

The Wonder of Christmas

One of the key elements of spirituality is a sense of wonder and awe. Are we in the process of losing it? Do we still view the wondrous Christmas event with amazement? Once we begin to take the event for granted we are on the road to estrangement from God. The absence of wonder is one of the marks of modern man with his love and hate relationship with science. And he has become the poorer for it.

We cannot do without wonder and awe. The latter lead to a deeper relationship with God. The older hymn writers were overcome with awe when they penned their Christmas hymns. For them the One who came to Bethlehem was more than a "gentle Jesus meek and mild." They stood amazed! An old Dutch favourite "Komt, Verwondert" expresses this feeling so well. "Come and stand amazed, you people, see how God is reconciled! See his plans of love accomplished, see his gift, this new-born child. See the Mighty, weak and tender, see the Word who now is mute. See the Sovereign without splendour, see the Fullness destitute; the Beloved, whom we covet, in a state of low repute,"

The amazing news is that our Lord Jesus came as God-man to planet earth in the form of a baby in a stable in Bethlehem, a city in a poor region of the Roman empire. He came to this earth in obedience to His Father's will. In Christ's descent from glory we witness the outgoing, sacrificial love of God. God the Father had only one Son to give. The angels in heaven were overawed by the Christmas event. They had witnessed His heavenly glory and might and were overwhelmed by His readiness to leave all behind for the sake of rebellious man living in a fallen world. They knew that Christ had but one goal in mind--the cross. Our forefathers used to talk about the sign of the cross hanging over the manger. On this cross God's love and His justice would meet each other. But the story does not end at Golgotha. Christ rose from the dead. Christmas is the beginning of redemption. As we celebrate Christmas may we recover our sense of awe. When we realize how God stooped down for us in Christ we will become open for an experience of His glory and a realization of His presence. In these troubled and cynical times believers know that because of the Christmas event we have a God who understands us, who has overcome the powers of evil, who has given us a future. The Christ, who came to Bethlehem in the poorest of circumstances, will return to this earth in glory - for His own. While we wait His return, we know that He sees us and cares for us. Christmas. The celebration of the incarnation! Awesome! Glory be to God!

Johan D. Tangelder