

There Is Hope In The Red Letters

Long Beach Alliance Church • December 14th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

THEREFORE THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU A SIGN: BEHOLD, A VIRGIN WILL BE WITH CHILD AND BEAR A SON, AND SHE WILL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL.

~ISAIAH 7:14 (NASB)

BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME **IMMANUEL, WHICH TRANSLATED MEANS,**

“GOD WITH US.”

~MATTHEW 1:23 (NASB)

1) The Ancient Promise Of Messiah

- A) From the beginning, mankind's only hope for a future is God's promise of a Messiah who would save the world (Genesis 3:15) and be a blessing to all of mankind (12:1-3, 17:1-8).

- B) God's initiation of this promise would be revealed when a "virgin maiden" (*see excursus) would have a son whose name would be "God with us" (Immanuel ~ Isaiah 7:14).

- C) The virgin birth of the Messiah (Matthew 1:18, 24-25; Luke 1:26-35) would occur in the “little town of Bethlehem” (Micah 5:2, cf. Matthew 2:1, John 7:42).

- D) Bethlehem, where King David’s family was from, was the town of the royal-line (1st Samuel 17:12). Jesus was to be of the house of David (Jeremiah 23:5, Luke 3:23-38).

- E) Further, Jesus was to be of the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & Judah (Genesis 22:18, 21:12, 35:10-12, 49:10; Numbers 24:17, Micah 5:2) which were all fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38).

2) The Kingly Line Of The Messiah

- A) The beginning of the genealogy† of Jesus Christ emphasizes the line of promise which ran from Abraham, through David, and eventually to Jesus (Matthew 1:1).

- B) Being a “son of David” was a title for being a messianic deliverer in Israel, and was in accordance with the Davidic Covenant (2nd Samuel 7:4-17) which prophesied about the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

† When reading biblical genealogies, we must not expect accuracy by our modern standards. Omissions, variant spellings, and even variant names (i.e., some persons with two names) may be expected in genealogies, with many of these alterations motivated theologically. But to admit the theological interest in and impact upon these genealogies need not lead to the conclusion that they are not in any sense meant to be taken as factual. Both Matthew and Luke are concerned to represent the facts contained in their sources; they are hardly creating lists out of thin air. These genealogies, like much of the content of the Gospels, are to be taken as interpreted history — i.e., factual and not fictional data, conceived and set forth with theological goals, these in turn informed by the eschatological fullness now inescapably present to these writers. Summarized from *Matthew 1-13*, by Donald A. Hagner, pg. 8-9, from *The Word Biblical Commentary Series, Volume 33a*.

- C) Jesus' genealogy reveals both his royal lineage and it gives a foreshadowing of what Jesus is "made of." Jesus' lineage has profound theological implications!

3) The Disenfranchised Line Of The Messiah

- A) It is notable that the line of Jesus runs through several "scandalous" or "disenfranchised" ancestors:
- i) Isaac was the younger child to Ishmael (the line usually ran through the eldest child).
 - ii) Jacob was a liar and stole the birthright (inheritance) of his older brother Esau.
 - iii) Judah is part of the Messianic line, rather than Joseph, a much more extraordinary son of Jacob.
 - iv) Tamar was a Canaanite woman who disguised herself as a prostitute to seduce her father-in-law, Judah, into sleeping with her so she could have a son.
 - v) Rahab was an actual prostitute, and a Canaanite.
 - vi) Ruth was a Moabite woman, an outsider to Israel.
 - vii) David (the king) was a liar, an adulterer with Bathsheba (next on list), and a murderer of Uriah, one of David's mighty men and faithful husband to Bathsheba.
 - viii) Mary (the fifth woman mentioned) also was experiencing an unprecedented and unconventional pregnancy, although only scandalous in its appearance.
 - ix) The next section of names marks a great period of decline in Israel during the divided kingdom. This leads to the Babylonian captivity and exile.
 - x) The names in the final section are unknowns, people who were of Jesus' ancestry but of little individual significance.

4) The Genealogy Which Lives On

- A) The genealogical list which begins the book of Matthew establishes Jesus as both from the kingly line of Israel and as a son of scandal and obscurity (Matthew 1:1-17).

