

THE WORD AND TWO CREATIONS

JOHN 1:2-13

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The prologue to John's Gospel contains three magnificent declarations and three explanations that help us understand the meaning of the declarations. The first explanation begins at verse 2 and ends with verse 13. It is the story of two creations.

As we have already noticed, verses 1, 14, and 18 of the first chapter in John's gospel declare the greatness and grandeur of God and declare how God who has no limitations or restrictions of any kind became flesh and took on all the restrictions of a human being. Such a declaration raises questions that need explanations. One question that such a declaration raises is, why? Why was it necessary for God to become a man? It is this question that is answered in the first explanation found in today's scripture reading.

The explanation begins with the story of the Word and creation. It is basically the same creation that we noticed last week. It is the creation of the universe. Today I will refer to it as the "first creation." In JOHN 1:3, we see the phrase "all things" used to describe creation. The same exact phrase is also used in COLOSSIANS 3:16 to describe creation. JOHN 1:3 says all things were made through the Word; "without him nothing was made that has been made." COLOSSIANS 3:16 emphasizes the exact same truth.

There is one thing, however, that we learn from John's explanation of the *first creation* that we did not see in the explanation recorded in the third chapter of COLOSSIANS. It has to do with the whole idea of light and darkness that we see in JOHN 1:5. When the Word created the universe, He imparted to everything He made the capacity to declare some truth about the Creator.

One of my childhood memories about my father happened one night during a camping trip. It was one of those nights where the brilliance of the stars took your breath away. I can still see my father looking up at that magnificent display of God's handiwork and saying, "How can anyone see this and not believe in God?" My dad is a nuclear physicist. As I was growing up, I considered him to be the smartest person in the world. Science never hindered my dad from believing God. The more he understood about the universe, the more he was convinced that there is a God. That night, the light shining forth from the stars revealed some truth about God to my father.

Everything in this universe has been created with the capacity to reveal some truth about God, but all of creation is greatly limited in its ability to declare truth with the exception of human beings. Human beings have a capacity to reveal certain truth about God that far exceeds anything else in creation. Human beings have the capacity to reveal love and holiness like nothing else in creation can. For something to have life, in the fullest sense of the meaning of life, that something must possess love and holiness. God possesses love and holiness. In God there is life in the fullest sense of the meaning of life. And, when God created human beings, He gave them the capacity to possess love and holiness on a level that nothing else in creation has. This capacity acts like a magnet to draw us to our Creator. Thus, human beings are the only creatures known to have religion. Being created in the image of God means far more than the ability to make choices and experience emotion. More than anything else, it means the ability to possess love and holiness.

In the same way a candle is made to shine forth light, human beings were created to shine forth the light of God's image which is love and holiness, the very essence of the life of God. JOHN 1:4 puts it like this, "In Him (that is in the Word) was life, and that life was the light of men." In the first creation, human beings were created to be like candles. Our spirits were created to be like candles shining forth the image of God. From the King James Version of the Bible we read these words: "The spirit of man *is* the candle of the Lord." (PROVERBS 20:27).

If you can think of the spirit you possess as a candle, then it will help you understand what is taking place in the description of the first creation we find in our text. In the process of creating this universe, the Word took the life and light He possesses and imparted it to human beings. He gave man a spirit which is the candle of the Lord.

JOHN 1:5 tells us that the light is shining in the darkness. Where did the darkness come from? Our text does

not say where the darkness came from. We know that God did not create the darkness, but out of all that was created, darkness did appear. Its presence cannot be denied.

Now listen to verse 5 as I quote from the King James Version of the Bible. "And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not." At this point I must appeal to the King James Version for accuracy. God created men to be like candles, shining forth the life and light of love and holiness that He himself imparted. Somehow darkness appeared. The goal of the darkness was to overcome or overpower the light. The goal of the darkness was not to understand the light. It was to kill the light. But, it failed to kill the light.

Adam and Eve sinned. There is no doubt about that. As a result of that sin our spirits are no longer able to shine like they were originally created to shine. But, the darkness failed to kill our spirits. The drama played out in the events of the first creation left the spirit of man in an extremely weakened condition, but not destroyed. The battle between light and darkness did not result in the complete destruction of the light. Every person is still born with a conscience. Every person is born with the capacity to discern right from wrong. Every person is still born with a spirit. According to the Bible, the part of us that we call spirit is in a terribly weakened condition when we are born, but it is not overcome. Perhaps it can be argued that, even at the time of our birth, our candles are close to being destroyed altogether. But, close to being overcome does not mean overcome, at least not yet.

The problem is that the darkness does not give up in its goal to kill the light. Like a strong gust of wind threatening to extinguish the small flame of a lamp, Satan attacks us with all his strength. From the moment we are born, His goal is to kill whatever light is there. Without help, the chance of our spirits surviving is zero. Without help, every candle will be blown out, the lights will be completely destroyed.

