

Meditation: THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

A Christmas meditation.

In 2 Corinthians 9, the apostle Paul highly commends the believers in Corinth for their generous giving to take care of the needs of others. Their actions caused many observers to praise the Lord – a fitting response, since God is the source of all the things that we give. Then Paul, whose mind was always on things above, broke out into a wonderful doxology, naming God as the greatest gift giver of all. He said: *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

I'm sure we know the gift Paul had in mind. It's the same one John was thinking of when he said, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son*. It's Jesus, who was really the first Christmas gift ever given! While we are given few details, it would not be hard to create a fairly accurate description of the baby boy who was laid in a manger shortly after his birth. What, then, makes this gift impossible to describe?

Some may think of the virgin birth of Jesus as the main mystery in the Christmas story. Now that there are so many ways to conceive a child – by artificial insemination, for example – I can imagine a virgin giving birth; certainly the process could be described. But the birth of Jesus was different; no man was involved in his conception in any way. Paul says, *"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive adoption into God's family."* A child was born of Mary AND simultaneously, a Son was given by God, just as God had predicted through the prophet Isaiah perhaps 700 years before the event took place. Can you explain that? I can't!

I think the HUGE scope of this dramatic gift, which stretches backward and forward into eternity, even involving us and our need for salvation, and is all wrapped up in God, GUARANTEES that the gift will be indescribable. We can't even SEE it all at once! Yet God, through the various Bible writers, gives us all kinds of beautiful pictures of this gift. Here is how Paul describes Jesus in the 1st chapter of Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Isn't it marvelous?

The Son of God, named Jesus at his birth, is the creator of all things, including Heaven. He made the world that we can SEE, as well as a whole world that is INVISIBLE to us, unless God chooses to give us a glimpse. Jesus is the supreme ruler over all he created, and will ultimately be acknowledged as such, not only by God, but by everybody! The connection I mentioned between Jesus and Heaven is not only that he MADE it, but that he LEFT it to come to earth as a human being, born of the virgin Mary and laid in a manger in Bethlehem. What a sacrifice! He was on a mission that only he could perform: making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. By the way, Jesus is the only person who ever pre-existed his conception. Except for Adam and Eve, who were created, all of us got our start when we were conceived by our parents.

Here is another beautiful description of Jesus that Paul used when writing to the believers in Philippi. It, too, begins with eternity past, discusses his time on earth, and ends with eternity in the future.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Yet with these and other wonderful descriptions that flowed from Paul's pen, he still calls Jesus God's INDESCRIBABLE gift! Perhaps he meant that he knew more of Jesus within his spirit than human words could convey; maybe he didn't even WANT to write some of his personal revelations concerning Jesus. But he wrote what he did so everyone would know that the gift God gave when he sent Jesus to the earth was SO DESIRABLE! And he did that well.

The gift is also so AVAILABLE! God so loved the WORLD that he gave us Jesus. It is still true today that WHOEVER believes in him (which is the same as receiving the gift) shall not perish, but have eternal life (which includes a home in Heaven). Now we've come full circle, making another connection between Heaven and Christmas. May you find pleasure in thinking about these things. Amen.

References: 2 Corinthians 9:15; John 3:16a; Galatians 4:4,5; Colossians 1:15-20;
Philippians 2:5-11.

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