- B) In some capacity, Jesus lineage foreshadows His ministry. The exact kind of people from whom he came, are the exact kind of people with whom He came to minister (cf. Matthew 11:5).

- C) Further, note that Jesus' genealogy includes both Israelites and Gentiles (non-Jews). This foreshadows a Messiah which would be a blessing to the "whole world," not just the nation of Israel (Ephesians 2:10-16; cf. John 12:20ff).

- D) Note that Jesus' genealogy includes women, which established a value for women in the plans of God which was heightened by the purity and faithfulness of Mary, Jesus Christ's mother (Matthew 1:18ff).

- E) What then do we observe in the genealogy of Jesus Christ? We see God's hand has been in control and at work, even in the worst of situations, from the beginning, to work out salvation and provide for our future (cf. Philippians 2:12-13).

- F) This is the beginning of the "Jesus story" in Matthew's gospel, but it is certainly not the end of the story! Jesus' life and ministry brought hope to the whole world! As Matthew closes his gospel, the invitation to become part of the family of God (part of the genealogy) is extended to "all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20).

*Excursus on the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ

The Hebrew word which is translated "virgin" or "young maiden" (al-mah/עַלְמָה) is more ambiguous than the clearer and completely unambiguous word for "virgin" (bethula/בְּתוּלָה) in Hebrew. This has led some to conclude that translators have inappropriately inserted the word "virgin" (*isogesis*, reading something "into" the text) in the Isaiah 7:14 passage, rather than simply leaving the word as "maiden," as Isaiah intended.

Many secular voices reject Jesus' virgin birth. Surprisingly, these secular voices have been joined by some Christians, even resulting in conjecture as to whether the Scriptures need to be literally accurate. In his book "*Velvet Elvis*," Popular speaker and pastor Rob Bell writes this disturbing conjecture...

"What if tomorrow someone digs up definitive proof that Jesus had a real, earthly, biological father named Larry, and archaeologists find Larry's tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in to appeal to the followers of the Mithra and Dionysian religious cults that were hugely popular at the time of Jesus, whose gods had virgin births? But what if as you study the origin of the word "virgin," you discover that the word "virgin" in the gospel of Matthew actually comes from the book of Isaiah, and then you find out that in the Hebrew language at that time, the word "virgin" could mean several things. And what if you discover that in the first century being "born of a virgin" also referred to a child whose mother became pregnant the first time she had intercourse? Could a person believe all of this and still love God? Could a person still be a Christian? Or does our belief all just fall apart?" (Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, pg. 26).

What can be said to compelling secular and Christian voices who see the "virgin" birth as mythology and see those who believe in the virgin birth as "faithfully misdirected?"

I would add the following to the conversation... The word in question (al-mah/עַלְמָה) is never used of a married woman in the Old Testament. Rather, the word itself carries with it the clear idea that the woman was unmarried, and thus, was a virgin. The two ideas are inseparable in the biblical mind-set. Our Western mind-set "reads into" (*isogesis*) our own cultural values (that one need not be a virgin in order to be a young maiden) to the words of Isaiah. However, this would be an enormous cultural mistake. The fact is, the Isaiah passage is left ambiguous because the focus of the passage is not on the virgin birth, but rather military kings with whom Ahaz was to be focused (cf. Isaiah 7:10-16). As is true whenever we translate and interpret Scripture, the context of the passage is our number one guide, not word usage.

All of this to say, I affirm the usage of "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 for both contextual and cultural reasons. The promise of "God with us" would come from a virgin birth, a dual miracle which would be unmistakable in its fulfillment. That Mary was the "virgin" of Isaiah (Matthew 1:18, 24-25; Luke 1:26-35) is abundantly clear. The fulfilled prophecy further clarifies that Jesus Christ's prophesied birth affirms He is 'God with us'!

Summarized from various sources already noted. I am especially indebted to *The Book of Isaiah, 1-39*, by John N. Oswalt, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT), pages 209-211.

Engaging Advent

The word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, which means "the approach" or "the arrival." The Latin verb is *advenio*: "I arrive. I come. I am coming."

