

The true message of Christmas

By **DR. JOHN C. WHITCOMB**

President, Whitcomb Ministries, Inc.

Every year it becomes sadly apparent that fewer and fewer Americans understand what Christmas really means.

Christmas is an international celebration of a moment in history on planet Earth when God's eternal Son, whom we know as the Lord Jesus Christ, became a genuine and permanent member of mankind in order to die for our sins upon a cross.

The key word is love – not our love, but God's love. In spite of our profound selfishness, pride and indifference to the claims of a holy and loving God, He – not willing that any should perish – provided the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, to die in our place – as our substitute, our divine and sinless representative – and to rise from the dead.

Christ (the Messiah) was born in Bethlehem of Judea and raised in Nazareth of Galilee 2,000 years ago. He was sent into the world by God the Father because of His love for human beings.

A brilliant, God-honoring medical doctor and historian named Luke described what happened one night in the city of Nazareth. An angel came to a young Jewish woman named Mary and announced: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy (one) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

What does this mean? A miracle of cosmic magnitude was about to occur. That is why this messenger from God explained: "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Jeremiah had used this same expression 600 years earlier when contemplating the creation of the universe: "Ah Lord God! Behold, Thou hast made the

heaven and the earth by Thy great power...There is nothing too hard for Thee" (Jer. 32:17).

But how could the Son of God, the Second Person of the triune Godhead, add a human nature to His eternal divine nature without becoming two persons – and without the human person being not only finite but sinful?

The Holy Spirit solved this dilemma by using the genetic information in the body of the Jewish virgin, wholly apart from the function of a human father and to the exclusion of her sin nature. (See Luke 1:47, where Mary stated that God was her Savior, as proof that Mary had a sin nature).

Note the special emphasis: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35a). It is only for this reason that she could be assured "that holy (one) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (v. 35b)

The pre-existent divine Person, who was the Son of God, assumed a human nature through Mary, but not a human person. He became one Person with two natures – the divine nature dominating the human nature without in any way canceling its non-glorified limitations, such as limited knowledge (Luke 2:52), weariness (John 4:6), hunger (Mark 11:12) and thirst (John 19:28). In fact, He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Thus, the incomparable miracle of divine incarnation by means of virgin conception resulted in a Person who is not only 100 percent deity, but also a 100-percent descendant of David (Matt. 1:1; Rev. 5:5; 22:16), Judah (Heb. 7:14), Abraham (Matt. 1:1) and Adam (Luke 3:38). It was not a mere theophany, an appearance of humanity, which died on the cross. It was a genuine and sinless human being who bore our sins and served as our perfect substitute.

The author of Hebrews expressed the Christmas message in a marvelously precise way: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:14-17).

Thank God for the true message of Christmas!

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Scripture taken from the King James Version.