THE PARADOXES OF THE CROSS (1)

By Keith Greer

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." {2 Corinthians 12:9,10} Many look at such passages and consider them to be paradoxes. A paradox is defined as "**a seemingly contradictory statement that may nevertheless be true; an assertion that is essentially self-contradictory, though based on a valid deduction from acceptable premises.**" In today's study we examine paradoxes of Christ's cross and the great lessons they teach us.

Jesus Christ came into the world—so that we might enter heaven. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." {1 Timothy 1:15} Our Savior left the portals of glory to come to this sinful, sorrowful land. Many have difficulty grasping the fact that Jesus voluntarily LEFT heaven to come to earth so that we might be able to ENTER heaven one day. Is this not the sweet story of redemption? "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." {2 Corinthians 5:1} Jesus also promised that He would come again and "receive us to Himself—that where He is we might also be." {John 14:1-3}

Jesus Christ was born in the flesh—so we could be born of the Spirit. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." {John 1:14} "By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God." {1 John 4:2} Along with accepting His Deity, we must also believe that Jesus Christ lived in the flesh. This incarnation of God's Son made it possible to teach men how they can, and must, be born of the Spirit. "Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" {John 3:5} The spiritual birth occurs as the result of incorruptible seed—God's word. {1 Peter 1:23} Such a birth allows one to enter into a relationship as a new creation in Christ. {2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26,27}

Jesus Christ was born of woman—that we may be born of God. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." {Galatians 4:4} Several hundred years before Christ's birth, the prophet Isaiah foretold His coming {Isaiah 7:14}. The Divine took on human form so we could be born of God. "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." {John 1:11,12} "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith." {1 John 5:4} Jesus was born of woman to the end that we might be born of God.

Jesus became the Son of Man—that we might become sons of God. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." {Luke 19:10} "Behold what manner of love the

Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." {1 John 3:1,2} Jesus was willing to be humbled so that we, as mortals, could be exalted. Such love, when expressed to mankind, is difficult for the finite mind to fathom. How does one really understand the depth of love that Christ had for mankind? He left the splendor and glories of heaven to come to earth knowing He would suffer the horrible death on the cross!   (Continue next page) ***