

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

OUR SAVIOR

by the Rev. Geoffrey S. Childs

There was a time on earth when every day had the beauty of Christmas morning. It was the time of the Garden of Eden. The Lord was with mankind directly and there was no fear—no fear of death—and angels could talk directly to people on earth. Conjugal love was in the hearts of husband and wife, and there was complete peace. That was the way the earth should be, and that is how the Lord wishes it would be. Thus it was so sad when those in the Most Ancient Church turned to themselves and put the love of self first. As soon as that happened the Lord made a direct prophecy that He would be born on earth, because self-love destroys all happiness in human hearts. This was described in a very dramatic scene, as in the future, the Lord Himself, the great warrior, would combat a very strong, powerful serpent, pictured as a great snake. The Lord on earth would struggle against this terrible, frightening serpent. And in that great war, the serpent would bruise the Lord—would hurt His heel. But the Lord Himself, that future day, would conquer that terrible serpent.

Thousands of years went by. Darkness came upon earth, and everyone lived in the valley of the shadow of death. Once more, then, the Lord spoke. He spoke through Isaiah, the great prophet. He said He would be born in Bethlehem. And He said a Child would be born—a Son Given, and the government would be upon His shoulder. And His name would be called Wonderful. He would counsel us. He would be a mighty God. He would be an everlasting Father. He would be a prince of peace. And again, a long time went by.

Finally, Gabriel, God's bright angel, came and he told the old priest, Zachariah, that his prayer was heard. His wife would have a child, John. John would prepare the way of the Lord. He would bring joy and gladness. He would make crooked places straight, and rough places plain.

Six months later, that same angel came to a virgin named Mary. She lived in Nazareth—a good, simple, beautiful woman. The angel said, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women." The angel told her that she would be the mother of Jesus the Savior. She answered, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." When Mary heard this, she understood. She said, "Behold, the maidservant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:28-38). Imagine how Mary felt. Afraid? Yet, she was a person who trusted, trusted in the Lord completely. She felt a great joy that came up within her soul, which she expressed so beautifully in song.

At the last of the year, Joseph, the carpenter, and Mary, his espoused, left the village of Nazareth. They took the long journey down to the tiny village of Bethlehem. Imagine how tired they were. Mary was about to have her baby. They came to the inn and there was no room. Then they found a stable, and on that night the Baby Lord was born. There was a great light within that stable, because all the angels were there. And there was warmth of love that touched that baby with the

tenderest, most innocent love. Out in the fields were the shepherds, and they saw a very strange light in the sky that became brighter and brighter. They were afraid. And the angel Gabriel appeared, and said, “Do not be afraid; for there is born to you this day...a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.” And then the whole angelic host of Gabriel was seen by the shepherds: those simple, good men. They heard the sweetest song ever sung on this earth up to that time: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:10-14).

Why is it that Christmas brings such joy and such a flood of warmth? It is because it promises us that we can go to heaven. The Lord is our savior. He was called Savior to Mary. He was called Savior to the shepherds. He can save us. Sometimes we feel that we ourselves are so unworthy, that we are so frail, that no one can save us. We are not worth being saved. But the Lord has the power to save each of us. And that is the message of the angel Gabriel. And that is Christmas.

Christmas is a birth of good. It is a birth of the Lord within our hearts. And the good is this—that we can come to love other people more than ourselves. We can come to love the Lord more than ourselves. Self-interest can really die. How can this be, since we’re so selfish? It can be if John the Baptist comes first. If we have the courage to make the crooked places in our heart straight, and the rough places plain. And from the Lord we can do that. If we have the courage we can let Mary be the guide within our spirit, in our affections and in our thought—and what Mary represents beyond all else is the willingness to trust in the Lord. She is that virginal innocence which will put us in the hands of our Maker, and allow us to enter the stream of His Divine providence. We will be led to Bethlehem. The Baby Lord will be born in our heart. We will be saved.

**Texts: Luke 1:68, 2:1-7;
Apocalypse Explained 324:9-10**