



## An Inherent Danger of the Christmas Story

At the end of this day, the Christmas pageants will be over – at least for another year. The squeaky voices of the angels that announced the birth of Jesus henceforth will announce only that they are hungry or that they need help with their homework. Charlie Brown's search for the true meaning of Christmas will no longer be a viewing priority. We will give little, if any, thought to Linus VanPelt's center-stage quotation from Luke's gospel that provided the answer to Charlie Brown. If we hear the voice of Boris Karloff, we will think of the original "Mummy," not the Grinch. And when the creché components are packed away, it will be time to get on with life as we know it.

Almost everyone, at least in this hemisphere, loves the baby Jesus. Babies are vulnerable. They illicit from within us the desire to protect them. We tend to view them as innocent and non-threatening. We spend time and money preparing a nursery in which they will be perfectly safe and comfortable. But our thoughts about our children do not end at the nursery – or at kindergarten (even though we have a photo of him wearing a mortarboard) – or at her high school graduation.

There is a season for nurseries and formula and diapers and footie pajamas. But it doesn't end there. There is more – so much more. For the first-time parent, contemplating the "terrible twos" or the hormone-laden, zit-covered teen years can be terrifying. Yet no parent in his or her right mind would think it healthy if that little bundle of joy never grew up – even though that means that life is going to get increasingly complicated for all of us under the same roof.

Yet, isn't that what we do with the baby Jesus? We keep Him in the nursery. We don't want to think about His growing up. It is true that angels and shepherds and stargazers as well as other characters are part of the Christmas story. But we must remember that they really are incidental to the story. Yes, the prophet Isaiah did say, "For to us a child is born . . .," and we know that the child about whom he spoke is none other than Jesus. But we ignore the remainder of the quotation at the peril of our souls for Isaiah went on to say,

" . . . to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6, ESV)."

In spite of the proliferation of other yuletide traditions, we Christians do a fairly creditable job celebrating the birth of the child – and we most heartily agree that this child is, indeed, the very Son of God.

Elizabeth rejoiced over the unborn child in Mary's womb. Mary and Joseph awaited the birth of a baby. Angels announced to shepherds the birth of a boy child. When Jesus was 40 days old, Simeon and Anna rejoiced at the appearance in the temple of this infant. The magi arrived later looking, presumably, for a toddler. But in every one of these instances, the emphasis is not on the baby but on the fact that the baby was the promised "son" who was to be given to the nation and the world.

Read the story again. Notice that all the protagonists in the Christmas story have an *immediate* awareness of who this child really is. The angel Gabriel told Mary that the child was "the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32). The incredulous Joseph was told in a dream that the child would "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Elizabeth referred to Mary's unborn child as "my Lord" (Luke 1:43). Her husband, Zechariah, in jubilation over the birth of his own son, John, stated that the Lord God "has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us" (Luke 1:68-69). He recognized that the coming of the forerunner (John the Baptizer) meant the Messiah was soon to appear. In his announcement to the shepherds, the unidentified angel of the Lord called the newborn, "Savior" and "Christ" (i.e., Messiah) and "Lord" (Luke 2:11). Simeon and Anna knew that the 40-day-old baby was God's "salvation" (Luke 2:30) and the promised "redeemer" (Luke 2:38). Later, the magi came seeking a "king" whom they found and "worshiped" (Matt. 2:2, 11), another acknowledgment that this baby was (and is) the Son of God who was given.

All the aforementioned people were waiting for a baby because that baby would be the incarnate God. We join them in rejoicing over that promised baby. But we must be careful not to sentimentalize the Christmas story. A poor, young, pregnant girl for whom a community had no room stirs our heart strings. But that's not why Christ came. He came, not to bring us to tears – but to repentance. He came not to touch us emotionally – but to touch us spiritually. As we later put away the glitter of the season, let us remember that we still are waiting – but not for a baby. We await the return of the crucified, resurrected, ascended, reigning Lord of glory. The Son, indeed, has been given.

– Soli Deo Gloria –

Chuck Bradshaw  
Christmas 2011

*Glimpses of Truth* is the print ministry of Focus on Truth in Columbus, GA  
View archived issues of *Glimpses of Truth* at <http://focusontruth.org>  
Address comments to: [glimpses@focusontruth.org](mailto:glimpses@focusontruth.org)