

## **“The Universal Longing”**

### **1 Timothy 3:16**

Throughout the ages of time there has been a universal longing in the hearts of pagan people everywhere to have their gods come down to them in the likeness of men as we see in (Acts 14:11), When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in bodily form.” Paul and Barnabas were distraught and used this as a teaching time to speak of the true God and his son Jesus Christ.

It was only at Bethlehem did the longing of men actually find fulfillment those many years ago when it was not just a god who came down, but it was God, the Creator and sustainer of the world and all that in it is. He revealed himself to mankind in the best possible way, through his Son, Jesus Christ. The Apostle John in his gospel explains it this way in chapter 1 vs. 14, “The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

He came down to earth, not just to do miracles as he spent time here, but he came down to identify with you and me, as he lived and walked among mankind and then to suffer and die in our place and thereby deliver us from sin, through our faith in him and the evidence of the empty tomb.

The heart of the Christmas message is the Incarnation, the coming of God in human form in the person of the Baby Jesus, God’s Son. There is always a longing in the hearts of men understood or not, for a Savior who would save them. This actually happened in Bethlehem just as the Prophet Micah prophesied in chapter 5 and vs. 2. God always fulfills his promises.

So again, at this time of the year, let’s not get caught up in the worldly trappings of Christmas, but pause to remember that the inherent longing of the human heart has been fulfilled, and now because God came down to us in the likeness of a baby that he might lift us above the world even while we are in the world, He has surely given us reason, real reason to celebrate Christmas. For God loved us so much, he gave his Son to save us and to give us hope of eternal life. And of course, it is Jesus’ birthday we celebrate. Have a wonderful Christmas!

I would like to share this story with you: Remembering that Christ was born in a manger, and as a helpless human infant, we sometimes hear folks asking, "But why did the Savior come in such lowly form?" Everybody likes stories, so I will share this one to answer the question people ask.

When the King of Greece came over to this country, some years ago, one of his attendants had with him a most beautiful dog, which, during the voyage, fell overboard. The master entreated the captain to stop the ship and rescue the dog. But the captain did not deem the matter of so much importance, and having the king on board, refused to stop. What do you think the master did? Quickly addressing the captain, he asked, "Would you have stopped the ship if it had been a man." "Certainly," was the reply. Instantly, before any had time to hinder, he flung himself into the sea. The ship was stopped, and not only the man, but his dog, too, was saved, and all because the man, devoted to his dog, identified himself with him in his peril, and even braved death itself to save him.

It was in some such sense as this that Christ stooped to save us. He identified himself with us in our peril, came in lowly form, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," accepted humblest abasement, just because he found it necessary to make himself one with us in order that he might rescue us from our peril. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Christ identified himself with us to save us. There was a wonderful purpose toward us, love-prompted, in Christ's self-abasement. The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. If there is any one fact more than another the Christmas bells ought to ring out to the world and down deep into our hearts it is this, "Christ came to save." "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Let us yield our hearts to him this blessed Christmas season.

Pastor Garry Culler