

He Became Poor for Us

2 Corinthians 8:9

About thirty-three years ago, a very important event took place in my life. The date was April 1, 1974. On that day I bowed my head in prayer and asked Jesus to come into my life and be my Savior and Lord. On that day I took the first step of my journey in the true Christian faith.

On the advice of my pastor (Thomas Thompson) and a few other Christians I

knew, I began to read and study the Bible. I discovered that the more I learned about the Bible the more I wanted to learn about the Bible.

As I continued my reading and studying, I was fascinated by various prophecies – predictions that were made. People have often asked me if I believe that every prophecy in the Bible will be fulfilled. Yes, I do. I have no reason whatsoever to doubt the truth of the Bible. The Bible has never been proven

false in the past and I am confident that it won't be proven false in the present or future. I can have this confidence because of what it says in 2 Peter 1:21. It says, "For prophecy [and other words of Scripture, as well] never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along [moved, guided, inspired – the picture is that of a sail boat being moved by the wind; the sailboat goes wherever the wind takes it] by the Holy Spirit."

The Bible isn't just another book. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Yes it was written by men – forty or so different men over a period of about 2,000 years. But these men were guided by God in such a way that everything they wrote was in perfect harmony with the will of God. It can be said, therefore, that the Bible, though written by men, IS the very Word of God. And because the Bible IS the Word of God it can be trusted without reservation.

When we usually talk about Bible prophecy we think about the Great Tribulation, the rapture, the wrath of God, Armageddon, the Millennium, the New Heaven and the New Earth, etc. These are prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled. As we gather here this morning, I'd like to focus on two Old Testament prophecies that WERE fulfilled when Jesus was born.

There are approximately 200 prophecies that are related to the first

coming of Christ and his mission here on Earth. One of the most familiar of these prophecies is found in Isaiah 7:14. About 750 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah spoke these words.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” [The name “Immanuel” was not the proper name of the son of the virgin. The name “Immanuel” explained who this son was and is. This name

reveals the son's true identity.] Matthew 1:23 tells us that the name "Immanuel" means "God with us."

So the prophet Isaiah was saying that at sometime in the future a virgin would give birth to a son who would be God in human flesh. That's quite a prediction, isn't it? Yet every word of it is true.

Many people refuse to believe that a virgin could give birth because that would be a miracle. To this I say, "Miracles happen!" Miracles happen, because the

God I love and serve can do anything!

The God I love and serve IS a God of miracles. Surely the God of the Bible, the one and only true God, the one who created the entire universe out of nothing, can produce a child in the womb of a virgin, and that's exactly what God did!

The fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy is recorded in Matthew 1:18-25. "This is how the birth of Jesus came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together

[before they had sexual relations], she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband [although they were not officially married, they were legally bound as husband and wife because of their pledge] was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly [because they were pledged to be married they needed an official divorce document to break their bond]. But after he had considered

this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son [descendant] of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus [meaning “Yahweh is salvation”], because he will save his people from their sins.’

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet [Isaiah]:

‘The virgin will be with child and will

give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ – which means ‘God with us.’

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no [sexual] union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”

The Old Testament Scripture also predicted the birthplace of the Christ-child. Micah 5:2 says, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are

small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over all Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

According to the prophet Micah, the Christ-child would be born in Bethlehem. But as the time drew near for the Christ-child to be born, it didn't look like this prediction would come true. There Mary was, at her home in Nazareth – not Bethlehem – ready to give birth at any moment.

God often works in mysterious ways.

In the case of Mary and Joseph, God got them to Bethlehem in time for the Christ-child's birth, and God did this by using the Roman Emperor.

In Luke 2:1-7 we find the words. "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in strips of cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” So

everything worked, exactly the way God said it would. Amazing, isn't it, how the Word of God never fails.

So God the Son, the second person of the triune Godhead, became flesh and was born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem. Why? Why would God want to become a man? I can understand why a man would want to become God, but why would God want to become a man? Why would God the Son leave the splendor of heaven with all its riches and

glory and voluntarily put himself in a position of poverty among mankind?

The answer is found in 2 Corinthians 8:9. Here the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says this. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

There are three great truths in this verse of Scripture. One, Jesus was rich.

