

Incomparable & Boundless

by Greg Albrecht

“... *the incomparable riches of his grace.*”

—Ephesians 2:7

“... *the boundless riches of Christ.*”

—Ephesians 3:8

You know the story: a newly married couple, exhausted from a long trip, expecting a baby any day, arrived in town and were unable to find a place to stay. The only decorations and ornaments in Bethlehem that first Christmas were “No Vacancy” signs.

It happened during the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 BC-AD 14). Mary, a young teenage girl, heavy with child, looked like she was about ready to pop—at this final stage of her pregnancy her efforts at ambulating would better be described as “waddling” rather than “walking.”

Perhaps it was best for Joseph and Mary to leave their hometown and be surrounded with strangers, away from people who thought they knew the real story of their young life together. As you know, even though they were married, Joseph wasn’t the birth father of the baby that Mary was expecting.

Were Joseph and Mary to suddenly appear, in our city or town or suburb, looking exactly like they did then, we would without a doubt think of them as homeless—we might even say that they seemed to be living rough.

As the time for Mary to give birth was near, they had to find some shelter—they found that shelter in a place that reeked of the smells of urine and dung. And there it was, in such a place, that the majesty of God in the person of Jesus entered into our mundane world.

What was really going on there in Bethlehem? It was the most critically important and historically significant moment in time, yet the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus looked for all the world as unimportant and insignificant. It was, as it turns out, a time and event that was and is ***Incomparable and Boundless.***

It was *a brief and fleeting moment* that passed without fanfare at the time—a scene and time of

incredible irony. The real significance of what was happening was buried, like artifacts under layers of civilization, buried, as was the floor of the stable, beneath animal manure.

The baby had created the universe, but he had voluntarily left the pristine perfection of eternity in favor of the mud and filth of that stable—and the dust and grime of the world that he would inhabit as he grew up. He chose to come as a baby who would be delivered via the birth canal and then later spiritually deliver not only Mary, the one who had physically delivered him, but ALL mankind, including those who tortured and crucified him. ***Incomparable and Boundless.***

Here, in a tiny little backwater town of Bethlehem, our Creator, the Prince of Peace



arrived looking more like a little prune-faced pauper than an adorable Gerber baby born into comfort, safety and hygiene. The first Christmas was a long way from the adorable depictions of baby Jesus we see today, in front yards, on Christmas trees and over the mantle of fireplaces. 2000 years later Jesus has been, in the popular version that is taught and imbibed, adorable, repackaged and shrink-wrapped.

watch and then either retires or moves on to other tasks.

The birth of Jesus tells us that Jesus is God our Creator, and that as our Creator he is not detached. The heart and soul of this universe is a personal God, not a humanly fabricated device that whirs and buzzes and eventually blows fuses and circuits, only to crash and burn and melt down as all machines eventually do.

Christmas reminds us that God

Jesus' incarnation, his birth as God in the flesh helped humans come to know and comprehend God. Jesus is not just a man who lived and died and was buried. Jesus cannot be relegated to a cemetery or a dusty bookshelf in a library, because while he did exist, and while he died as we all do, he was resurrected and is alive right now. Jesus is indestructible, the eternal, true and gracious super-hero, if you like. Jesus will never melt-down, he will never crash and burn. He will always be for us, with us and one of us. ***Incomparable and Boundless.***

CHRISTMAS REMINDS US: GOD IN CHRIST WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Jesus, God incarnate, is the head of a universal, boundaryless spiritual community. God's work is mysterious to the human mind so that hope sometimes comes from the most unexpected places and most unlikely people. Jesus is truly ***Incomparable and Boundless.***

How amazing and stupendous, and how paradoxical is Jesus—and how truly he reveals the mind and heart of God, who is, above all, love. Here is a human, born as an impoverished baby, born in such a way, by God's plan, that his human birthright might be held up to question.

There truly was nothing about Jesus that *appeared* to be beautiful, inspiring, amazing or majestic. Jesus did not *appear* to be incredibly successful. Jesus did not *appear* to be someone to whom people would naturally flock, putting all of their hopes and dreams on him.



It is easy for the secularized and commercialized Jesus to overshadow and overwhelm the ***Incomparable and Boundless*** meaning behind Christmas—here are three perspectives that might bring spiritual focus:

CHRISTMAS REMINDS US: GOD IS ONE OF US, WITH US & FOR US

Christmas means that God is not detached from his creation. God's relationship with our world and our universe is personal, as contrasted with the god some propose who is a watch-maker-creator as he/she fashions a

loves us, and that we are not just a number or a bit of information stored somewhere on his hard drive. Christmas reminds us that Jesus is indestructible, the grave could not hold him. Jesus will not melt down, crash or burn. He will, as he reminds us elsewhere, never leave or abandon us.

The glorious truth, the BEST NEWS EVER, is that ***God is always One of Us, One with us and One for us.*** Jesus came to reveal the Father—the triune Godhead, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus came to reveal God to us—God is exactly like Jesus!

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