

Did Hamlet Know Shakespeare?

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Consider that Hamlet was a character, an actor in a play while Shakespeare was the author and creator of the play. Shakespeare created the play but was not a character in the play, therefore I would say Hamlet did not know Shakespeare. The only way Hamlet could have known Shakespeare is if Shakespeare had written himself into the play.

I use this analogy to propose to you that in the same way we cannot know anything about God, our creator, unless He reveals Himself to us. Of course we are born with an innate sense of God's existence, and every person knows from the order and complexity of the universe that it was created with intelligent design. Nevertheless, we cannot know God's attributes or His will unless He reveals them to us.

This holiday season we celebrate the birth of Christ. This event was like no other birth before or since. It was a totally unique birth in which God took on flesh and appeared in the form of man. To complete the analogy, GOD WROTE HIMSELF INTO THE PLAY. Theologians call this event the incarnation. Webster defines this as the "embodiment of deity, the union of divinity with humanity in the person of Christ".

The Gospel of John tells us that Christ pre-exists creation, and in fact Jesus was not created, but is self-existent. This is way over our heads—way beyond our finite thinking. We cannot possibly comprehend this, which is exactly the point. John wrote, "The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father...no man has seen God at any time, the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (Jn.1:14). GOD WROTE HIMSELF INTO THE PLAY. We know God and understand His plan of redemption and spiritual life for us because of the incarnation.

I have been asked many times, "Why did God do it this way? It seems so difficult, so bloody!" The author of Philippians gives us insight into the "what and why" of what God did for us in Phil. 2:4-9. Let me paraphrase: Put other's interests as a priority as Christ did for us. Christ existed as God in heaven in a place of glory and perfection, but he did not hold on to that. He gave up this wonderful state out of love for us, and took on the form of a servant and was made in the flesh. This involved a veiling of His glory and a voluntary waiving of His divine prerogatives. He left perfection and glory to come to a chaotic cesspool where He was rejected, humiliated, beaten, and died the worst kind of death. He did this out of love for us, to offer salvation to us.

Traditionally, the church has minimized the humility of the incarnation, but upon further review we can see that God maximized it. Consider that Jesus was born to lowly parents, in a lowly place. It was assumed by all His relatives that He was born illegitimately, which is why there was "no room at the inn". He was born in an animal stall, laid in a feeding trough and worshipped by shepherds (a lowly occupation). The leadership of Israel did not come, instead, Gentile leaders came (the Magi). The king of His nation, Herod, tried to have Him killed. He grew up in a lowly town, and had a humble occupation. He was convicted of a crime He did not commit, beaten terribly, and died the worst kind of death.

Let me give you a few reasons why God did it this way:

1. Promises—God had said He would bring a man from Abraham, from Judah, from David, born in Bethlehem who will redeem man to God.

2. We need a perfect willing sacrifice who is able to die for our sins. A man must die, but he had to be perfect.

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3. It took a real birth so He could experience a lifetime of pain, humiliation, suffering, and rejection to prove His perfection and love.

4. To reveal who man should be—we always have to defend the character of Christians but never Christ.

5. We need a sympathetic advocate to approach God for us. Hebrews 4:14-15 says He knows our pain, and He has experienced all our temptations because He lived it first hand.

I hope this holiday season you will dwell on the true meaning of Christmas—the incarnation whereby God wrote Himself into our play. God became a child so we could become children of God. I know one more question—If God sent His only Child to meet your need, and then die in your place, would you believe He loved you?

Merry Christmas

Charlie Taylor