

The Mystical Link between Incarnation and Missions by Mike Ruhl

This article first appeared in the December 15, 2006, Mission Moments newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions. Permission is given to copy this article for distribution within your own congregation. Please credit the author and the Center for U.S. Missions in Irvine, California, www.centerforusmissions.org. For more information, contact the Center at 949-854-8002 x1780.

It jumped out at me like an arrow launched by a deer hunter with a compound bow. It was nothing less than an arrow of illumination.

The arrow was launched by the Holy Spirit at a Christian Christmas concert, of all places. A multitude of voices blended beautifully in bringing forth ancient-future melodies in celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, and Savior of the World. *Pa-rum-pum-pum-pum* the choir chanted, providing melodic and rhythmic accompaniment to the sacred words celebrating the Incarnation of Jesus. In the Babe of Bethlehem, *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself* (2 Corinthians 5:19), making provision for the One who would come in the flesh and *crush the serpent's head* (Genesis 3:15) on the cross.

As the choir sang *O nata lux* (Morten Lauridsen, 1997), the arrow of illumination found its target in my heart with these words: ***pro perditis--for the sake of the lost ones.***

It was then that I marveled (again) that our God is a *missionary God*. And there is no clearer illustration of that fact than the *incarnation of Jesus Christ*. Stop and think about what the Incarnation of Jesus, the Word made Flesh, actually reveals about the *missionary nature* of our great God.

- 1. God determined to act on His love.** His love was much more than a “sentimental feeling.” Because of sin and unbelief, so many people were lost and separated from their Lord. That reality crushed God’s heart. But that love was self-sacrificing in nature and it would move the Lord into taking action.
- 2. God took the initiative.** His love was *pro perditis--for the sake of the lost ones*. So He made the decision NOT to wait for the lost ones to come to Him. Instead, God chose in love to take the initiative and come to earth and to us. He did that by sending His one and only Son Jesus, in the flesh, to accomplish our redemption and restoration.
- 3. God left His comfort zone.** Driven by His loving passion to reach, rescue and redeem those who had become estranged and separated from Him, God chose to leave the heavenly realm and pilgrim through time and space to accomplish His mission. It meant taking on human flesh, lacing up human sandals, penetrating multiple human cultures, interacting with strange and often hard-hearted people, all *pro perditis--for the sake of the lost ones--and seeing them reconciled to God by grace and through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ*. Indeed, this kind of love would require “leaving one’s comfort zone,” leaving the temple to pitch a tent and “tabernacle” on earth.

4. **God delivered the gift.** The tiny hands of Jesus Incarnate Christ reaching up from the manger became hands nailed to a cross. Myrrh, familiar from the Magi's gift, anointed his lifeless body brought down from the bloodied cross. Yet thundering words continue to testify: *It is finished!* The full price of reaching, rescuing and redeeming lost and sinful people has been paid.

Back to the arrow of illumination. There is a link between the Incarnation of Jesus and what we know as "missions." God is a *missionary God* and we are His *missionary People*. Is it not true that the moment the Holy Spirit brings us to saving faith in Jesus Christ, we are transformed from a *mission prospect* into a *missionary*?

We are missionaries as the Holy Spirit enlightens us in the church to be the *on-going incarnation of Jesus Christ to the world!* The People of God now *take action* to reach the lost in their families and communities. They *take the initiative* and seek the lost, refusing to simply "wait for them to show up."

The saints do not hesitate to *leave their comfort zone* (personal and corporate culture preferences) in order to penetrate and interact with diverse cultures and people groups so they can share the witness of Christ. They may worship in a temple, but they do mission work in a tabernacle! And yes, the saints do not rest until the priceless gift of salvation in Jesus Christ is delivered in full. For the heart of the missionary church beats in synchronization with its Missionary God.

Hair? Teeth? Bones? Muscles? Organs? That all sounds very *carnal*, does it not?

Yes, it does. Why was that incarnation necessary? The bottom line is quite simple: ***pro perditis--for the sake of the lost ones.***