

The Crib : When Eternity Is Born in the Present

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The Christmas story is not merely the story of a child born two thousand years ago. It is a revelation of a mystery that is continually taking place : **eternity is always being born in the present.**

The figures surrounding the crib can be understood as symbols of different dimensions of human existence. King Herod represents the past that seeks to preserve itself. Mary and Joseph represent the past that has become open to eternity. The Child represents the eternal present. The wise men represent knowledge that has discovered its own limitations and surrendered itself to wisdom. The shepherds represent innocence that is capable of receiving divine revelation. The angels represent the voice of heaven announcing the meaning of the event.

Seen in this way, the crib becomes a profound symbol of the relationship between **past, present and eternity.**

1. Herod : The Past That Wants to Continue

King Herod represents the past that is afraid of losing itself.

The past has an understandable desire for continuity. What has been established wants to remain established. Institutions, traditions, identities, religious systems, philosophies and structures often seek to preserve themselves by reproducing what they already are.

Herod hears that a child has been born who is called "king of the Jews." He does not welcome the child. He experiences the child as a threat.

Why?

Because the child represents something new.

The past wants the future to be a continuation of itself. It wants the present to serve its own survival. Therefore, when something genuinely new appears, the past can become defensive. It can attempt to control, suppress or even destroy the newness that has appeared.

This is the tragedy symbolised by the slaughter of the innocent children.

The past wants the present for its own continuity.

Herod therefore becomes a symbol not simply of an evil individual but of a spiritual tendency within humanity: the desire to make the present reproduce the past rather than allow the present to open itself to eternity.

The child, however, cannot belong to Herod.

The child belongs to the future—or, more profoundly, to eternity.

2. Mary : The Past That Opens to Eternity

Mary presents an entirely different relationship with the past.

Mary also belongs to history. She comes from a people, a family, a religious tradition and a particular historical moment. She represents the past.

But Mary does not demand that the future be a repetition of the past.

She becomes **virgin**.

Virginity can be understood here not merely as physical virginity but as a profound spiritual symbol. Spiritual virginity means becoming empty and receptive before God. It means that the past does not close itself around what it already possesses but becomes open to what God wants to bring forth.

Mary's greatness is therefore not simply that she gives birth. She gives birth because she is open.

She allows eternity to enter time.

Her attitude is the opposite of Herod's.

Herod says, in effect:

"The future must preserve what I already have."

Mary says:

"Let what God desires be born through me."

The virgin therefore represents **humanity becoming receptive to eternity**.

The truly virgin human heart does not possess the future. It receives it.

3. Joseph: The Past That Protects the Future

Joseph too belongs to the past. He represents tradition, ancestry, law and historical continuity.

Yet Joseph does not attempt to possess the child.

He accepts the mystery of the child and protects it.

This is an important distinction. Tradition has a sacred role when it becomes the guardian of new life rather than its owner.

Mary and Joseph therefore represent a transformed relationship with the past.

They do not destroy the past.

They allow the past to bow before the future.

They become the parents of the Child, but eventually they become worshippers of the Child.

This is one of the deepest paradoxes of the Christmas story :

the past gives birth to the present, and then the past worships what has been born.

4. The Child : The Eternal Present The Child

Jesus represents the **eternal present**.

Eternity does not appear as something distant. Eternity manifests itself as now.

The eternal God enters time as a child.

Why a child?

Because a child is always present. A child does not yet carry the burden of a completed past. The child is openness, possibility, newness and immediacy.

The eternal is therefore always like a newborn child.

It is never old.

Eternity does not age.

We may speak of eternity as something that existed before creation and will exist after creation, but eternity itself is always now. It is not imprisoned within chronological time.

The Incarnation reveals this mystery.

God does not simply send a message from eternity into the past. Eternity manifests itself **in the present.**

The Child is therefore not merely a historical event. The Child becomes a symbol of the everpresent mystery of incarnation:

Whenever the human being becomes open to God, eternity is born in the present.

Christmas is consequently not only something that happened.

Christmas is something that happens.

Every moment can become Christmas when the present opens itself to eternity.

5. The Child of God : The Present Does Not Belong to the Past

There is another remarkable movement in the Christmas scene.

Mary and Joseph are the parents of the Child, yet they worship the Child.

The one who gives birth bows before the one who has been born.

This suggests a profound spiritual principle:

The present is not created merely to continue the past. The present exists for eternity.

Mary and Joseph do not say:

"Because you came from us, you belong to us."

Instead, they recognise :

"You have come through us, but you do not belong to us."

The Child is the **Child of God**.

The past becomes fruitful precisely when it is willing to release its claim over the present.

A parent must eventually worship the mystery of the child rather than try to make the child a continuation of the parent's unfinished story.

Likewise, religious traditions must allow the divine mystery to be greater than their historical formulations.

The past fulfils itself when it gives birth to something that transcends it.

