

The Incarnation: Because of Unbelief Christmas 2017

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

For years I made sacrifices in the service of self; yes, of sin; and yes, I made sacrifices in the service of the world. I placed my treasures, my loves, my sacred possessions on the altars of other gods, those gods I preferred to deny as being “my” gods, idolatry.

You understand, we live in America. We are cultured, rational, intellects, civilized, and technological. We are “up” on the latest, want the latest, and just want to be accepted and loved. We also find unbelief rising.

In fact, “a new [Pew Research Center survey](http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2017/december/new-study-shrinking-number-of-americans-believe-the-birth-of-jesus-based-on-historical-events) says there has been a noticeable decline in the percentage of U.S. adults who say they believe the biblical elements of the Christmas story were actual historical events. The four elements they cite found in Scripture say Jesus was born to a virgin, that the wise men were guided by a star and brought gifts for baby Jesus, that Jesus' birth was heralded by an angel of the Lord and that Jesus was laid in a manger as an infant.” See more here: <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2017/december/new-study-shrinking-number-of-americans-believe-the-birth-of-jesus-based-on-historical-events>

As for me, only by the Holy Spirit’s granting the grace of repentance did I perceive the graven images, the homage, the tributes, the attachments, the trophies of my worship and service in the name of the no-gods. Labor. Striving. Discipline. Restraint. Priorities. Time Management. Pressing toward the goal to win the prize, attain the victory; achieve the position. The no-gods award such sacrificial service with public acclaim, degrees, medals, trophies, money, fame, escape, etc. The no-gods reward our wild worship and dedication tangibly and presently.

Let your flesh align with the elemental things of the world. Feel the power of the earth, the wind, the fire, the water. Worship and serve the creation, for the temporal satisfies the physical senses. Sacrifice in the service of self-satisfaction. So say the no-gods.

But what is truly satisfying? And why is it that the no-gods never truly satisfy, but rather, lead us to the sink-holes of Satan? Oh, for the moment the pleasure comes; but the first is the best, and the addictions never recapture that rapturous, primal ecstasy.

At His right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm16:11). God is most pleased when we are satisfied with Him alone. One time the Holy Spirit said to me, “You have Me; isn’t that enough?” At that time, I had to respond, “Honestly, no.” Then I realized I needed to know God Himself more. Sacrifice in the service of the Living God yields satisfaction.

Why do we stay aloof from what John Piper calls the “white-hot worship” of God? Well, it is dangerous to the world, deadly to sin and self, and victorious over Satan and his minions.

Sacrifice. We do it all the time in the service of the no-gods. We do it for some sort of satisfaction. But we will not sacrifice in the service of the One True and Living God in order that we might be satisfied with Him alone until we comprehend, by God’s grace, sacrifice in things eternal.

I'm talking about spiritual realities, eternal truths, concepts which call us to stretch beyond the veil of the temporal into the Holy of Holies.

Sacrifice. The Hebrew word, *zabach*, means to slay, slaughter, or sacrifice. In English the word "sacrifice" can suggest giving up something we want to keep, something that has value to us, in order to obtain or to do something else for oneself or someone else. To the Hebrew mind, sacrifice involved the offering of a life.

Jesus Christ came as the Incarnate Word of God to offer His life as a sacrifice pleasing to God. He said,

I have come to do Your will, O God. (Hebrews 9) By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all [time]. (Hebrews 10:10)

Jesus was born to die as a sacrifice for sins; not His own sin, for He had none. He died for those given to Him by His Father, who sent Him from heaven to save. His resurrection the third day demonstrated that the Father had accepted the atoning work of Christ, the Beloved; we are thus accepted "in the Beloved" and reconciled to the Father.

When does the sacrifice, the offering of Jesus Christ for the life of the world, touch me, my heart? And if I dare ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the heart of Eternal Love that so sacrificed itself to save rank rebels of the cosmos, could I handle such an outpouring of grace and mercy, undeserving as I am? I think of the longsuffering, the progressive revelation in the plan of God, Christ's obedience in willing submission, the sharing of creaturely ways, the sufferings, the scorn, the desire and intent to glorify His Father, the Incarnation.

You see, to the American mind, sacrifice holds a negative connotation because we think of it as a giving up. Often we give regretfully. We perceive loss, not gain. We think in terms of pleasure and pain, not "I have come to do Your will, O God."

For Jesus, sacrifice was and is a giving to. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, the Word made flesh and who dwelt among us, offered up His life because the will of His Father controlled and compelled His value system. Jesus delighted to do the will of His Father. Take a look at Psalm 119 and as you read it, see Jesus saying this to His Father. Jesus always did those things that pleased His Father, including His thoughts, beliefs, and actions. The Father's delight, the Father's will, was what brought Jesus pleasure. His sole purpose, His source of joy and satisfaction, was glorifying His Father.

Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, offered up His life because of the Father's love, because humanity's unbelief required a remedy. The Incarnation may take a lifetime of meditation and reflection on the love of God. And then to think that He rose again from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty as King of kings and Lord of lords, Ruler over the kings of the earth.

Only with such meditation and reflection, however, can we put our lives into perspective. Our perception needs to change. Touch the heart of Jesus and our hearts will heal in the presence of His brokenness. Ask Him what it was like to leave the glory of heaven to become a Baby and to fulfill every promise of prophecy and all righteousness. Ask Him how it is to identify with us, with sinful flesh, for He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Identify with Jesus in His outpoured life and we will serve Him with our praise and worship. We will count every trial joy, every offering a glory to the Lamb who was Slain, ever labor an act of love, every sacrifice as serving to separate us unto Him.

