



December 2018

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Christmas is the hinge and fulcrum of all history. Points in time *before the first Christmas* are B.C. or B.C.E. (before the Christian era) and events after that first Christmas are A.D. (*anno Domini*—year of our Lord). The birth of the Christ child, God in the flesh, is a new beginning ... his new beginning and our new beginning. But make no mistake, Christmas was not the end of God's revelation to humanity, it was *only the beginning*.

God has gradually revealed himself and the abundance of the gospel over time with greater clarity and fullness. In the beginning, Genesis speaks of God as “we” by saying *let us make man in our image...* (Genesis 1:26). However, the full revelation of God in Three Persons, working in unity and complete harmony, was not revealed in the Old Testament. In the New Testament account of creation, the first chapter of John speaks of how important the birth of Jesus was and is:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not understood it... to all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent... but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us... For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:1-5, 12-14, 17).

In this same account, in the first chapter of the Gospel that bears his name, John also speaks of the ongoing and continual revelation of God: *Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given (John 1:16).* Peter tells us that we *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).*

The Incarnation, when God became human, in the person of Jesus, was only the beginning of the fullness of his revelation. Christmas celebrates the beginning of the divine revelation in Jesus, who was and is *God with us (Matthew 1:23)*. But it seems that for some who place great credence on one or two theologians, Christmas is the beginning and the end of the gospel.

Some erroneously believe that “incarnation theology” means that when God came to us, in the person of Jesus, all that we need to know and believe was revealed. ***But Christmas is only the beginning of the gospel.***

The progressive revelation of God in Christ began with the Incarnation—the first coming of Jesus: THEN it was followed by his ministry and teaching; THEN the Lamb of God willingly went to his cross; THEN the Son of Righteousness was victoriously resurrected; NOW the Risen Lord indwells us, living in and through us, now and forevermore; AND HE WILL COME AGAIN, IN HIS SECOND COMING.

Yes, I know that it all started with the Incarnation—the gospel starts with Christmas, but thank God, the Incarnation is not the full and complete story of God's revelation to you and me!

While we are in this mortal body our Risen Lord lives the life of the age to come in us, and all the while we eagerly anticipate his Second Coming. Who Jesus is and all he will forever be is progressively unfolded. **The birth of God in the flesh is ONLY THE BEGINNING.** Indeed, *no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

1 John 3:1-2 says we are children of God “NOW” while “WHAT WE SHALL BE” is yet to be made known: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Dear friends, now are we the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* (emphasis mine).

God progressively reveals himself to us even as the dawn of a new day gradually overcomes the darkness with light. The Magi followed the STAR to Bethlehem. Jesus, the LIGHT of the world, the SON of Righteousness, overcomes the darkness. Jesus the SON rose from the dead with the rays of the sun he created. He rose and exploded out of the darkness of the tomb.

The Son is the RADIANCE of God's glory and the exact representation of his being... (Hebrews 1:3). The LIGHT of Jesus carries through his birth, his life and teaching, his death, burial and resurrection and finally to his Second Coming.

With a singular focus on “incarnation theology” some seemingly conclude the First Coming was the *be-all and end-all*—the central and core teaching of the gospel. It is true, without the Incarnation of God in the flesh—without the first coming of Jesus—the life, teachings, crucifixion, resurrection and Second Coming would not progressively unfold. **But the Incarnation is ONLY THE BEGINNING of the full revelation of God—it is not the totality of the revelation of God.**

Paul said *we preach Christ crucified* (1 Corinthians 1:23). Any theological formulation any *mind has conceived* (1 Corinthians 2:9, my emphasis) is inadequate to the degree that such postulating and thinking places sole and primary emphasis on any of the particular unfolding stages of the revelation of God in Christ.

While Christmas is a grand and glorious beginning of the gospel, Paul unequivocally and decisively connects the birth of God in the flesh and the cross by saying:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19-20).

Christmas is an unbelievable miracle—the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus is stupendous and incredible—but the Incarnation is only the beginning. Jesus is our center... *in him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). All that Jesus **was, is and is to be** is the ultimate fullness and the consummate final revelation of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus says, **I am the Alpha and the Omega...** *who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty* (Revelation 1:8).

