

Heart to Heart

*Bringing our hearts to Him,
Receiving His Heart for us!*

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Dear ,

I hope these thoughts, inspired by our Lord's birth, will help you esteem Him more deeply during this time of special remembrance of what it meant for the Word to become flesh and dwell among us. What He set aside is tremendous to contemplate. How difficult that made His journey to the cross is a marvel to behold. Jesus is an amazing God!



Jesus Emptied Himself!

Here's the Why? What? How? of it...

*Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, **but emptied himself**, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.*

Philippians 2:5-7 ASV

Do you see what I see? The Christmas story has so many familiar images that we can practically picture Jesus' birth in our minds. Indeed it has been played out before eyes in numerous movies and church pageants-we know it by heart. **But what about the hidden story-invisible to us yet stunningly apparent to that host of heaven praising His birth** of whom we catch but a tantalizing glimpse on those wintry fields beyond Bethlehem? There is something quite astonishing going on behind the scenes and it will help our hearts to esteem Him even more as we seek to unveil just a bit of this Mystery, **the mystery of how it was that the Word became flesh through the "self-emptying" of Jesus Christ.**

1) Why? Why a baby? We take it for granted that He came into the world as a baby, but that wasn't His only option. From a Christian perspective there are numerous sightings of the Lord Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures most notably in His appearance as both "a man" and "Prince of the Lord's hosts" to Joshua just before battle (Joshua 5:13-15). Why didn't Jesus simply step into time and space to begin His mission looking and acting like one of us? Why did He choose to enter our world

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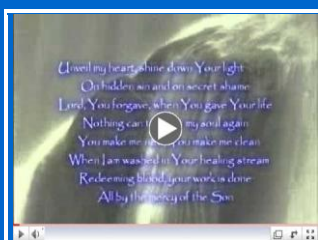
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as a baby instead? Clearly, He had to become fully human. That could only happen by being born of a woman same as the rest of us. But why? I see two compelling reasons and they both argue for Him not only becoming *fully* human, but in some "operational" sense, *only* human:

a) He had to become one of us in order to die as our representative at the cross and

b) He had to become one of us to regain the dominion authority over the earth that we had ceded to Satan.

To do this He had to "empty" Himself of all that went with being God. Someone put it this way: ***"though He was never less than fully God, He lived as never more than only man."***

2) What? What was He emptied of? No doubt there is much here that needs reverent pondering, but the list is impressive even when filed by title: Jesus chose to empty Himself of His own divine glory, of His rights and privileges, of omnipotence, of omniscience, of omnipresence, and of the fame and adoration He received in heaven. He left behind heaven's beauty, its' glory and its matchless fellowship, including especially His "face to face" intimacy with His Father. Think of what a little baby brings into the world by way of knowledge and power and only add to that an unbroken spiritual connection to the Father (He was born of the Holy Spirit) and only subtract from that picture a spiritual connection to the enemy (He was born without a fallen nature). This is admittedly a huge difference from our birth-we don't received the same spiritual connection to the Father until we are born again and it is only then that we are severed from the fallen nature and the enemy's mastery over us that it provides. Even so these realities are distinctive of the invisible realm of spirit and take place within our hidden depths. ***Hold the picture of what a baby's body offers by the way of powerlessness and what a baby's soul provides by way of knowledge and you will see well enough how thoroughly the Son of God was emptied!***

3) How? How did He grow? How was He "refilled"? Luke tells us He grew in favor with God and man, but far before that He had a tremendous amount of catching up to do with the Person He once had been, the Person the baby would grow to become. God help us not to transgress in our thinking about so hallowed and mysterious a subject as what was transpiring within the infant Jesus. Yet, for Jesus to have honestly and fully become an infant there could be nothing in the baby's consciousness that would not be in ours, save for the inchoate sense of connection to Father God and the absence of strident self will. ***But where, oh where, were the words?***

The Word became flesh by setting words also aside. Did not the Babe of Bethlehem have to learn Hebrew word by word? Indeed we know that it takes a while for babies to separate out images, sounds, feelings and then associate them with ideas, before speech itself can be learned. Did not Jesus have to travel this same path or was it all just pretence and pretending? Did He who gave the Word to Israel, not have to learn Truth through the scriptures as a child (same as we who follow Him now)? Did He not have to search the scriptures to discover (rediscover) His divine assignment and destiny? Did He not need a faith community to aid His own spiritual formation? Was He not tempted same as we are? Did He not

have to seek to stay united to His Father through intimacy and obedience and depend upon the Spirit for guidance and power-same as we? He "suffered" the burden of all of these disciplines (so necessary for us as well) and grew.