For centuries, followers of Jesus Christ have observed this season with a passionate anticipation of Christmas morning, marking the joy of the birth of God in the flesh, Jesus Christ.

Despite its significance, our culture has largely captured this season and disguised it with Lord's-a-Leaping, Sleigh Bells Ringing, and a Jolly Old Elf.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with any of these special traditions... Unless we miss Jesus Christ in the midst of all the tinsel and trappings.

If we miss Jesus Christ, then we have missed Christmas, and we have missed the message of "Peace on Earth, and goodwill toward men..."

Will this year be any different?

Simply, you are invited to engage Advent, perhaps for the first time in your life.

Through this season, which encompasses the three Sundays which lead up to Christmas (and the Christmas Eve Service), there will be special Advent Scripture readings which you (and your family) are invited to read during the week. There will also be some readings from Christian writers who have contemplated Advent over the centuries.

Will you schedule a time each day to anticipate His coming? Will you engage Advent? Join with the shepherds, walk with kings from the East, sit with Herod as he hears of the Christ child, exult with Mary & Joseph, gaze on the star of Bethlehem all over again, as though this is the first time...

Advent Scripture Reading

What does the birth of Jesus Christ mean for mankind? Let's read about the birth and connect with the story of God coming in the flesh.

- **Read Matthew 1:18-25**
- **Read Luke 2:1-20**

There were a faithful remnant of people who were awaiting Christ's birth. These were people who lived in the anticipation of the light coming into the world -- the same way we are to live today in anticipation of Christ's Second Coming. Learn from their faithful example.

- **Read Luke 2:21-38**

There were also people who surrounded the birth of Jesus Christ, those who were on the periphery. What were their reactions and how do these parallel modern reactions to Jesus Christ?

- **Read Matthew 2:1-23**

There is something profound in the coming of Christ as God in the flesh. Different writers catch different aspects of Jesus and give us an amazing view. Let's read it together and learn of our great Messiah!

- **Read John 1:1-34**
- **Read Hebrews 1:1-13**
- **Read Philippians 2:5-13**

Advent Reading #3 ~ Philip Yancey

Philip Yancey is a popular Christian author who has sold over 13 million books. His most famous books are *Disappointment With God*, *Where Is God When It Hurts?*, and *What's So Amazing About Grace?* A skillful author and a dedicated Christian, Yancey's words open up the wounded heart and allow the Word of God to minister in a profound fashion.

The Visited Planet

Sorting through the stack of cards that arrived at our house last Christmas, I note that all kinds of symbols have edged their way into the celebration. Overwhelmingly, the landscape scenes render New England towns buried in snow, usually with the added touch of a horse-drawn sleigh. On other cards, animals frolic: not only reindeer but also chipmunks, raccoons, cardinals and cute gray mice. One card shows an African lion reclining with a foreleg draped affectionately around a lamb.

Angels have made a huge comeback in recent years, and Hallmark and American Greetings now feature them prominently, though as demure, cuddly-looking creatures, not the type who would ever need to announce "Fear not!" The explicitly religious cards (a distinct minority) focus on the holy family, and you can tell at a glance these folks are different. They seem unruffled and serene. Bright gold halos, like crowns from another world, hover just above their heads.

Inside, the cards stress sunny words like love, goodwill, cheer, happiness, and warmth. It is a fine thing, I suppose, that we honor a sacred holiday with such homey sentiments. And yet when I turn to the gospel accounts of the first Christmas, I hear a very different tone, and sense mainly disruption at work...

Even those who accept the supernatural version of events concede that big trouble will follow: an old uncle prays for "salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us"; Simeon darkly warns the virgin that "a sword will pierce your own soul too"; Mary's hymn of thanksgiving mentions rulers overthrown and proud men scattered.

In contrast to what the cards would have us believe, Christmas did not sentimentally simplify life on planet earth. Perhaps this is what I sense

when Christmas rolls around and I turn from the cheeriness of the cards to the starkness of the Gospels.

