

## **Not Exactly What We Had Expected**

When Jesus was born, most people responded with skepticism. What happened to all the people who had been waiting, who were going to embrace and fall down before the Messiah when he arrived? It was like the world, which had expected the Messiah was saying, "This was not exactly what we had expected." When Jesus went to the cross instead of the throne, many responded "this was not exactly what we had expected." We expected a power of a King, but God came to us in a baby. We expected a ruler, but God came to us through a servant. We expected an easy way, but God asked us to follow even if it leads us to the cross. The irony is that the baby we think must be a mistake is the Messiah. God's salvation is revealed in the "The Word becoming flesh." That the "King of Kings" should be born to Joseph and Mary that the "bread of life" for all should be laid in the feed-box of animals. Amazing!

It seemed like heresy to the world that "the Word became flesh." The world wanted God to be God. To be strong, so we could be weak; but God became weak so that we could become strong. If we are not careful we too may miss the view of the baby, unless we choose to open our hearts to love; unless we choose to live out the message of love in our lives; unless we pass on the gift of the Messiah's love by our loving in word and deed. God sent Jesus into a world that needed to hear some good news. The Prophecy about the coming of the Messiah had been a long time in coming to fulfillment.

If you think it was difficult to wait for Christmas, imagine how Israel waited a thousand years for the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah. A thousand years before the birth of Jesus, King David was promised that one of his descendants would be the king in an everlasting kingdom. For a thousand years, every Hebrew parent wondered if their child would be the Messiah. In our lives things may not be as good as we would like them to be, but there is Good News that can remove the sorrow; Good News that can overshadow the disappointment; Good News that can calm the anxiety that threatens to overwhelm us. God does not take away the problems. God gives us the patience and the resources to cope with them. Our FAITH does NOT keep us from difficulties. It changes how we face them. God does not promise to remove the trouble of the day God promises only to provide light for the way. Because we believe that God guides our way, we sing "a thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices. For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn." We can awake to a new and glorious morn. We can awake to the potential of what life can become. We can be reminded again that peace is possible if we change our minds and experience the healing of our hearts.

It is in facing the most difficult of circumstances that we come to know the most about what really matters. Then we come to know who we are and whose we are. In moments that require us to go to the depths of our faith, we discover there in the depths the very presence and fullness of God, knowing that the Messiah was sent into the world for us too. We come to know that God is with us, Emmanuel! We cannot give up! It takes a lot of persistence to discover the great treasure that God has given to us.

So, come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free. Come, take our minds and think through them. Take our lips and speak through them. Take our hearts and set them on fire. The Messiah is at hand. We cannot give up! It takes a lot of persistence to discover the great treasure that God has given to us. Maybe the Messiah is NOT what we had expected, but sometimes it is better not to get what we had expected but to realize that what we got is what we really need. Thanks be to God for such a great gift!