Perhaps the greatest temptation Jesus faced throughout His life was to draw on His divine side and in so doing forfeit the right to be our representative. Seen in this light every day from childbirth onwards was fraught with hidden perils. How perfect His obedience had to be! His self-emptying choice to become (and remain while on earth) fully human was a direct reversal of the enemy's temptation to Eve to become like God. We have all-especially in infancy-aspired to be the god of our own little worlds, imposing our wills wherever we could get away with it! Yet, Jesus emptied Himself, choosing to become a servant to His Father's will each and every moment of His life. Not only that but His assignment was to live as if He were only human, so that He could complete His high calling at the cross.

What an irony-Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, was the only child born of Adam who freely chose to be merely human. In this He shows us the way. We may not have received His start, but ***we who believe have all received the same re-start.*** Now seek to see how your own self-emptying and graced refilling can mirror His. Go back over the path of His own development and see how He is even now seeking to grow up from a mere babe inside of you into full stature and favor with God and humanity.

Our Secret Weapon

Lord, give me patience. Now!

Waiting doesn't seem like much of a weapon, but it is. It breaks down many a hidden obstacle. Israel waited a LONG time for their Messiah to come to them. That should tell us something: Jesus will seem to us *at times* to be the slowest Person we could hope to have come to our rescue! I read that thought in a book as a young Christian and it really scared me--I needed immediate results from my Rescuer! I have learned since then that His timing is not always "right now"--He has also been known to say "I'm coming soon. Wait and watch." So this Christmas, I'm including these thoughts to help us all learn to wait upon the Lord and perhaps like it a bit better.

Consider these negatives which require our "waiting upon the Lord" for Him to remedy: tiredness, weakness, brokenness, woundedness, emptiness.

What could possibly be good about them? A lot as it turns out--these are our secret weapons! Where for instance does the Lord say He desires to dwell? That's right. With the ones in touch with their brokenness, the ones who have been humbled by their emptiness, weakness and powerlessness. For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:

*"I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, **To revive the spirit of the humble**, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

Isaiah 57:15

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But **those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength;** They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:28-31*

What do these passages show us about His desire when He sees weakness, tiredness and those without strength? **He wants to dwell with us!** He wants to renew our strength and even increase it! Know this for a fact--and take great courage. However, we need to take note that not everyone qualifies as a dwelling place. There are two requirements that go along with this promise:

- 1) You have to be without strength. OK we've got that.
- 2) You also have to wait upon the Lord.

This means no complaining! This means no depression is allowed. Waiting upon the Lord means that we are actually looking to God with **eager and undeterred expectancy** because we know He is surely coming to strengthen us. Waiting on God means we realize we have no other hope and that we are looking for no other champion to come to our rescue. But we also know He is coming, so we REFUSE to get an attitude that would close us off from grace and shut us down spiritually. We intentionally stay open and expectant.

Consider Jesus with the woman at the well. He was tired, but He became completely refreshed because He stayed open to the Father's leadings, did the next right thing (talked with the woman and shared faith with her) and received the refreshing! Consider Paul and his thorn: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." I would go into these passages more thoroughly if I had more time. But it's Christmas and I've got a bazillion other things to do today... :)

Waiting allows us to "slow down so the Lord can catch up with us"--we often run ahead. We re-center, re-surrender and become re-freshed. All in all, it's an amazing offer to meet us at the very place we least desire to be--and would least expect to find His grace waiting for us and His generous Spirit waiting upon us. I'd say its high time we learned to wait.

From We to Thee

'Tis the season to take risks

We are attending a family reunion of sorts this Christmas, even as I write. And I hasten to add that just because we are long time Christians doesn't mean that these infrequent (but much desired) meetings will go off without a hitch. The enemy ever seeks to find ways to sow division and discord and what rich opportunities extended family gatherings can provide. It is a rare (and incredibly blessed) family system that has no



brokenness and dysfunction and that can meet, greet and sail through the holiday gatherings without some stormy seas.

My words of wisdom? Walk softly and carry a big stick! Just make sure that your rod of correction is for your own attitude and is a staff of prayer for everyone else's. So far it seems to be working...

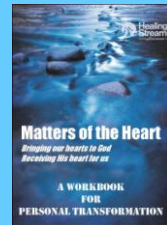
In the meantime, my hope of getting all three books of 2011-- *Rescued from Hell*, *Matters of the Heart*, and *The Missing Peace* to a publisher or at least available through Amazon is suffering the inevitable delays of the process. I am waiting upon the Lord big time for that one! Please pray--I want to be on time with my steps so the Lord won't be waiting on me...

Thank you for your prayers for the project and God bless you in all your gatherings this Christmas season,

Steve and Eunice

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Sincerely,

Steve and Eunice Evans

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