Christmas art depicts Jesus' family as icons stamped in gold foil, with a calm Mary receiving the tidings of the Annunciation as a kind of benediction. But that is not at all how Luke tells the story. Mary was "greatly troubled" and "afraid" at the angel's appearance, and when the angel pronounced the sublime words about the Son of the Most High whose kingdom will never end, Mary had something far more mundane on her mind: But I am a virgin!

Once, a young unmarried lawyer bravely stood before my church in Chicago and told of a sin we already knew about: we had seen her hyperactive son running up and down the aisles every Sunday. Cynthia had taken the lonely road of bearing an illegitimate child and caring for him after his father decided to skip town. Cynthia's sin was not worse than many others, and yet, as she told us, it had such conspicuous consequences. She could not hide the result of that single act of passion, sticking out as it did from her abdomen for months until a child emerged to change every hour of every day of the rest of her life. No wonder the Jewish teenager Mary felt greatly troubled: she faced the same prospects even without the act of passion.

In the modern United States, where each year a million teenage girls get pregnant out of wedlock, Mary's predicament has undoubtedly lost some of its force, but in a closely knit Jewish community in the first century, the news an angel brought could not have been entirely welcome. The law regarded a betrothed woman who became pregnant as an adulteress, subject to death by stoning.

Matthew tells of Joseph magnanimously agreeing to divorce Mary in private rather than press charges, until an angel shows up to correct his perception of betrayal. Luke tells of a tremulous Mary hurrying off to the one person who could possibly understand what she was going through: her relative Elizabeth, who miraculously got pregnant in old age after another angelic annunciation. Elizabeth believes Mary and shares her joy, and yet the scene poignantly highlights the contrast between the two women: the whole countryside is talking about Elizabeth's healed womb even as Mary must hide the shame of her own miracle.

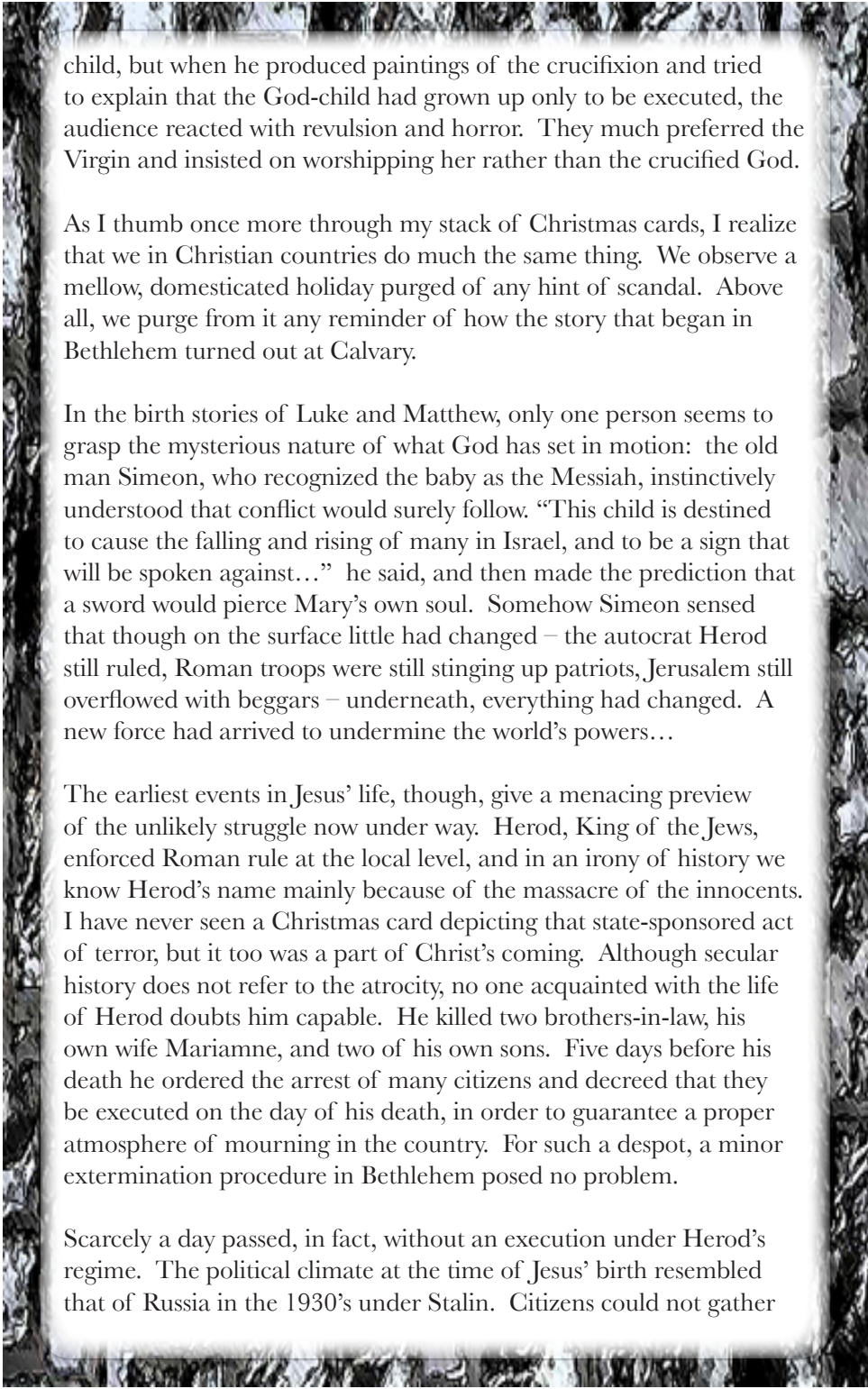
In a few months, the birth of John the Baptist took place and amid great fanfare, complete with midwives, doting relatives, and the traditional village chorus celebrating the birth of a Jewish male. Six months later, Jesus was born far from home, with no midwife, extended family, or village chorus present. A male head of household would have sufficed for the Roman census; did Joseph drag his pregnant wife along to Bethlehem in order to spare her the ignominy of childbirth in her home village?...