And thus, the stage is set for the *second creation*. The only way to save the light from going out completely is for the original light to enter the very universe it created and give life to the struggling flames before they die out altogether. The purpose of the incarnation that we celebrate at Christmastime is to save the lights of men, to save the spirits of men from the onslaught of evil.

The words recorded in JOHN 1:6-13 are all about this second creation. After the true light entered the world that He created, a man named John the Baptist was sent by God to give witness to this light. John wanted all men to believe that this Word who had now become flesh was the very source of life and light. John wanted them to believe that Jesus was the true light that could give men the light that they originally had before Adam and Eve sinned.

This Word can save the candles of men from being destroyed altogether. He can cause the candles of men to burn with the same brilliance that they were originally created to have. He can bring about a second creation. He can cause there to be a new birth.

When the Apostle John wrote this gospel, the events of Christ's life and death and resurrection had already happened. John recorded those events. He said that the Word came into the world and; and specifically, He came to the nation of Israel. They were the people of God's own choice. God had chosen the nation of Israel to receive more truth than any other nation. But, when the Word came, people did not receive Him. Those people who did not receive the true light did not sense their own need. They did not realize that their candles were burning dim. The dimmer our candles become, the harder it is to realize our need for the light. And, once the candle of a person goes out altogether, any hope of ever recognizing the light is lost forever.

But, miracles still happen. There were some who did recognize their need. They came from within the nation of Israel as well as from without the nation of Israel. They saw the light and believed. They received the gift of life and light and they were born again. The Creator of the universe caused a new creation to happen. The candles were again given the life and light they needed to shine forth the image of God. Once again, it was possible for men and women to experience love and holiness. 1 CORINTHIANS 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

To this day, the process of the second creation remains a mystery. That's why we call it a miracle. Miracles are things that we cannot understand or explain, and the process of the spirit of a man being released from bondage is something that we cannot understand completely. When the flame of the candle once again burns strong, we can see it, but we cannot understand exactly how it happens.

It doesn't happen just because a person chooses to pray a prayer asking Christ into his life, although that may be part of it. We cannot inherit the new birth from our parents, and other people cannot choose it for us. The Word makes it happen. He causes people to see their need for the light. Through His death on the cross He makes it possible for those people who sense their need to receive grace and become free from the bondage of the darkness. He saves our spirits from certain death. The Word is the One who rekindles the candles and makes them shine for the glory of God. The reason for the incarnation, the reason why the Word became flesh is to make it possible for people to have a second creation experience happen in their lives. And, this second creation experience is truly a miracle.

At Christmastime, we really should be celebrating the Incarnation. We really should be celebrating this great event when the Word became flesh. But, how should we celebrate?

I am sure that most of us will be purchasing and decorating Christmas trees, buying and exchanging presents, attending parties and eating lots of food. We will use these ways to celebrate Christmas. I cannot stop these things from happening in your life any more than I can stop them from happening in my own life. And, it would be wrong for me to try.

However, I would like to suggest another practical way for us to celebrate Christmas. I would like to suggest that we make Christmas a time where we do something to remind ourselves of the Incarnation. And, since the whole reason why the Word became flesh was to make it possible for people to experience a new birth, and since experiencing a new birth is truly a miracle, I would like to suggest that we begin to hope for and expect a miracle to happen this Christmas.

The miracle I am talking about is the miracle of a new birth. I have heard many Christmas stories where miracles happened, but in most cases the miracles that happen are people being healed from sickness or receiving something material that they desperately needed or passionately desired. Very few of the famous Christmas stories make any mention of a person receiving a new birth. But, I am now suggesting that we celebrate Christmas by expecting the miracle of a new birth to happen in someone's life.

Just like our society trains its children to expect presents from Santa Clause, let's train ourselves to look forward to the miracle of a person becoming a new creation. A child will make a wish list and send it to Santa or sit on the lap of a person dressed up like Santa and tell that person what he or she desires. Let's make our own wish list. But, let's keep material things off our list. Instead, let's put the names of people who need to experience a new birth on our lists, and then let's daily come to our heavenly Father and tell him what we want.

Christmas should be the season for miracles to happen. If every one of us could do what I am suggesting today, I believe we will see miracles happen.

Who will you put on your wish list this Christmas? I would encourage each of us to put at least one person on our list and begin to pray for that person daily. If possible, plan a meeting with that person. Ask God to give you wisdom to know how to be a witness. If a meeting is not possible, then perhaps a phone call or a letter would do.

Consider celebrating Christmas in a different way this year by hoping and praying for the miracle of a new birth to happen in someone's life. Then, follow up the hoping and praying with some attempt to make a meaningful contact with that person. Wouldn't this kind of celebration be more in harmony with the truth of the incarnation? May God allow us to experience the best kind of miracle this Christmas, the miracle of a new birth taking place in the life of someone we love.