



"He who joyfully marches to music in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him a spinal cord will suffice."

—Albert Einstein

25-Dec-20

'Unto Us a Son Is Given'

The above title comes from the words of [Isaiah 9:6](#), "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty [God](#), Everlasting Father, Prince of [Peace](#)." The verse also comprises the lyrics of a well-known song within George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*, heard often at this time of year. The song appears in the first part of the oratorio in a section that relates prophecies of Christ's Incarnation, providing a prelude to songs about His birth, highlighted during the [Christmas](#) season.

Handel's references to a "Child" and a "Son" fit well into the season's emphasis on the birth of [Jesus](#). Depictions of the Messiah as a baby in a manger, as a baby in His mother's arms, as a baby obtaining gifts from the Wise Men, as a baby receiving adoration from shepherds, and so forth, are plentiful in art, advertisements, churches, and private residences all over [the world](#). At this time of the year, very few depictions of the verse's other names of Christ appear.

This is natural, of course, since Christmas purports to celebrate His nativity, something Scripture never mentions in terms of a commanded—or even a suggested—observance. The annual celebration of His birth tends to overshadow even His death for the sins of those who believe in Him, something the Bible *does* tell us to remember each year (see [Luke 22:19](#); [I Corinthians 11:23-26](#)). Because of His birth's overemphasis, many people see Him as little more than a Divine Baby, helpless and inactive, totally reliant on others.

That is *not* the image of God's Son that [Isaiah 9:6](#) paints. The prophecy describes a powerful King, a Being of great majesty and awe-inspiring authority, a Wise Man of profound depth and concern, a Deity of unequaled might, an eternal Father to His people, and a Leader who brings peace. Such descriptions do not fit a babe in arms, one who can say nothing and do nothing, a weak and ineffective infant.

Even when He was born to Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, the Bible's emphasis does not linger on the fact of His infancy. Instead, it quickly shifts to His vast potential. Matthew relates Joseph's encounter with an angel of the Lord. Notice the direction of the angel's words: "And [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" ([Matthew 1:21](#)). His emphasis shifts immediately from His birth to His work as Savior, the Redeemer of His people's sins. His birth was just a necessary beginning, God born in human flesh to pay for the sins of humanity. Even at His birth, God's focus was on His sacrificial death and all that it would mean for the furtherance of God's plan.

Two verses later, Matthew brings the prophecy of [Isaiah 7:14](#) to mind: "'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us'" ([Matthew 1:23](#)). Again, his attention moves swiftly from the virginal conception and birth to something far greater: that the Son she bore is "God with us." The Being, called the Son and Savior, would be none other than the God of Israel Himself, taking the form of a human being to fulfill His role as the Suffering Servant who, "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" ([Philippians 2:8](#)). The greater glory rests on His finished work, not His humble beginning.

Luke's gospel does the same thing. When the angel Gabriel announces the coming conception and birth of Jesus to Mary, he points her toward what her Son will become:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. ([Luke 1:31-33](#))

His speech, in short, is a rough reiteration of [Isaiah 9:6](#)! Gabriel looks far beyond His incarnation to what really makes Him great: His work as Savior, His appointment as Son of God Almighty (see [Hebrews 1:2](#); [Psalm 2:7](#)), and His eternal Kingship over Israel. The Baby laid in a manger would fill all these offices and many more, but not before many long years of trial, suffering, and ultimately, death ([Hebrews 2:10](#), 14-15, 17-18). While necessary, the human baby stage fades into near-irrelevance in comparison to His later, greater works.

Luke pens a few more words than Matthew about the birth of Christ and its surrounding events, but the theme is the same. When the angel announces His birth to the shepherds in the field, he cries, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great [joy](#) which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" ([Luke 2:10-11](#)). While he also gives them a sign to identify the newborn Child in the present (verse 12), his words extol His future glory as Savior, Messiah, and Lord of all people, a Being worthy of worship and praise.

That God's Son came into this world as a human being to save us from our sins is a glorious truth, and we should praise God often for it. The Savior of mankind could not be something other than human to pay for human [sin](#), yet no human alone, even a sinless one, could pay for any other person's sins, only his own. Only the life of the Creator God was valuable enough to redeem the colossal debt of human sin, so God determined at the foundation of the world ([Revelation 13:8](#)) that the One called the Word ([John 1:1-4](#)) would take on human flesh to pay that steep price (see [Romans 5:6-11](#)). So, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" ([John 1:14](#)).

But we do Him a disservice if we think of Him as a weak and helpless Babe, when He was most vulnerable. God wants us to think of Him as He *is* right now, sitting in power and glory at His right hand. He is our powerful High Priest and Advocate, working constantly to bring us into His own character image and into the [Kingdom of God](#). We need to think of Him as the glorious Son, our Creator God, "the brightness of His [Father's] glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power" ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).

He has come a long way since His lowly birth in Bethlehem. It is high time for our conception of Him to rise above the mere physical, which Christmas tends to emphasize, to the glories of His present and future work.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Father-Son Relationship \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Human reason is frequently applied—wrongly—to God's nature. The Catholic Encyclopedia admits that there is scant biblical evidence for a trinity, but that it is "substantiated" by "Christological speculation" only. This fallacious doctrine claims there are three co-equal Beings in the God-Head. Yet the Father is the source of everything, and the Son is the channel through which He carries out His purpose. By His own words, Christ asserts that the Father is superior to Him (though They are one in purpose and mind). Christ is the only means through which we can receive the knowledge of God, revealing the image, mind, purpose, and character of the invisible, immortal Father. As the Son projects the image of the Father, God wants to fill the entire universe with images that conform to the Son.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Was Jesus Christ Born Under the Law?](#)

by Earl L. Henn

As Christians, we are followers of Jesus Christ, but many subtle arguments are advanced to prove we really do not have to walk in His footsteps—that He did it all for us. Earl Henn explains that such teachings are ridiculous!

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
