December 4, 2018

Dear Ones in Christ,

At this wondrous season, we just want to welcome you to the commemoration of the Incarnation – the "Word Was Made Flesh." There is a Christmas program entitled "Night of Miracles," but that is only "half right." Rather it was a "Season of Miracles." Paul set the stage when under inspiration he wrote:

> "But when the fullness of the time was come. God sent forth His Son,
> made of a woman…" (Gal. 4:4)

It is a simple straightforward statement, but within it are numerous amazing and awe-inspiring conditions that beg our attention.

Condition #1 How to get Mary and Joseph to undertake the trip to Judea and to Bethlehem near Jerusalem in time for the birth of Jesus. Luke tells us "there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed" (Lk. 2:1-7). Since Joseph was of David's lineage he had to get to Bethlehem in time to fulfill the some 700 year-old prophesy of Micah (Mic. 5: 1-2).

Condition #2 Kings are born into splendor with the best of attending conditions and care. Not always. Luke records that Mary "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). The manger seemed to foreshadow the conditions of the Saviour, when some 30 years later He would say to a certain scribe, "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:19-20).

Condition #3 On the "Night of Nights" you might surmise that those who would be favored to receive a royal announcement would be the high priest, or perhaps the Sanhedrin, or maybe the scribes whose lot it was to know the Sacred Scriptures. But not tonight. Rather this night, the darkness and silence were broken as the ambassador from the realms of glory announced the birth of "A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2: 9-15). It was not to the "high and mighty," but to the lowly keepers of the flock that the birth of the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, and the Good Shepherd had come to give "His life for the sheep" ((Jn. 10:11).

Condition #4 For good or ill there will be a response to a royal invitation. This night was no exception. Later, probably weeks later, certain wise men from the east came saying they had "seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him." A significant question was asked. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Now, the son of a king may be born a prince, or perhaps even a crown prince, – but not a king. But this One was different. He had no earthly father, and His Father in Heaven would never die. Uniquely He alone was born King.

Condition #5 These same wise men had travelled 900 -1000 miles to meet a King Whom they did not know; because they had seen "His star in the east" (Matt. 2:2). Yet the priests, scribes, and rulers of the Jews in Jerusalem who knew the Word of God (Matt. 2:4-6) had not gone the approximately 6 miles to Bethlehem to see if it were so. What a commentary on their priorities and the state of "religion."

Condition #6 As a contrast to the lamentable state of the religion of the nation, there were, even in that day, some whose hearts burned in anticipation of "the consolation of Israel" (Simeon) and "redemption in Jerusalem" (Anna) (Lk.2:25-38).

To each of you, may you have a blessed Christmas and a joyous New Year in our Lord and Saviour.

In the service of our risen and coming Lord,

Stanley and Marvine Cline

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