

HISTORY HAS NO GREATER MIRACLE

(Why Did He Become a Man? – For You, For Me)

Hebrews 2: 1-18, especially 14-18 and Hebrews 10: 4, 5-10

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In a secluded oak-studded knoll in historic Andover, Massachusetts, stands a large memorial stone. On the stone there is a weathered bronze plaque which reads. IN THE MISSIONARY WOODS ONCE EXTENDING TO THIS SPOT, THE FIRST MISSIONARY STUDENTS OF ANDOVER SEMINARY WALKED AND TALKED 100 YEARS AGO AND ON THIS SECLUDED KNOLL MET TO PRAY. IN MEMORY OF THESE MEN, ADONIRAM JUDSON, SAMUEL NEWELL, SAMUEL NOTT, GORDON HALL, LUTHER RICE, SAMUEL J. MILLS AND JAMES RICHARDS, WHOSE CONSECRATED PURPOSE TO CARRY THE GOSPEL TO THE HEATHEN LED TO THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS. THIS STONE IS SET UP IN THE CENTENNIAL YEAR OF THE AMERICAN BOARD-1910.

In a capsule, the modern missionary movement in America began 111 years ago with seven young men who were dedicated to God and dedicated to doing His will for their lives. There on that knoll, now known as Missionary Knoll, beside a haystack, in that famous haystack prayer meeting, God performed a miracle. He awakened America to the need to evangelize the world in our own time. Yes, it was so small to start with. In most people's eyes, like our baptism today of Matt Gray, it was insignificant. But in the sight of God, just as in the feeding of the 5,000, there was plenty for God to work with in five loaves and two fish, more than enough for God to perform a miracle. This principle is repeated over and over in God's word, and it still works today. In the Old Testament, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, regarding Zerubbabel, the builder of the temple after the Jews were restored to their own land from their 70 years of captivity. The work on the temple was slow, but God said, "For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice...not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts --In the New Testament, the same principle of God using small things is found in I Corinthians 1: 27-31. We read,

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of Him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." This principle of how God uses the tiniest things, brings us to our message about the birth of Jesus. History knows no greater miracle than when God came down to man in Bethlehem, that insignificant Judean town Micah spoke of in Micah 5: 2. What could be God's eternal purpose in sending His eternal Son as a tiny crying infant, a baby boy to come from the Shekinah glory into our dark world. Yet, there's more to the story. So much more can be and needs to be said.

We read in Hebrews 2: 14-18, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” This is our message today. In this miracle of all miracles, the birth of the Son of God into the human race, why did Jesus come incarnate as a baby boy? Why did God become a man in Jesus?

GOD CAME IN FLESH TO BE THE PERFECT SACRIFICE FOR OUR SIN. (I.)

Notice Hebrews 2: 14a and 16,17a We read, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things...For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, he had to be made like His brothers in every respect.” Also, go with me to Hebrews 10: 4-10. We read, “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” When He said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then He added, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

What the writer of Hebrews is telling us is that since we are men and women, God had to become a man to help us, and to deliver us from our bondage to sin, and our eternal destination of hell. The eternal God who created the entire universe, became not only a man, but before that, He became a zygote, a fetus, inside the virgin womb of Mary. If you want to get an idea of what condescension this is and was, think of being willing to become a salamander, a slug, or a slimy leech. That is a start, but what God did in becoming a man was even greater than that. Why couldn't God have just come as an angel to send an angel to help us? Why did Jesus have to come as a man? Why couldn't one special angel sacrifice have been enough? The answer from God's word over and over is simply this. Only by becoming a man could God satisfy the justice of God. Only through the incarnation, would Jesus be the prepared perfect sacrifice for us to pay the penalty of our sins.

The Old Testament is full of shepherds. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds, as were Moses, David, and the prophet Amos. Shepherding was one of the most important jobs in the community of God's people because God's people needed lambs, and a lot of lambs in order to fulfill the requirement of sacrifices to

God. The Old Testament is filled with the continual slaughter of thousands, even millions of lambs as sacrifices for sin. The thought of it is unsettling. Think of the priests who participated in these bloody sacrifices. Yet, because of our sins, God requires a sin sacrifice, a sacrifice for sin that is in our place. In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was a lamb, and it wasn't just any lamb. The lamb had to be spotless, without blemish, and without defect. Leviticus 22: 21-22 states, "And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, to be accepted, it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar."

Yet no lamb was ever quite perfect. Their sacrifice was a temporary covering for sin, but Hebrews 10: 4 is clear. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Every bleat of a lamb or sheep or goat or calf or bull was as it were a cry of all mankind, crying for a truly perfect Lamb of God. This cry continued down through the generations and decades and centuries until one day, the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist saw Jesus walking toward him. In John 1: 29, John the baptizer said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This was God's final answer to our cry in our sin. It was the answer to Isaac's question when he asked his father Abraham long ago, in Genesis 22: 7-8 "My father!" And Abraham said, "Here am I, my son." Isaac said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."

