A Christmas Message (2010) [1]

Submitted by Wessel on Friday, 24 December 2010 - 14:27
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The world celebrates Christmas because it is a time of goodwill and giving, fun and happiness. But more importantly, at the heart of Christmas is the story of a little helpless baby, born to two common people in adverse conditions. It is a heart-warming story! The adversity of not finding a place to stay for the night is completely overshadowed by the miracle of a birth and the adoration of complete strangers. And as the night grew long, there lay the little baby Jesus: sleeping and helpless. Not condemning and not judging, but totally dependant on the two young humans He was entrusted to.

But not so for Easter. Yes, people hide and find the eggs and they wonder what bunnies and eggs have to do with each other. But no scenes of the crucifixion adorn shopping malls, as nativity scenes do. Churches are not quite so full on Easter as they are on Christmas. The image of a bloodied and dying man is far less tasteful than that of a newly born child. The cry of "Forgive them!" is less pleasant to hear than the gurgling of an infant.

The death of Jesus on the cross was no mere tragic end to the king that was born in Bethlehem. The death of Jesus was the apex of His life; the culmination of a grand plan which existed long before He became human. If His death was not in view, His life would have held little for us. That is because we all stand guilty before the cross. But as the man who was once so admired by shepherds and wise men breathed out His last, forgiveness becomes possible. All that stands between one and this forgiveness, is the horrid realisation of the sheer wickedness and evil which resides within oneself. It is the awareness that one's very being rejects infinite good and therefore stands condemned. The cross peels away the layers which we stack up to artificially mask this evil.

There can be no Christmas story without the Easter story. Indeed, the nativity should fill the sinner with dread, because Jesus Himself said

> "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." — Luke 5:32 (WEB)

The fact that Jesus came down to Earth means that we are all sinners, that we all fall short of the perfection which is necessary to enter God's presence. But we as sinners can find forgiveness and joy at the cross.

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