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# The Babe Who Will Not be Tamed

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**Monday, December 22, 2003**

The annual Festival of the Incarnation, what we commonly know as Christmas, comes to the commercial world as a windfall, but it comes to the Church as a summons. Substituting the truth of God for a lie, the secular world cannot but confuse the manger with Santa's sleigh, or the shepherds with elves. We should not be surprised by the commercialization of Christmas—it is the natural reflex of a fallen world in unbelief.

But Christians know that Christmas is not really a holiday or a season—it is a call to faith and witness. Only those who know the Christ know what Christmas is all about, and the Church will respond with either faith or faithlessness.

The real issue at Christmas is the identity of the child in the manger. If the babe is he who would grow to serve as a great moral teacher, the founder of a major world religion, an example of service and humility, then the world can handle him quite comfortably.

But if the child is the incarnate Son of God, fully God and fully man—He who came as “Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing”—the world has a major problem. When the church presents the manger as a mere sentimental object lesson of divine love, the world smiles and moves on. But when the Church speaks the truth—that the child of the manger is the God who comes as both judgment and grace—the world sees the infant as a truth it must attempt to tame.

So Christmas is first a call to faith—a call to look in the manger and see God in human flesh. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews understood this well. God, he wrote, who had spoken in various times through prophets, now spoke in His Son, through whom He had made the world.

This is no babe who may be tamed. The Book of Hebrews states that this Son, “being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” [Heb. 1:3].

Thus, this babe is the One who was God clothed in human flesh, the divine God-man who had been promised by the Father through the prophets of old, and was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. But the babe in the manger must never be separated from the Jesus who cleansed the Temple, performed mighty miracles, and claimed, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by Me.” [John 14:6].

The manger led to a cross, where Christ died as our substitute, bearing our sins and, as Hebrews states, purging our sins. The divine babe of the manger is the one who would die on a cross, and was raised on the third day. Christmas is inseparable from Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. The unfathomable truth of Christmas is that this babe was born to die—and to die for sinners.

This means Christmas can never be trivialized or sentimentalized by the Church. The babe is tender, gentle, and meek; but He is also the One who holds all things together by the power of His Word, and will judge both the quick and the dead. His name is the only name under heaven and earth whereby we must be saved.

The Church must repent of assisting the world in the evasion of Christmas, and speak boldly the truth it knows—the whole truth. The Church’s role is to preach Christ and bear witness to Him, to make certain that when we say “Christmas” the world knows we speak a word of truth.

Christianity stands or falls on this central truth, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. This truth claim makes Christianity Christian—and what makes it the enemy of unbelief. The Christian faith rests on the twin pillars of the person and work of Christ, that is, who Christ is, and what He accomplished through His incarnation, death, and resurrection. An attack upon one of these truths is an assault upon the other. The Christmas truth tells both parts of this story: The Child who came is the Messiah who saves. He is also the Lord who reigns.

This means a word of witness. Christmas affords the Church an unusual opportunity to tell the world the true identity of the infant of Bethlehem—to share the Good News that this babe came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

The world is vulnerable at Christmas. All the commercialization and trivialization of Christmas are but the unbelieving world’s defense mechanisms at work. These defenses can be undone by the truth, and the truth is ours to tell. So have a very Merry Christmas, as comes only to those who know the Christmas truth, and have put their trust in the Christmas Lord. Tell the world the Christmas story—the real Christmas story—of the Babe who will not be tamed.

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