

## **Our Lord's Descent.**

### **No Five**

How can anyone adequately describe the mystery of the incarnation - the Son of God taking on human form and entering the stream of earthly life? How can the great doctrines of the Christian faith be explained to children? Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95) found a solution. She was a poet and knew that children loved poetry. So she decided to write some simple hymns or poems, nearly all of them an attempt to illustrate her Sunday school lessons. She also wrote hymns which interpreted the Apostles' Creed for children but with such profundity and eloquence that some are still sung by young and old alike. They carry a message grown-ups can appreciate. Such as "Once in Royal David's City," which was written not specifically as a Christmas carol but to illustrate the creedal "I believe...in Jesus Christ... born of the Virgin Mary." The first two stanzas are concerned with our Lord's birth and what it means. The second stanza depicts the Son of God once in heaven, ready and willing to come down to earth in God the Father's appointed time to become flesh and live among us.

He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And his shelter was a stable,  
And his cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

The mystery of the Incarnation is stated in the first two lines. Who is the baby in the manger?

He is none other than the Lord of all, who in obedience to His Father's will came down to earth from heaven. Jesus came from above. When we talk about our Lord's descent from heaven we must go back beyond the beginning of creation - into eternity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This verse emphatically states the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ had been above all human beings and all angels; nevertheless, He left the glory of heaven. History was made in heaven as well as on earth. The angels in heaven didn't fully understand God's plan of salvation (1 Pet.1: 12). They looked upon it with wonder. "We must imagine, therefore," comments the Reformed Bible expositor James Montgomery Boice, "that something like the rumors of Christ's descent to earth had been circulating around heaven and that for weeks the angels had been contemplating the form in which Christ would enter human history. Would He appear in a blaze of light bursting into the night of the Palestinian countryside, dazzling all who beheld Him?" But what did He do? He stripped Himself of all privilege (Phil.2: 5-11). His first home nothing but a stable; his cradle - not a cozy crib but a stall. The purpose of His coming? "Our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor.8: 9).