

From the September 4, 2008 Issue

He's Coming! He's Coming!

“He’s coming! He’s coming!” These were my words as my first son was being born. In retrospect, it was an odd way to describe what was happening. “Coming” is what an absent person does in order to become present. And our baby boy was certainly already present. For 9 months he had been as physically close to his mother as he would ever be (inside). And just as he is departing her body, we describe it with the language of drawing near.

My wife Karen and I had dreamed of having children who would participate in our life together as a family. Like all good dreams, our dream was an echo of the One Dream—the Triune dream of Adoption. The Father-Son-Spirit dream of “Let us make man in our image.” The dream of a creation that would participate fully in the Life-Together of the Triune Creator.

My family’s dream-come-true started out with a 9-month embryonic stage. And as I read the Bible, it seems God’s creation goes through a similar phase—a time of joy and vomit, breathing hard and screaming, followed by joy so big it swallows everything that went before.

God spent 13.5 billion years preparing a womb for his New Creation—a womb which he himself would enter, and from which he would later emerge as the firstborn of the New. It was a womb of galaxies and black holes, mountains and oceans, platypuses, petunias and people. During this time, the womb contracted a fatal infection called sin. But the Triune purpose never once wavered. Father, Son and Spirit continued their labors, but now their holy task of creating included the holy task of healing.

In the world God created for himself a people. In their flesh, the womb of ‘old creation’ began to bear the glory of the New. And for 2 millennia, their ears rang with a message they could barely understand: “He’s coming!... He’s coming!...”

At the center of the universe, a world. At the center of the world, a people. And at the center of the people, a Jewish teenager at her prayers. In her lips, the cosmos whispered “Let it be with me as you have said.” And soon thereafter, Mary was puking in anticipation at the coming of the Lord. “He’s coming!... He’s coming!”

At long last, the time came. “It’s time,” He said. “Today what you expected has been fulfilled in your hearing.” “The kingdom of heaven has come to you.” The angels sang. The nations raged. Birth has always been a messy business. The womb convulsed. The earth shook.

Blood flowed. His blood. His people’s blood. Mingled with water. “He’s coming!... He’s coming!”

The baby’s head makes for the hardest part of labor. When the head begins to emerge, it’s called ‘crowning.’ It was on the third day, a chilly Sunday morning when the Head of new creation emerged from the tomb/womb of the old. At long last, new heaven and earth had crowned.

With a new kind of body, its Head moved through a new kind of space and time, to be crowned at the Father’s right hand. And, though it is now visible only to the eyes of faith, all of the old

creation (with its space, time, and matter) is right there with him. As Stephen died he saw the truth about our world: the Son of Man standing at the Father's right hand (Acts 7.56). "He's coming!... He's coming!"

The labor continues, but the worst is past. The Head is out; getting the body out is relatively easy. What the Head sees, the body can scarcely imagine. But the work continues. "He's coming!... He's coming!" We have heard rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines; we know them for what they are—birth pangs (Matt 24.8). We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Rom 8.22). But we also know that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom 8.18). "He's coming!... He's coming!"

The wonderful news is that new creation's Head has been liberated from decay, and the rest of us are following close behind (Rom 8.21). His resurrection from the dead has already given us new birth into a living hope (1 Pet 3.3) through the word of truth (Jas 1.18). The truth that our Head now occupies the new world, and that in him, we live there too.

We are still "in" the womb, but we are not "of" it. We who believe are of the New; we are the firstfruits of all who will come later (Jas 1.18). Our Head is the firstborn from the dead, but he will not be the last (Col 1.18). Our true life is now hidden with him in the new space-time he now occupies. But when we too emerge and see him as he is at his Appearing, we will also finally appear to ourselves and each other, in glory (Col 3.3-4). "He's coming!... He's coming!"

The Son of Man is come! Come, Lord Jesus!

~ John Stonecypher