There by the Jordan River when John declared Jesus was the Lamb of God, Peter would later say in I Peter 1: 18-19, "Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." Beloved, we aren't looking for a lamb anymore. He has come. Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed and crucified in our place for our sins. Paul said in I Corinthians 5: 7, "Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed." Isaiah prophesied and it happened in Isaiah 53: 5, "But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wound/stripes, we are healed." Jesus is the Lamb, the only Lamb, that once for all became the sacrifice for our sins. Hebrews 10: 12 states it, "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God." John bore witness that this Jesus born in Bethlehem who died on Calvary's cross was and is and forever will be the Son of God. In John 1: 34, John said, "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." John in speaking about those taking the mark of the beast some day soon, said in Revelation 13: 8, "And all who dwell on earth will worship it (the beast), everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." Jesus was born, and He became the God-Man to bleed and die for you and me, and to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Secondly,

GOD CAME IN FLESH TO DELIVER US FROM THE BONDAGE OF DEATH. (II.)

Notice Hebrews 2: 14-15. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Richard Lenski said of this, “Jesus put Satan out of commission, that is, him who has the power of death.” This is the teaching of the Word of God by Paul as well in I Corinthians 15: 20-26 where we read, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also, the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” Then Paul caps this deliverance in I Corinthians 15: 53-55, saying, “For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

A pastor some years ago, named Pastor G. H. C. MacGregor told how an old Aberdeen minister he knew was comforted by God in a strange but wonderful way. This minister, like many of us today, had always feared death, and thus he always felt powerless to comfort others facing death. Toward the end of his life, he moved away from his home he loved. When all the furniture was loaded, the old minister lingered in the house and sat on the floor. This was where he had lived and loved his wife and children. This was where all his children were born. This home had his study in it where he had prepared all his messages. He wouldn't budge, until one of his helpers in the move, came in and said to him, “Sir, everything here is gone, and the new house is better than this one. Come on. Come away.” This man preached a lesson to this pastor which he never forgot. God has prepared a place not built with hands – a home much better than this body and house we live in. We read in II Corinthians 5: 1, “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Oh, beloved, Jesus came to die for us and to defeat our last enemy, the enemy—death by his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus is the firstfruits, and every born-again believer is delivered from our last nemesis and enemy-death. 3rd,

GOD CAME IN FLESH TO BECOME OUR MERCIFUL HIGH PRIEST. (III.)

Notice our text in Hebrews 2: 16-18. We read, “For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He (this is Jesus) helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation/satisfaction to the Father, for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” Christ became our go-

between. Before Jesus came to earth, there was no go-between, there was one God, but Job saw no mediator, no merciful and faithful high priest. Job said of God in his misery, in Job 9: 33-34, “For He is not a man, as I am, that I might answer Him, that we should come to trial together. There is no arbiter/mediator between us, who might lay His hand on us both.” After Jesus came to earth incarnate, Paul was able to declare in I Timothy 2: 5, “For there is one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Jesus coming in His birth in Bethlehem fulfilled all Job’s wishes and more.

For us as born-again believers in Jesus, as far as we are concerned, Hebrews 4:14-16, makes it clear that a great and merciful High Priest is what we need so much. Jesus is that and more for us. We read, “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Jesus came to earth to let us in on the secret that He knows every temptation we have ever had, every human weakness we have felt, sickness He faced, being helpless as a baby, and helpless, nailed to that bloody cross at Calvary. Jesus more than sympathizes with us; He empathizes with us. He has been where we are. He knows our struggles, and He knows the path to victory. Sometimes we pray, and say, “God, if you only knew what I am going through.” He knows, and that’s why we can come boldly to His throne to find mercy in our time of need.

As far as God the Father is concerned, Christ came to earth and succeeded. He made it possible for us to be reconciled to God. None of us can approach the holiness of God because of our sin, except through a personal representative. Christ by becoming a man, our high priest, and by dying in our place, made it possible that sinful people like you and like me can come boldly into God’s presence. Hebrews 4: 16 states, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Jesus’ sacrifice in our place made it possible for God to forgive repentant, believing sinners and still remain holy and just. The incarnation, the miracle of miracles, for history knows no greater miracle, was for you, for me. In fact, it’s for everyone. The good news of salvation the angel announced in Luke 2: 10-11 is for everyone one of us. The angel said to the shepherds the night Jesus was born, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy that will be for all the people.** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” But remember, though the good news is for everyone, not everyone receives the good news. Jesus said in the great commission in Mark 16: 15, “**Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature/to the whole creation.**” That’s my commission and yours too. Like a check written out to us, some of us will cash this good news, this good news check from the Bank of Heaven. Some people will ignore, deny, or reject this good news, and for them the good news of Jesus’ birth is bad news—God’s witness to them, will one day witness against them. Have you repented, believed and received God’s good news?