John Piper reflects that God is most pleased when we are satisfied with Him alone. Are we satisfied with all that God has for us in Christ? This kind of satisfaction has eternity in its sights. How do we find it? The key to finding it is sacrifice in the worship and service given to the One True and Living God out of a heart loyal, adhering to and abiding in, and separated unto Him. (Romans 12:1, 2) In supreme loyalty and attachment to Jesus Christ, we are granted grace to obey through faith which works by love.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service [spiritual service of worship].*
² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Look, we perceive sacrifice as a giving up of something we value for something we value more. We live in a “choice” environment, one in which more choices give us more of what we value most. We choose what optimizes our value system. We tend to see sacrifice as one value over another. Were we to have one value system, one governing belief system, one thought system, we would not perceive ourselves as “making a sacrifice.”

Jesus continuously walked according to truth. He had a unified thought system, bringing everything in His mind to do the Father’s will. Jesus had a unified belief system and value system. It didn’t enter Jesus’ mind to eat what was forbidden, break the Law, rebel, or resent coming on a mission with a message. His heart is holy, pure, good, full of faith, loyal, true, with nothing crooked or bent, no iniquity.

For those in Christ, sacrifice becomes the offering up of our lives, daily dying to self, and taking on the value/thought/belief system grounded in the truth of God. All departures from truth are built on lies and corrupted by lust (Colossians 3).

When we become governed by the value/belief/thought system grounded in truth, grounded in the will and Word of God, our Father, we will not perceive our offerings as a “giving up” but rather as a “giving to.” Jesus conquered the tension in Gethsemane with “not My will, but Thine be done.” He knew. He saw beyond the cross (Hebrews 12).

We must also see beyond the cross. The power of the atonement is in the Resurrection. If Christ be not risen, our faith is in vain. The risen life delivers us from the present power of sin just as the Cross delivered us from the penalty of sin.

Unbelief is the nexus, the crux of the matter. Unbelief cast Adam and Eve from the garden. Unbelief kept the children of Israel out of the Promised Land. Hebrews 2:2:

For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

And this in Hebrews 4:6:

Those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience.

This later verse refers to failing to enter God’s rest because of disobedience resulting from unbelief. The pattern of unbelief is this: drift, doubt, disbelieve, disobey, and die.

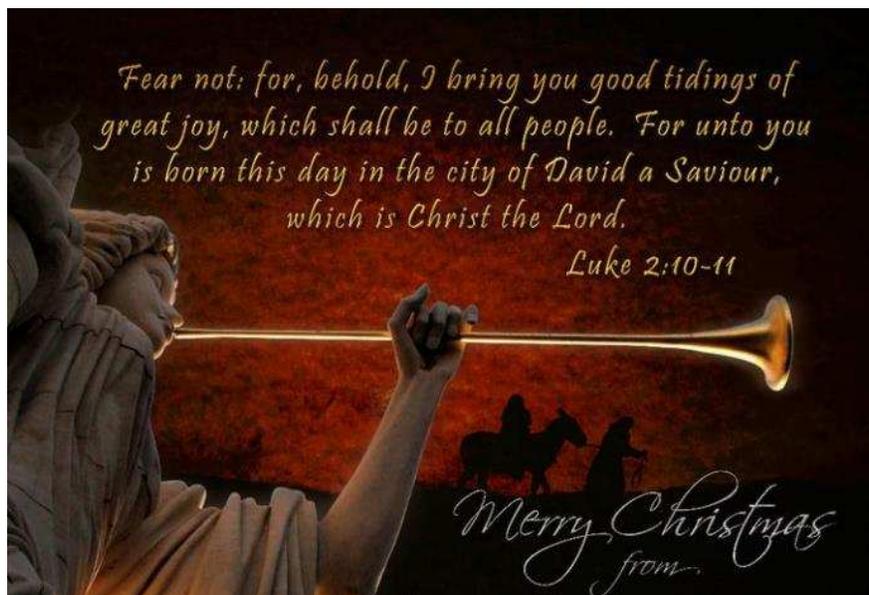
We must believe the Word of God, the truth, for it to affect our lives. We must believe in Jesus, believe Jesus, and believe what Jesus believes. The Holy Spirit reveals truth to us to enable us to walk in love. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of wisdom and revelation. We corrupted ourselves when we bought into the deceitful values of the no-gods. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, came as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by/through Him. Salvation is about getting back to the Father.

Because of our unbelief, the Father decreed the Incarnation. It was necessary. Jesus gave His life, fulfilling all righteousness (the righteousness of obedience and satisfying divine justice as sacrifice for the remittance of sin), offering Himself unto God to remedy our unbelief. It was sufficient. His Resurrection established the Atonement and thus we who believe truly find guilt and liability expiated through sacrifice, bondage to sin overcome through redemption, reconciliation with the Father/making peace through the Blood of the Cross, the wrath of God propitiated, and Satan's kingdom destroyed.

God Incarnate. One mind. One heart. One will. One voice. One perfect offering.

Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.

This is what Christmas is all about. It should give us pause to reflect, to worship, to praise the Living God, and to appreciate the continuity of this Holy Day as we celebrate a miracle.



Mary Craig

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But when the fullness of the time had come,
The God sent forth His Son,
born of a woman, born subject to the law,
that those under the law He might redeem,
in order that the adoption of sons we might receive. And because you are sons,
The God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,
Crying, Abba! Father! Galatians 4:4-6

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