Two, Jesus became poor. And three, because Jesus became poor, you and can become rich. Isn't that neat?

Let's consider the first truth – Jesus was rich. How so? He was rich simply because he was and is God. He was rich in his position as King of the universe. He was rich in his power – all authority was given to him. And he was rich in his possessions – all things were created by him and for him.

Yes, Jesus was rich, yet for your sake and mine he became poor. His poverty extended beyond material possessions.

True, he was born into a poor family, and his birthplace in Bethlehem was far from splendid. But the poverty of 2

Corinthians 8:9 is much more than poor surroundings. The poverty was the incarnation itself. When God the Son became flesh, he became poor.

He became poor in his position. The sovereign king became the humble

servant. As God he spoke and things happened. As Jesus the God-man others spoke, asking him to serve them. The lepers begged for cleansing, the blind pleaded with him to give them sight, and even the prostitutes came to him, seeking forgiveness.

Jesus came to serve. In Philippians 2:6,7 we find these words. “Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing,

**taking on the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.” Jesus
became poor in his position.**

**Jesus also became poor in his power.
Jesus had power while he was here on this
earth, but that power was always under
the control of his Father in heaven. While
God the Son was here on Earth, he
voluntarily set aside the independent use
of his supernatural power. [The
“poverty” of Jesus was temporary. When
his work on Earth was complete, he**

returned to his former glory.] Listen to what Jesus says in John 5:19. “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he see the Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son does also.” [See also John 5:30 and 8:28.] When God the Son became flesh he became poor in his power.

He also became poor in his possessions. He had no real home of his own. In Matthew 8:20 Jesus said, “Foxes have

holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man [a phrase Jesus often used to refer to himself ... a phrase Jews used to refer to the promised Messiah] has no place to lay his head.” On one occasion Jesus borrowed Peter’s boat to use as a pulpit. On what we call Palm Sunday, Jesus borrowed an animal so he could ride into Jerusalem. Even the tomb Jesus was buried in was borrowed.

Yes, Jesus became poor in many ways, but his greatest poverty was experienced

on the cross. On the cross the one who was sinless became a sin offering for us (see 2 Cor. 5:21) and paid the price for our salvation. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient unto death.

As God he could not die. As the God-man he had to die. He was put to death like a common criminal on a Roman cross. Jesus loved us so much that he became poor for us. And because he became poor we can become rich. What does this mean?

For one, it means that you and I are poor. If we weren't poor Jesus wouldn't have to make us rich. Our poverty is spiritual poverty. Our sin puts us in the spiritual slums. Praise God, Jesus can put us in spiritual mansions! But before he can do that, before he can make us rich, we must first admit that we're poor.

One of the hardest things for sinners to do is admit that they are spiritually poor and in need of a Savior. Many people have "HMS" – high and mighty

syndrome. They're like the people mentioned in Revelation 3:17. They say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." Revelation 3:17 goes on to say that these people "are actually wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked." When it comes to sin, we're all guilty; we're all in need of a Savior. And Jesus is the Savior we all need; he's the only Savior.

**Jesus became poor so that you and I
and everyone else might become rich.**

And he'll make us rich, if we let him.

**How do you become rich? To become
rich you must do three things.**

**First, you must understand who Jesus
is. Jesus was God in the flesh. Jesus was
God incarnate. We celebrate Christmas
because 2,000 years ago God the Son took
on a human body and lived for a while
among us (see John 1:1,14).**

Second, you must understand what Jesus did for you. Jesus died on a cross to atone for – to make amends for and take away – your sin (see 1 John 2:2). He sacrificed his life so that your sin and mine could be forgiven. And then he arose from the dead to prove that he was the promised Savior. That’s why we celebrate Easter.

Third, you must make a conscious decision to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. You must repent of your sin and

ask Jesus to forgive you, and you must be willing to make Jesus your Master (Lord and Leader), allowing him to shape the way you think and act.

This is how you get rich in Jesus. And in the end this is the only wealth that will matter.

If you're rich in Jesus, rejoice and share the wealth. But if you're still in spiritual poverty, I urge you to let Jesus make you rich.