

MONDAY 26 September 2022 "Born of a Woman" (Gal. 4:4, 5)

Good Monday morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Occasionally we hear a statement, perhaps it's an announcement or a declaration, that is so powerful it simply stops us in our tracks. I left you this weekend, in a small house in Syrian Antioch, about the year 48ad, with a famous man, the apostle Paul, as he is writing the first of 13 letters we have in the New Testament of the Bible, which he claims to have penned. *He does NOT claim to be the author of these books, rather, he is the scribe, receiving the words he writes directly from God.* The last statement he wrote is one of those powerful, shocking statements which causes you to stop and ponder, and take note. Paul is writing to the Gentile Christians in the towns he visited a few months before, in the region we today know as the country of Turkey. Here's the statement Paul wrote: **"When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive the full rights of adopted sons."**(Galatians 4:4,5)

Yesterday we spent extended time looking at the first phrase **"...when the time had fully come, God sent His Son..."** Today, let's look at the next phrase: **"...born of a woman, born under the law..."** *The 'incarnation' of God is perhaps the most complex, outrageous miracle imaginable.* I can't fully explain it, but God declares it to be true, so I believe it and I am living every day in its reality. We know what is called the "Christmas story", don't we? The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a young virgin woman in Nazareth, Israel for the purpose of explaining that *she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.* She would not have sexual relations with Joseph her fiance or any other human being. God Himself would fertilize one of Mary's eggs and her pregnancy would proceed as any normal human pregnancy. The birth of her child would be as normal as any human birth. Her baby would appear and act like any other newborn baby boy. There would be nothing, nothing at all, which would be different by appearance about this child *other than occasional shocking events when people or angels identified Mary's son as someone very special.*

Now I can't tell you how much Paul knew about what we call the Christmas story, when he was writing this letter to the Galatians. Neither Matthew nor Luke had yet written their accounts. But I wonder if Paul would have made great effort to find Mary, Jesus' mother, and inquire of her as much as he could learn about Jesus from her perspective? Of course, we have no Biblical record of such a meeting between them. I also wonder if Paul sought time with John the disciple/apostle who was Jesus' best friend, to hear about Jesus from John's perspective. So as Paul wrote this powerful statement **"When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law..."** he would have reflected on what I suspect he might have heard from Mary and John.

As you reflect on what you know about the birth and early life of Jesus, can you name the various special occasions when people were shocked by either angelic or human statements *about the true identity of baby Jesus?* Here are the ones which come to my mind:

1. **Mary's** visit from the angel Gabriel, announcing and explaining her incarnation pregnancy. (Luke 1:26-38)
2. **Joseph's** visit from an angel, announcing and explaining Mary's incarnation pregnancy. (Matt. 1:18-25)
3. **Elizabeth's** announcement when she and Mary first met upon Mary's arrival at Elizabeth's home. (Luke 1:39-45)
4. The **angels** appeared in the night sky near Bethlehem and announced to shepherds, watching their flocks in the fields, that a Savior had been born in the town of David! Remember that from Luke 2:8-14?
5. Those **shepherds** went searching and found Mary and Joseph in an area for animals, and the baby was lying in a feeding trough, a manger. (Luke 2:15-20) Those shepherds announced what they had experienced, to any who would hear them.
6. **Simeon and Anna** both recognized baby Jesus as the God sent Messiah, when Joseph and Mary brought Him to the Temple in Jerusalem for his consecration to the LORD. (Luke 2:22-38)
7. **Magi** from the east came to Jerusalem searching for the '*newborn king of the Jews*'. (Matt. 2:1-12) Their inquiry with King Herod alerted him to Jesus' birth even though he knew little of the details. Those Magi followed a star from the east, all the way to Bethlehem, and presented gifts of honor to the child and Mary.
8. An **angel** from heaven was sent by God to warn Joseph and Mary to quickly take the child and flee Bethlehem for Herod was sending his soldiers to kill all the baby boys in a desperate attempt to be sure this 'king of the Jews' was slain. (Matt. 2:13-18)
9. An **angel** again came from heaven to alert Joseph and Mary that Herod was dead, and it was safe for them to return to Israel with the special child, so they moved to Nazareth. (Matt. 2:19-23)
10. And finally, do you remember that when young **Jesus** was 12 years old, Joseph and Mary took Him with them to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, and after the festival they left, not knowing that He was not among the travelers, heading back to Nazareth. Perhaps you remember they returned and found young Jesus discussing the Scriptures with the Jewish scholars in the temple and in response to their inquiry of Him, young Jesus said **"Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"** (Luke 2:41-52) *With those words young Jesus identified Himself as the Son of God!*

When Paul wrote **"God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law..."** *while only a few words, it is one of the most powerful statements ever spoke or written by any person, at any time in history.* Can you fully grasp the significance of those words my friends? *Only Christianity claims God actually came here, to live on earth among the human beings He had created. Only Christianity claims God did not come as All Powerful God, but rather God experienced INCARNATION!*

God took on the humanity which He had designed for us members of the human race. I've been describing to you the HOW of the incarnation. Mary's God accomplished miraculous pregnancy and Jesus being fully God and fully man but without the sin nature we all inherit in our normal conception of a sinful human man and sinful human woman producing a child.

The little phrase Paul wrote: **"born under the law"** actually has two important meanings for Jesus. **First**, He was born at a time when the Roman Empire was powerful and controlled much of what is today, Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and even much of North Africa! *Jesus was born under Roman law, let's make no mistake about that.* Do you remember it was due to a Roman ordered tax census that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and because so many other people had come to that little town, it was so overcrowded Jesus was actually born in a stable?!

But Jesus was also born under the many and strict Jewish laws which we have in the Old Testament of the Bible. Joseph and Mary were evidently very careful about fulfilling every Jewish law. One example of that is their effort to bring Jesus to the Temple for His consecration on exactly the day the law prescribed, and bring precisely the proper sacrifice, according to the Jewish laws. (Luke 2:22-24) So we understand what Paul meant when He wrote **"God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."** But there's more, *in fact the final phrase in Paul's powerful statement may be the most impactful phrase in this entire, shocking statement: "...to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sonship."* (Gal. 4:5)

Ah my friends, that phrase is so full of meaning, and it so directly impacts your life and mine today, in 2022, that I think we'll pause right here, pondering all that we've learned today, and come back here tomorrow and seek to discern everything Paul was meaning when he wrote: **"...to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sonship."** May I suggest that you take a moment and ponder all that we've talked about today, and make a list of some of the most significant aspects of Paul's powerful statement, as YOU have experienced it? And here's a very powerful song to help us worship this Jesus!

Today's Scripture is Galatians 4:4-5.