

A CHRISTMAS LIKE NO OTHER?

A reflection at the end of the BOOST – A Christmas Like No Other; 12th November 2020

Well, not quite!

In many ways it will be like the first, when Christ was born
They were living in unbelievable times;
We are living in strange, unbelievable times.

But what if Jesus had been born into our world today in 2020 rather than in 4BC...?¹
Would he / could he have caught Covid-19?

Being God, he would have been free from the viruses that we catch.
But then that would make him different from us and free from death itself, **which he chose not to be.**

Jesus certainly healed people and had power over created forces of wind and waves and disease.
On the other hand....

We know Jesus experienced hunger – in the desert, being tempted²

We know that Jesus experienced thirst – on the cross³

We know that the body in which he came could die – a death on our behalf, in our place...!

Being human he would be at risk

Paul articulates this when he writes to the church in Philippi

Christ was truly God.

But he did not try to remain equal with God.

*Instead he gave up everything and became a servant,
when he became like one of us.⁴*

If the incarnation is to mean **anything**, then Jesus has to experience **everything**...

...everything that we experience.

Through his humanity and through his death

He wins our future, through his resurrection which will become our doorway to eternal life.

Christ chose to not to remain equal with God, not to be advantaged,

He chose to become one with us⁵, equal with us

at risk,

just like us.

This is the divine-human paradox

DEADLY SERIOUS in 2020 AD

So if Jesus was born this Christmas and if he could catch Covid-19, then it would be incredibly serious!

The World Health Organisation indicates that children under one year are at higher risk of severe illness than older children due to immature immune systems and smaller airways⁶

DEADLY SERIOUS IN 4 BC

But it was equally deadly serious to be born in 4BC

¹ Herod the Great is presumed to have died around 3BC, hence the birth of Jesus must have been before that time.

² Matthew 4:2

³ John 19:28

⁴ Philippians 2:6-7 (based on the Contemporary English Version)

⁵ Matthew 1:23

⁶ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-in-babies-and-children/art-20484405#> accessed 12Nov20

It is difficult to work back in time and be clear about infant mortality in the time of Jesus.

The average across a large number of historical studies suggests that in the past around one-quarter of infants died in their first year of life and around half of all children died before they reached the end of puberty.⁷

So one out of every four children are believed to have died within the first year, and another of the four would have died before they reached the end of puberty.

Coming into our world was not a ***cushy divine chariot descent***, it carried a huge risk.

Jesus was born into a town that was not under lockdown as we know it, but everyone was there because the Roman government had ordered them to be there⁸, even as we are staying at home because our government has ordered us to.

DEADLY SERIOUS IN BETHLEHEM

He survives that first year of life, but before he gets to two years old there is a new threat to his life.

Joseph, Mary and their toddler, Jesus, flee from Bethlehem just in time to avoid the child being hacked to death by Herod's troops as they moved through the town of Bethlehem killing every child under two years of age⁹. Herod, by the way, had a history of killing those who might challenge his power. He is reported to have killed some of his own children, as well as one of his wives and countless others.¹⁰

IF JESUS WAS BORN TODAY

Jesus would not be born in a sterile hospital room,
but in the equivalent of a garage

He would not be greeted by civic leaders

but by night-shift workers who probably had just washed their hands for 20seconds, were wearing masks and keeping a social-distance.

There is no King Herod killing indiscriminately this year,

just a pernicious virus doing the same thing but with a very different age group!

Christmas will be hard and difficult this year

because it was hard and difficult the first time it happened!

This year, it is not a Christmas like no other

It is a Christmas like the first

Raw painful vulnerable

God was there then in Christ re-imagining human life

God is here now! In Christ re-imagining human life

Let's re-imagine this Christmas and present a powerful message of future hope and glory
just like the first Christmas

David Howell

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⁷ https://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/articles/to_check/infant.html accessed 12Nov20

⁸ Luke 2:1-3

⁹ Luke 2:16-18

¹⁰ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/truth-or-fiction-did-herod-really-slaughter-baby-boys-in-bethlehem>
accessed 12Nov20