Nine months of awkward explanations, the lingering scent of scandal – it seems that God arranged the most humiliating circumstances possible for his entrance, as if to avoid any charge of favoritism. I am impressed that when the Son of God became a human being he played by the rules, harsh rules: small towns do not treat kindly young boys who grow up with questionable paternity.

Malcolm Muggeridge observed that in our day, with family-planning clinics offering convenient ways to correct “mistakes” that might disgrace a family name, “It is, in point of fact, extremely improbable, under existing conditions, that Jesus would have been permitted to be born at all. Mary’s pregnancy, in poor circumstances, and with the father unknown, would have been an obvious case for an abortion; and her talk of having conceived as a result of intervention of the Holy Ghost would have pointed to the need for psychiatric treatment, and made the case for terminating her pregnancy even stronger. Thus our generation, needing a Savior more, perhaps, than any that has ever existed, would be too ‘humane’ to allow one to be born.”

The virgin Mary, though, whose parenthood was unplanned, had a different response. She heard the angel out, pondered the repercussions, and replied, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” Often a work of God comes with two edges, great joy and great pain, and in the matter-of-fact response Mary embraced both. She was the first person to accept Jesus on his own terms, regardless of the personal cost.

When the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci went to China in the sixteenth century, he brought along samples of religious art to illustrate the Christian story for people who had never heard it. The Chinese readily adopted portraits of the Virgin Mary holding her



child, but when he produced paintings of the crucifixion and tried to explain that the God-child had grown up only to be executed, the audience reacted with revulsion and horror. They much preferred the Virgin and insisted on worshipping her rather than the crucified God.

As I thumb once more through my stack of Christmas cards, I realize that we in Christian countries do much the same thing. We observe a mellow, domesticated holiday purged of any hint of scandal. Above all, we purge from it any reminder of how the story that began in Bethlehem turned out at Calvary.

In the birth stories of Luke and Matthew, only one person seems to grasp the mysterious nature of what God has set in motion: the old man Simeon, who recognized the baby as the Messiah, instinctively understood that conflict would surely follow. “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against...” he said, and then made the prediction that a sword would pierce Mary’s own soul. Somehow Simeon sensed that though on the surface little had changed – the autocrat Herod still ruled, Roman troops were still stinging up patriots, Jerusalem still overflowed with beggars – underneath, everything had changed. A new force had arrived to undermine the world’s powers...

