

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 25 – BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY]

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***Last time we witnessed God's divinely inspired plan put into effect in order to heal and restore mankind's broken relationship with his Creator (Revelation 13:8).***

- ◆ If the first creation was about creating "man in God's image," the plan to restore mankind's relationship to God relies incredibly on "God condescending to take on the image of man."
- ◆ The Son of God lovingly gives up his heavenly privileges, takes off his crown, sets aside his sceptre, rolls up his sleeves and trades the splendour of heaven for the poverty of a stable.
- ◆ The message that accompanies His birth is "Mankind no longer needs to be afraid as a Savior is born in Bethlehem" (Luke 2:10).

***Now we need to go back to the virgin birth.***

- ◆ The history of mankind usually revolves around the mighty male and his conquests – Nebuchadnezzar, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler, etc.
- ◆ But in the most important event in human history the mighty male is excluded.
- ◆ The husband as the representative head of the family plays no part in the process.
- ◆ Instead God chooses to work through a humble faithful female.
- ◆ Despite the shame and humiliation associated with a pregnancy outside of wedlock, this was Mary's response.
- ◆ Luke 1:38 I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her
- ◆ The response of this humble maiden to this act of pure grace on God's part (In choosing to become one of us) is one of willing submission.
- ◆ Mary's response of faith is an example for all humanity on how we are to respond to God's gift of grace in the remarkable act of the Incarnation and the Atonement.
- ◆ Unlike her sister Eve in the original creation, Mary at the conception of the new creation willingly accepts and submits to God's claim on her life.
- ◆ Instead of exerting her independence and wanting "to be like God," she willingly cooperates with God's plan of redemption.

***The other question that arises with this passage concerns the question of "How did Mary become pregnant"?***

- ◆ Luke 1:34-35 How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
- ◆ If we're looking for a biological answer, we won't find one, any more than we will find a scientific answer to how God created the universe from nothing.
- ◆ This is one of those events that involve the crossover between the physical dimension of time and space and the spiritual realm God inhabits.
- ◆ Jesus became flesh purely by the Word of God in the same way He spoke at the original creation and all things came into existence "out of nothing."
- ◆ These events along with questions like the mystery of the Trinity are part of our walk of faith, the answers to which will be revealed when we too inhabit the spiritual realm, we will "see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

***But there is another reason the mighty male is excluded, as he plays no part in the conception of Jesus.***

- ◆ The creation of Jesus in the womb is an act of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ This is significant as this was the beginning of the new creation, and just as the Holy Spirit was active in the original creation, now we see Him playing a significant role in this new beginning (Genesis 1:2).
- ◆ While the origin of the birth of the original Adam was born of the "dust of the earth" in other words from "below," now we see the last Adam born from "above" (1 Corinthians 15:45-46).
- ◆ The last Adam came into existence from "above" through a divine act of the Holy Spirit, but His humanity was formed on earth in Mary's womb.
- ◆ But as He was born of a human woman Jesus could legitimately claim both titles, Son of God and Son of man.
- ◆ The doctrine of the Incarnation is that Christ really comes to us in human flesh and assumes it in its fallen condition in order to redeem it and sanctify it.
- ◆ Out of Mary, a sinful woman, the Holy Son of God is born.
- ◆ But we should not miss the point that Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the new creation, the first human born from "above," in perfect union with the Father.
- ◆ This is the discussion Jesus had with Nicodemus in John 3 about being born again, or born from "above."

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- ◆ John 3:5-7 “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’
- ◆ **“Water and the Spirit”** is a reference to the sacrament of baptism where on repentance; one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit that births us from heaven.
- ◆ But then Jesus makes the remarkable claim that in the same way as He was born from above, we too can experience the same heavenly birth, **‘You must be born again.’**
- ◆ John 1:12-13 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.
- ◆ Notice again the exclusion of the mighty male that can only birth us physically.
- ◆ The human male plays no part in this process as he represents the sinful independence of man who asserted his self-will in rebellion against His Creator.
- ◆ In the process of Jesus’ birth, man in the flesh, represented by Joseph is set aside and has no say in the matter.
- ◆ Now in his place to represent sinful humanity stands a man who is willing to faithfully surrender His will to His Father’s will.
- ◆ Jesus’ birth is one initiated from above, as this is the beginning of the new creation.
- ◆ Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
- ◆ This verse is the New Testament equivalent to Genesis 1:26 and demonstrates God’s commitment to his purpose of creating a holy people within whom He can come and dwell.
- ◆ Just as Jesus was born from above by the Holy Spirit, so we too can be born from above by the Holy Spirit and participate in His birth as **“brothers and sisters.”**

***But the first step in the process of being conformed to the image of his Son requires we be born from “above” by the Holy Spirit so we too can inhabit the new creation.***

- ◆ Without grace, without being birthed from above by the Holy Spirit, we can never attain the goal of being **“conformed to the image of his Son”** who was sinless and perfect.
- ◆ The reason He was sinless was not because He had a different nature to everyone else. It was because He chose to live without sin.
- ◆ Romans 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,
- ◆ Jesus lived a perfect life because unlike Adam and Eve and all other humans, He put His complete faith and trust in His heavenly Father and lived the faithful life of a true son of God, in the image of God.
- ◆ This is what it means to be a true human in the image of God.
- ◆ It was also this requirement of living a sinless life in the flesh that made Him the perfect sacrifice for human sins and the Savior of His mother and the rest of humanity, including the mighty male.
- ◆ He also had to be sinless if He was to save sinners (Luke 15:2).
- ◆ Rather than scaring sinners away with His perfection and moral outrage, He appealed to them out of love because He knew they needed a Savior who could offer them forgiveness, acceptance and help.
- ◆ Jesus Christ has opened up the way for the old humanity to transition to the new humanity, from the old creation to the new creation.

***But all this will come to naught if the other miraculous event does not take place at the end of His earthly life and that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.***

- ◆ There is a both a miraculous event at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly life and at the end.
- ◆ Bracketed between these two events we have the remarkable story of God joining Himself to our fallen and sinful humanity and producing out of it a new humanity that is holy and perfect like Himself.