6. The Wise Men: Knowledge Surrendering to Wisdom

The wise men represent another dimension of humanity : **knowledge**.

They have studied the heavens. They possess learning, intellectual capacity and accumulated knowledge.

Yet their knowledge does not lead them to themselves.

Their knowledge reveals its own limitation.

They see a star.

The star represents **wisdom**—a light that is greater than accumulated information.

Knowledge asks:

"What do I know?" Wisdom asks: "What is the truth to which my knowledge must surrender?"

The wise men begin with knowledge but allow themselves to be guided beyond knowledge.

They follow the star.

The star leads them to the Child.

This is a beautiful movement :

Knowledge → recognition of limitation → surrender → wisdom → the Child.

The wise men do not abandon knowledge. They allow knowledge to become humble.

True knowledge eventually discovers that reality is greater than what the mind can possess.

Wisdom begins when knowledge becomes receptive.

And wisdom finally leads to the Child.

For the Child represents truth in its freshness, simplicity and fullness.

7. The Shepherds: Innocence Receiving Revelation

The shepherds represent another dimension of humanity : **innocence**.

They are not presented as scholars or rulers. They are ordinary people watching over their flock.

Yet they are among the first to receive the revelation.

The angels come to them.

This suggests that divine wisdom cannot be reached through knowledge alone.

There is another way: innocence.

Knowledge searches.

Innocence receives.

The wise men follow the star.

The shepherds receive the message of the angels.

Both arrive at the same place.

The intellectual seeker and the innocent heart meet before the same Child.

This is significant because eternity cannot be possessed by intellectual achievement. Nor can it be reduced to simplicity without consciousness.

Knowledge must become humble.

Innocence must become receptive.

Both are led to the eternal present.

8. The Star and the Angels : Wisdom and Revelation

The wise men are guided by the star.

The shepherds are guided by the angels.

The star can represent **wisdom discovered through the searching of humanity**.

The angels can represent **revelation received from God**.

Humanity searches for truth, and God reveals truth.

The two movements meet in the Child.

The wise men come from the world of knowledge.

The shepherds come from the world of innocence.

Both are brought to the same mystery.

The Child is therefore not the possession of one group, one culture, one religion or one class of people.

The Child is the meeting point of humanity and eternity.

9. The Crib : The Whole of Creation Comes Together

The crib is therefore much more than a sentimental Christmas scene.

It is a **cosmic icon**.

Look at what is happening around the Child :

The parents worship their own child.

The past bows before the present.

The wise men offer their knowledge to wisdom.

The shepherds bring their innocence.

The star guides knowledge.

The angels reveal divine glory.

Creation itself participates in the event.

Everything is moving toward the Child.

The past is not destroyed.

Knowledge is not rejected.

Tradition is not discarded.

Innocence is not despised.

Rather, everything is transformed by its relationship with the eternal present.

The past finds its fulfilment by worshipping the present.

Knowledge finds its fulfilment by surrendering to wisdom.

Innocence finds its fulfilment by receiving revelation.

Humanity finds its fulfilment by becoming open to God.

And creation finds its fulfilment when eternity becomes visible within it.

10. "Glory to God and Peace on Earth"

The angels proclaim:

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth."

These two realities belong together.

When the present is claimed by the past, there is conflict.

When knowledge claims absolute possession of truth, there is conflict.

When humanity tries to possess God, there is conflict.

But when the past bows before the present, knowledge bows before wisdom, and humanity opens itself to eternity, there is peace.

Peace is therefore not merely the absence of war.

Peace is the harmony that emerges when everything finds its proper relationship with eternity.

The glory of God is revealed when creation becomes transparent to God.

And peace on earth is the fruit of that transparency.

11. Christmas Happens Now

The deepest message of Christmas may therefore be this:

Eternity is always being born now.

Herod asks the present to belong to the past.

Mary allows the present to belong to eternity.

Herod tries to kill the new.

Mary gives herself so that the new may be born.

Herod represents fear of the future.

Mary represents openness to eternity.

The wise men represent knowledge discovering its limits.

The shepherds represent innocence capable of receiving.

The angels represent divine revelation.

The star represents wisdom.

And the Child represents the eternal present.

The crib gathers all these realities together.

It tells us that every moment can become a Bethlehem.

Every human heart can become a virgin.

Every moment can become pregnant with eternity.

Every person can become a bearer of the divine.

And every present moment can become the place where God is born.

Christmas, then, is not merely the celebration of a birth in the past.

Christmas is the mystery of eternity being born in the present.

The Child never grows old because eternity never grows old.

The Child is always being born.

And whenever the past releases its claim upon the present, whenever knowledge surrenders itself to wisdom, whenever innocence opens itself to revelation, and whenever humanity becomes receptive to God, **the crib appears again**.

The angels continue to sing:

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace on earth.

For eternity has entered time.

And eternity is always **now**.