The earliest events in Jesus’ life, though, give a menacing preview of the unlikely struggle now under way. Herod, King of the Jews, enforced Roman rule at the local level, and in an irony of history we know Herod’s name mainly because of the massacre of the innocents. I have never seen a Christmas card depicting that state-sponsored act of terror, but it too was a part of Christ’s coming. Although secular history does not refer to the atrocity, no one acquainted with the life of Herod doubts him capable. He killed two brothers-in-law, his own wife Mariamne, and two of his own sons. Five days before his death he ordered the arrest of many citizens and decreed that they be executed on the day of his death, in order to guarantee a proper atmosphere of mourning in the country. For such a despot, a minor extermination procedure in Bethlehem posed no problem.

Scarcely a day passed, in fact, without an execution under Herod’s regime. The political climate at the time of Jesus’ birth resembled that of Russia in the 1930’s under Stalin. Citizens could not gather

in public meetings. Spies were everywhere. In Herod's mind, the command to slaughter Bethlehem's infants was probably an act of utmost rationality, a rearguard action to preserve the stability of his kingdom against a rumored invasion from another...

And so Jesus the Christ entered the world amid strife and terror, and spent his infancy hidden in Egypt as a refugee. Matthew notes that local politics even determined where Jesus would grow up. When Herod the Great died, an angel reported to Joseph it was safe for him to return to Israel, but not to the region where Herod's son Archelaus had taken command. Joseph moved his family instead to Nazareth in the north, where they lived under the domain of another of Herod's sons, Antipas, the one Jesus would call "that fox," and also the one who would have John the Baptist beheaded.

A few years later the Romans took over direct command of the southern province that encompassed Jerusalem, and the cruelest and most notorious of those governors was a man named Pontius Pilate. Well-connected, Pilate had married the granddaughter of Augustus Caesar. According to Luke, Herod Antipas and Roman governor Pilate regarded each other as enemies until the day fate brought them together to determine the destiny of Jesus. On that day they collaborated, hoping to succeed where Herod the Great had failed; by disposing of the strange pretender and thus preserving the kingdom.

From beginning to end, the conflict between Rome and Jesus appeared to be entirely one-sided. The execution of Jesus would put an apparent end to any threat, or so it was assumed at the time. Tyranny would win again. It occurred to no one that his stubborn followers just might outlast the Roman empire...

As I read the birth stories about Jesus I cannot help but conclude that though the world may be tilted toward the rich and powerful, God is tilted toward the underdog. "He has brought down rulers from their thrones but lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but sent the rich away empty," said Mary in her Magnificat...

I wonder what Mary thought about her militant hymn during her harrowing years in Egypt. For a Jew Egypt evoked bright memories

of a powerful God who had flattened a pharaoh's army and brought liberation; now Mary fled there, desperate, a stranger in a strange land hiding from her own government. Could her baby, hunted, helpless, on the run, possibly fulfill the lavish hopes of his people?

Even the family's mother-tongue summoned up memories of their underdog status: Jesus spoke Aramaic, a trade language closely related to Arabic, a stinging reminder of the Jews' subjection to foreign empires.

Some foreign astrologers (probably from the region that is now Iraq) had dropped by to visit Jesus, but these men were considered "unclean" by Jews of the day. Naturally, like all dignitaries they had checked first with the ruling king of Jerusalem, who knew nothing about a baby in Bethlehem. After they saw the child and realized who he was, these visitors engaged in an act of civil disobedience: they deceived Herod and went home another way, to protect the child. They had chosen Jesus' side against the powerful.

Growing up, Jesus' sensibilities were affected most deeply by the poor, the powerless, the oppressed – in short, the underdogs. Today theologians debate the aptness of the phrase "God's preferential option for the poor" as a way of describing God's concern for the underdog. Since God arranged the circumstances in which to be born on planet earth – without power or wealth, without rights, without justice – his preferential options speak for themselves...

