners that we so need. Let no one scoff at the wonder of Jesus' astonishing conception and birth but see in it the nature of God in His grace and mercy and love and power towards lost and sinful mankind. The day man fell into sin in the beginning with Adam and Eve, the Lord promised a Redeemer one day, the seed of the woman, to crush the head of the serpent. And in the fullness of time God sent the seed of the woman,

especially prepared and planned and provided by Himself, and Jesus came forth, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, the Christ-child exactly as we need.

Here I move already from considering Jesus' conception and birth as not only a mind-boggling practical gospel truth, but notice next with me it is certainly also a most marvelous, practical gospel truth as well, for think of what it all means that Jesus came as He did. And why is this so marvelous? Well, it tells us God is exactly true to all His gospel promises. It tells us God is all wise and all knowing and all powerful and ever faithful and just and merciful, and see what a Saviour of sinners He has sent into this world! God didn't send a half Saviour or a Saviour who could only accomplish a half salvation for us, but He sent us a Saviour fully willing and endlessly able and everlastingly true and reliable, and One so infinitely understanding of us as humans. God sent us none other than His only begotten beloved Son to be Saviour of sinners and He sent Him not as a full grown Man come to this earth but as One conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Why did God choose this astonishing way? Because we need a Saviour and Mediator Who, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, "...with His innocence and holiness covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth." To be the perfect and complete Saviour for us, Jesus had to come as He did and go through what He did, to cover from His conception on, the fact of His people's sinful conception and birth and entrance into this world.

Praise God, trusting Jesus Christ as Saviour, we have in Him a Saviour Who covers for our sins and sinfulness from the womb to the tomb, from my conception to my grave. It is so rich and comforting to think of how perfectly and completely Jesus Christ as God come in the flesh saves His people from their sins. There isn't a sin detail about us that Jesus doesn't provide remedy for in His person and His salvation work as Saviour and Mediator for us, even for as many as will trust and follow Him. In Psalm 51:5 David confesses, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" We need a Saviour from the moment we are conceived and Jesus in His coming the way He did proves to be that exact Saviour you and I need. He is the faithful, complete, perfect Saviour right till our last breath and even into the grave, for see Him lying in the tomb three days even after His death, but then miraculously triumphantly arising from the dead too.

Here is where we can so stress how practical this doctrinal teaching is about Jesus conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. It should give all who look to Him so much reason for all confidence in Him, considering what kind of Saviour He is and how complete He is in all His saving work for as many as trust and follow Him. How extremely tragic and sad and wrong the way the Roman Catholic church takes away from the wonder and worth of Jesus' birth in exalting Mary herself as in some way