

Advent Bible Studies 03 Dec 86 2

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Date: 03 December 1986

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] That's the event, the central event, which means that with Luke's gospel and with this event, you have the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ.

And in this beginning, and with a secret which God understands and which he understands, but which the rest of the world is not expected to understand and doesn't understand still, it's an embarrassment.

But it's also a foretaste of the reality of the person of Jesus Christ, whose central place in history begins with this event, that he came into history as the child of this teenage girl from a city in Galilee called Nazareth, that that's how the eternal Son of God breaks into time and history.

And it's such an offense to many people, such an offense to their rational faculties, such an offense to their spiritual understanding, such an offense to their concept of who God is, that it is categorically rejected.

And you start right at this point with the debate that goes on generation after generation, that Jesus cannot be who he, in fact, claims to be.

[1 : 57] And therefore, he is to be dismissed in terms of his claim. And that he was a great teacher, and that he lived an exemplary life, all those things are acceptable.

But here with this pregnant girl, betrothed to Joseph, you have a stigma from the very beginning of his life, and a stigma which continues to this day, because people say this surely can't be the beginning of the...

this can't be the event which... the event which, in a sense, is so wonderfully real for us, because when you come to have faith in Christ, because you suddenly are made aware that our mortality and our physical being and our commitment to a biological process, so to speak, that all these things are shared by the eternal Son of God, that he becomes flesh.

And that means that the whole scope of our earthly life gains the potential of being the areas in which God can meet us.

And I think this is what's... I think this is what's so very hard for people to understand, that so much of religion is an attempt to escape from our physical being.

[3 : 58] our physical reality, our loves and hates and desires and emotions and ups and downs. We want to get away from all that and to escape all that.

But somehow, the God in whom we believe, through the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh of the Virgin Mother, the mother of the Virgin Mary, his mother, and shared the very thing which is such, which we consider to be such a drag to our own spiritual life and attainments.

You know, that she... that this is how it happened. And I don't know what we do to try and escape from that, but we certainly work hard at it.

And the very burden of this, what I think Paul calls this body of humiliation, is the burden in which we draw near to Jesus, to his life and to his trial and to his death, because we bear in our bodies the death of the Lord Jesus.

We bear in our bodies the same reality. And in that reality, God has chosen to put us in order to teach us about another reality.

[5 : 47] And we don't learn that well if we spend most of our time trying to deny the reality of our physical being, trying to deny the process of aging, trying to deny the process of illness, trying to deny the reproductive processes of our life, trying to deny the reality of our emotions and things.

That it's not a matter of denying them, it's a matter of affirming them in the light of the fact that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us through his birth of a teenage girl in a village in Nazareth, a village called Nazareth.

Well, that's... There's one more thing I'll take one minute to tell you about simply because it's of some interest. But when we were in Nazareth, we stayed at the convent of the Sisters of Nazareth, which is a French order of Roman Catholic nuns.

Very nice people, I might say. And they had an order that had been there for, I don't know, a couple of hundred years perhaps, and they had beautiful buildings and beautiful accommodation and they fed us very well.

But the special treat they had for us when we'd been there two days was to take us down into the cellars of this convent. And they had been doing some excavating in the cellars of the convent.

[7 : 31] And if you... When we got down there, when they got down there, they found... They found a house down there among the...

They found a well which had been buried and they found a house which I think they want to...

They keep it as kind of a secret because of the onslaughts of tourism and what that does. But it really was just a kind of simple place like this with a room at the back and right here there was a tomb and in the tomb was a figure sitting up like this.

He was buried sitting up. And apparently that's the way some of the early Christian bishops were buried, still sitting up on their...

Because bishops sit in judgment over the world or in... To give counsel. But it was such a house which undoubtedly came from the first century of the Christian era and which they suspect might possibly be and of course there are other sites there too but it might possibly be the...

[8 : 56] Because of the bishops burial there they figured it must be an important place you see and the city would have grown up past that. And so they wonder if the significance of that was that it was that it was the house of Joseph in Nazareth.

Well, you know, I'm not sure how much that leads to superstition and how... But it does... And I think in Israel as most of you who've been there know, most of the archaeological sites are maybe, maybe not.

but they at least are helpful in that they give you the kind of picture in which this happened and the kind of setting in which Luke 1 takes place.

The virgin espoused to a man named Joseph in the city of Galilee called Nazareth. And it gives you the kind of grounding and basis of the incarnation of Jesus.

The incarnation being. You know, there's considered to be sort of two great facts in Christianity.

And one of them is the incarnation and one of them is the resurrection.

[10 : 29] That the eternal God who was from eternity to eternity became man. That's the incarnation. And that having become man, he went through death and rose and ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God.

So that God becomes man and man in Jesus Christ goes into the presence of God. And those are the sort of two more essential doctrines of our Christian faith.

And they're tied into a story of a story like like this one in Luke chapter chapter 1.

Well, we'll quit. Any questions or things that you'd like to raise? Well, it's good.

It's a great thing for us to know that comes from the birth of a normal act or a normal of a good race.

No, but the virgin birth has become very important to people who want to demonstrate that Jesus was just another man.

[12 : 21] and if the virgin birth is true then that doesn't hold exactly. You know, it's undermined.

Well, I may not have told you but I'm reading this detective story called The Moonstone.

Has anybody ever read The Moonstone? Well, there's a gentleman by the name of Gabriel Betteridge who's the family butler and has been for many years.

And in the course of the story he says, I thank God that I am not in the least a reasonable man. By which he means simply that people can give reasons all they like but the truth is something else is not reasonable.

It's something quite different and stands on the truth and that reason and that reason isn't going to carry you there. And in a sense probably the people can reason back and forth about the virgin birth all they like but the reality of it is something which is which is beyond reason in the sense that Gabriel Betteridge says that the truth for him is not is not reasonable it's something quite different that stands on its own.

[14 : 00] And sometimes it's delightful not to be reasonable. I think that's spoken in the New Testament when it says except you become as a little child that little child children can see things

that totally rational people are utterly blind to.

Let me say a prayer. Father thank you for this noon hour and thank you for your word and do grant that we may accept the circumstances of our earthly life with greater strength and greater dignity and greater courage because you have chosen to share them with us and so bring great honor to the to the reality of our physical and mental and emotional existence.

our God we ask grace to to accept that reality and to live joyfully with it in all the blessings that are ours.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.