There is one more view of Christmas I have never seen on a Christmas card, probably because no artist, not even William Blake, could do it justice. Revelation 12 pulls back the curtain to give us a glimpse of Christmas as it must have looked from somewhere far beyond Andromeda: Christmas from the angels' viewpoint.

The account differs radically from the birth stories in the Gospels. Revelation does not mention shepherds and an infanticidal king; rather, it pictures a dragon leading a ferocious struggle in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun and wearing a crown of twelve stars cries out in pain as she is about to give birth. Suddenly the enormous red dragon enters the picture, his tail sweeping a third of the stars out of the sky and flinging them to the earth. He crouches hungrily

before the woman, anxious to devour her child the moment it is born. At the last second the infant is snatched away to safety, the woman flees into the desert, and all-out cosmic war begins.

Revelation is a strange look by an measure, and readers must understand its style to make sense of this extraordinary spectacle. In daily life two parallel histories occur simultaneously, one on earth and one in heaven. Revelation, however, views them together, allowing a quick look behind the scenes. On earth a baby was born, a king caught wind of it, a chase ensued. In heaven the Great Invasion had begun, a daring raid by the ruler of the forces of good into the universe's seat of evil.

John Milton expressed this point of view majestically in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, poems which make heaven and hell the central focus and earth a mere battleground for their clashes. The modern author J.B. Phillips' fantasy to try to escape my earthbound viewpoint.

In Phillips' version, a senior angel is showing a very young angel around the splendors of the universe. They view whirling galaxies and blazing sounds, and then flit across the infinite distances of space until at last they enter one particular galaxy of 500 billion stars:

As the two of them drew near to the star which we call our sun and to its circling planets, the senior angel pointed to a small and rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis. It looked as dull as a dirty tennis-ball to the little angel, whose mind was filled with the size and glory of what he had seen.

"I want you to watch that one particularly," said the senior angel, pointing with his finger.

"Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me," said the little angel. "What's special about that one?"

When I read Philips' fantasy, I thought of the pictures beamed back to earth from the Apollo astronauts, who described our planet as "whole and round and beautiful and small," a blue-green-and-tan globe suspended in space. Jim Lovell, reflecting on the scene later, said, "It

was just another body, really, about four times bigger than the moon. But it held all the hope and all the life and all the things that the crew of the Apollo 8 knew and loved. It was the most beautiful thing there was to see in all the heavens.” That was the viewpoint of a human being.

To the little angel, though, earth did not seem so impressive. He listened in stunned disbelief as the senior angel told him that this planet, small and insignificant and not overly clean, was the renowned Visited Planet:

“Do you mean that our great and glorious Prince... went down in Person to this fifth-rate little ball? Why should He do a thing like that?”...

The little angel’s face wrinkled in disgust. “Do you mean to tell me,” he said, “that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball?”

“I do, and I don’t think He would like you to call them ‘creeping, crawling creatures’ in that tone of voice. For, strange as it may seem to us, He loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like Him.”

The little angel looked blank. Such a thought was almost beyond his comprehension.

It is almost beyond my comprehension too, and yet I accept that this notion is the key to understanding Christmas and is, in fact, the touchstone of my faith. As a Christian I believe that we live in parallel worlds. One world consists of hills and lakes and barns and politicians and shepherds watching their flocks by night. The other consists of angels and sinister forces and somewhere out there places called heaven and hell. One night in the cold, in the dark, among the wrinkled hills of Bethlehem, those two worlds came together at a dramatic point of intersection. God, who knows no before or after, entered time and space. God, who knows no boundaries, took on the shocking confines of a baby’s skin, the ominous restraints of mortality.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation,” an apostle would later write; “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” But the few eyewitnesses on Christmas night saw none of that. They saw an infant struggling to work never-before-used lungs.

Could it be true, this Bethlehem story of a Creator descending to be born on one small planet? If so, it is a story like no other. Never again need we wonder whether what happens on this dirty little tennis ball of a planet matters to the rest of the universe. Little wonder a choir of angels broke out in spontaneous song, disturbing not only a few shepherds but the entire universe.

From 'Watch For The Light' Reading for Advent and Christmas, pages 254-269.

Advent Notes