

## Contemplating Christmas

John R. Rose, 2003

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the event of all events. It redirected the history of this world, setting in motion the recovery of all of creation from bondage to sin and death. Christ's divine act will occupy our attention and adoration for all of time and eternity.

Here are a few questions it may be useful to ponder, when contemplating the Incarnation:

- Who is Christ, eternally? What is the "Word" of John 1:1, and the speech of Genesis 1?
- The Word created this world: How does the world reflect its creator?
- The Word made us in His image. How do we reflect the nature of our creator?
- The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. How surprising this is!
- Why did God need to burden himself with human nature? Was there no alternative?
- What major purposes did Christ have in assuming human nature?
- What major historical consequences have there been? (See R. Stark, *Rise of Christianity*)
- Was Christ's body real? Is he truly human? Is there anything lacking in his humanity?
- What if there were limitations, exceptions, exclusions to Christ's humanity?
- "Whatever Christ failed to assume, he could not redeem." Is our redemption complete?
- Was Jesus mortal? Subject to pain, fatigue, temptation, limitation? Is this comforting?
- A human has parents, childhood, a home, culture, language, an earthly life. Does Jesus?
- Does Jesus have a human mind? Does he have a free human will? Will we be like him?
- How is it that Jesus referred to his body as a temple? What is a temple for?
- How is it possible for one man, even Jesus, to accept death in place of us?
- Christ took the form of a servant. How can that be a fitting act for God?
- How is service, love, and self-sacrifice a fitting perfection of human nature?
- Are there other, pagan ideas in the air about the perfection of human nature?
- How has Christ's model of human perfection altered mankind's culture and aspirations?
- What is Jesus doing now with his human nature? (The mystery of the glorified body...)
- Will we relate humanly to Jesus, in the future, when he returns? Is he our king?
- Jesus' body is animated by the eternal life and spirit of God: How do we join this life?
- Does Jesus' human nature enable us, in especially effective ways, to know and love God?
- How might Jesus' human nature give us special access to God's life and spirit?
- Why does the author of Hebrews 10 refer to Jesus' body as a new and living way to God?
- Why do the apostles refer to the Church as Christ's body? Is this just flowery language?
- Why do they insist that Christ and his body are undivided? Is this our experience?
- What, specifically and precisely, do they mean (dozens of times) by being "in Christ"?
- Why do they say that we participate in Christ's sufferings and death?
- What did Jesus say about his body in John 6? Why were we to eat it? Was he serious?
- Why did he offer bread to the disciples, and all of us, and call it his body?
- Where is Jesus' body today? What is it doing? How do people recognize it?
- Who are Jesus' "least brethren" (Mt 25)? How does he know them and their experiences?
- Is Jesus personally present in today's world? How does he depend on our cooperation?
- Is it fitting for God to delay acting until a bunch of redeemed sinners get around to it?

For December devotions, consider reading Athanasius *On the Incarnation*. You may especially profit from sections numbered 1, 3-4, 7, 9, 12-14, 17, 20-21, 24, 27, 31, 46-48, 51-53, 56-57.