

From the November 4, 2010 Issue

## **The Womb of the Incarnation**

The Church's upcoming celebration of Advent will be a preparation for the coming of Jesus - both his first and second coming. That is what "advent" means in Latin—"coming."

Here's a question, though: Since the Son of God was destined to come into the world as the man Jesus Christ, in order to accomplish the Father's plan to adopt humanity (Eph. 1:5), where and how did his advent have to take place? If the Son had become flesh as the man Cain, born of Eve, would Adam and Eve had been able to recognize him and receive him? If he had born as the man Hayani in ancient Assyria would the world have been prepared to accept him?

What the story of Israel makes clear to us is that a place had to be prepared for the Advent of the Son. He could not come in the first generation of humanity, we were not yet ready. Nor could he come in some pagan culture cut off from a knowledge of the Triune God's revelation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All that Israel learned, experienced, and rebelled against from Abraham to the Virgin Mary was part of the Father's plan to form a people and place for the Son's Advent.

Israel herself was prepared to be the womb of the Son's incarnation (as T. F. Torrance says). All that Israel experienced was, in a sense, designed to produce the Virgin Mary who could participate in the Son's faith in the Father in such a way as to undo the sinful choice of the first Virgin, Eve. This isn't to say that the lives of all other Israelites before and since were meaningless, it simply tells us that the meaning of their lives—whether it be Abraham, David, or Esther—can only be properly understood in the light of the life of the true Son of Israel, Jesus, and of the human nature given to him in the womb of Mary, the one whose existence was the ultimate goal of all of Israel's history.

You might want to think of that the next time you're suffering. Like Israel, and Mary herself, we only see the future in the most general terms. We know the Son will come again. We know that the New Israel of Jew and Gentile is participating with him in his work to prepare the world for his Second Advent. But also, like Israel, we cannot always understand how what we are going through now is leading up to the Lord's Advent.

Like ancient Israel we may often cry out "How long, O Lord?" (Psalm 6:3). And the Father's answer to us through Jesus, in the Spirit, is "Yes, I am coming soon" (Rev. 22:20).

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

*~ Jonathan Stepp*