

## THE SHAME OF CHRISTMAS

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” *Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)*

This Isaiah passage is one of the great prophetic passages in scripture. It foretells the gospel: that we shall be saved by grace through faith. Jewish women longed to be the mother of the promised Messiah, thinking of the glory and the honor of that position. However, the actual position brought shame. When the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary, she was engaged (“betrothed”) to Joseph, but they were not yet married. Before the angel Gabriel spoke to Joseph he had planned to divorce her quietly for fornication. “And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”<sup>1</sup> Mary’s contemporaries thought her child was the fruit of fornication. When Joseph was forced to return to his birthplace to register in obedience to Rome’s edict he was unable to find a place to stay. Not even his family was willing to take in this disgraced couple. Mary and Joseph lived under a cloud of suspicion and whispers all their married lives. Joseph must have been viewed either as a fornicator or a cuckold. When Jesus began His ministry His detractors accused Him of being a bastard: “They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?”<sup>2</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus was born in a way that even the lowest of society could look down on Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:19

<sup>2</sup> John 8:19

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 53:3

Here is the power of the Gospel, the overwhelming reach of God’s love. El Shaddai, God Almighty, would humiliate Himself in order to save sinners. His birth was quiet, not conspicuous. Angels heralded his arrival, but the people were unaware. His people ignored Him, but foreigners sought him. Lowly shepherds were the first to see Him, but the rich and powerful were oblivious of His coming. By His lowly birth He made Himself accessible to *everyone*. A person must be reduced to nothing in his own eyes before he will come to Jesus. “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.”<sup>4</sup> That is why the gospel appeals so powerfully to the rejected and unloved. The slave master may have toyed with Christianity, but the slave understood the beauty of salvation. The satisfied and contented, the honored and powerful will find little in the gospel to attract them. But those who are hated, unloved, despised are powerfully drawn to it. The person who is backed into a corner, the person without earthly hope, the woman at the end of her rope find in Jesus the answer to all their longing. A friend shared the Gospel with the “*untouchables*” in Hyderabad, India.<sup>5</sup> When they heard that Jesus loved *them* one woman fell to her knees and kissed his feet.

God came to us, Immanuel. Receiving His salvation often involves shame for those who believe. We must relegate everything else to second place behind Him. We must be willing to be criticized and considered foolish for believing in Jesus. Being a Christian can bring shame here, but glory in heaven. But if we reject Christ because of the shame, we lose everything. Salvation is for those who consider the shame as dung compared to the richness of knowing Jesus and being known by Him.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:3

<sup>5</sup> Dalit: meaning "broken/crushed" in Sanskrit and Hindi, is a name for the “untouchable” people discarded by the India caste system, outcasts that are valued less than animals without a soul. The refuse of their gods. *AFA/Set Free Alliance*