The Triune Nature of God is a profound illustration of progressive revelation. From our vantage point in history, it may seem to us that there are many clear references in the Old Testament to the Second Person of the Triune God, Messiah, who would come and be *Immanuel* (Isaiah 7:14) and *Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6). In hindsight, the Second Person of the Godhead can be clearly seen by you and me in the pages of the Old Testament, but it was not so clear to the nation of Israel, who only perceived of God as Father.

The Deity of Jesus was far from clear to the religious world he encountered during his earthly ministry, such that they sought to kill him for what they regarded as an idolatrous, heretical and preposterous claim as being one and the same as the Father. *For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God* (John 5:18).

Christmas is filled with mystery, majesty and the miraculous, but *it is only the beginning—it is not the end—it is only the beginning*. God the Holy Spirit was not fully revealed until the Day of Pentecost, following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (see Acts 2). Jesus told the disciples that God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (John 14:16, 25), the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17) would guide them into all truth (John 16:13).

The Incarnation is the story of the First Coming, but there is a Second Coming. In his First Coming, Jesus came to be with us as one of us. He still is. He is still with us, now and forever. In his Second Coming, the beginning of eternity will be fully revealed, when God makes his home with all mankind here on earth: *Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them* (Revelation 21:3).

Christmas begins the fullness of the progressive and transforming revelation of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that the beginning of eternity will mark the end of human life as we know it: *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away* (Revelation 21:4).

Thanking God for his new beginning, wishing a Merry Christmas to you and yours, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. Here's a note of thanks from someone who has been blessed by the ministry of CWR/PTM, which YOU help to provide with your faithful prayers and donations. **THANK YOU!**

PTM has blessed me so much since I left the Jehovah's Witnesses several years ago. I feel that PTM has been my church since then and you have helped me to "grow in grace and knowledge." Thanks so much for all the work you do, and may Christ continue to bless this worldwide work.—Massachusetts

CWR/PTM Prayer List—December 2018

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray for me as my white blood count is very low, and the doctors don't know why.—North Carolina

Please pray for my neighbor's struggle with alcoholism. He lost all of his inheritance and almost lost his home because of delinquent property taxes.—Wisconsin

Please pray for my dear wife who suffered a severe stroke recently and also pray that her conditions of GERD and osteoporosis will be healed.—Mississippi

My son is in recovery from drugs and is now doing very well—thank you, Jesus! Please pray for my grandson and my nephew and his wife who are on drugs.—Indiana

Please pray for me. I'm 72 years old and I have shingles on my hip and leg, which is causing me a lot of pain.—Massachusetts

Please pray for my daughters, one is in the army, another is having a hard time paying her bills and the last one is in a nursing home because she is bipolar and suffers from high blood sugar.—South Carolina

Please pray for me as I still am suffering from the effects of a stroke I had over two years ago.—Washington

Please pray for my mom who has restless leg syndrome, which is very troublesome for her.—Ohio

Please remember me in your prayers. I'm still suffering from clinical depression and PTSD. Please pray that I won't need to be hospitalized again.—Tennessee

Please pray for all the people on dialysis. They suffer so much.—California

Please pray that I will be able to get a low-income apartment as soon as possible.—New York

Please pray for my dad who is 96 years old. He has been in treatment for gangrene and has also suffered a mini stroke that has affected his muscles and nerves.—Michigan

Please pray for me that God will heal my spine and ease the pain I'm suffering.—Florida

My Parkinson's disease has progressed, and it has caused me to have delusions and hallucinations. Please pray that God will help me to cope with this.—Virginia

Please pray for relief of my migraine headaches and for a restored relationship with one of my daughters.—Tennessee

Please pray for my son. He has been suffering from Lyme disease for quite some time.—Missouri

Pray for my husband. He had two stents for clogged arteries, and he has advanced kidney disease.—California

Please pray for my friends at our senior center as many are ill and several are dealing with cancer.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for my dear friend, who is age 90, as she is getting very forgetful.—Ohio

Please pray for my son-in-law who is having trouble keeping his blood pressure at the right level.—North Carolina

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.