

The Womb of God

To become “sons of God”, we must be born again, we must be born of God (John 1:7,12-13).

How can this be? Can God give birth to us? Nicodemus asked if we could re-enter the womb and thus be born anew. Jesus answered, “that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit”. We can’t go back into the fleshly womb and be born – nor would there be any reason to, since we are already here in the flesh. But we can be brought forth as spiritual creatures out of the womb of God.

Does this seem like a strange idea? It was not a new one, even when Jesus spoke of it. The concept was already there in the Old Testament. Through Isaiah (46:3-4), God says, “Hearken to me, O house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb. And even to your old age I am he; and even to your hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

The Hebrew word *malat* means to deliver, as in giving birth. But it also means deliverance of another kind: the kind that rescues us from death or danger.

In Psalm 107, God speaks of his people Israel, “the redeemed of the Lord...whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” (verse 2). Four instances are given of God’s intervention on their behalf:

(Psalm 107:4-7)

“They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way...hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distress.

And he led them forth by the right way...”

(verses 10-14)

“Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of God...

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and...

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death”.

(verses 17-20)

“Fools because of their transgression,...they draw near unto the gates of death.

Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and ...

He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.”

(verses 24-30)

“They...see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep... the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves...they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.

Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and...

He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves are still...so he brings them to their desired haven.”

Each of these four episodes begins with distress. They are lost, wandering in unmarked land, or battling the wind and the waves. Sometimes the distress is self-induced: they rebelled; they became fools.

Each time, they cried to their God for help. And, whatever the cause of their trouble, God came to their aid. He led them by the right way, he brought them out of darkness, he delivered (malat) them from destruction. And at last, he brought them to a safe haven.

He not only bore them on eagle’s wings (Exodus 19:4), he bore them in a more intimate sense. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him,” he says (Hosea 11:1), “and called my son out of Egypt”.

And he will do more: “I will extend peace to her like a river... you shall suck, you shall be borne upon the sides, and be dandled upon the knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you;” (Isaiah 66:12-13).

Like a mother, “he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with goodness” (Psalm 107:9).

Two kinds of deliverance are implied at once: rescue and rebirth. Only God can effect both. In fact, with him, the two types are one and the same. For in bringing us to spiritual birth, he delivers us from sin and death. We are borne by him, as Israel was, delivered not only from something, but to something:

He brought them out of the land of bondage, “brought you into the land...” (Judges 2:1). “I brought you,” he reminds them, “into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof” (Jeremiah 2:7).

But most amazing of all is the destination we hope to share: “I brought you unto myself” (Exodus 19:4).

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