

Sunday December 24th sermon: "The Wonder of the Incarnation!
Salvation is of the Lord! (Pt 5)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:1-20

Jonah teaches us that Salvation Belongs to the Lord!

The only way men can know the things that God has given to us, is by the work of the Holy Ghost. The natural man, without the work of the Spirit, does not receive the things of God. In fact, nobody can declare that Jesus is the Lord, except by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus taught that it takes a special, selective work by God upon a sinner before that sinner can trust in Christ unto salvation.

That gift of faith is given to us by God, by the powerful working of the Holy Ghost in all the Lord's people. Lost men are naturally helpless to believe the Gospel under their own steam, and yet in each of our believing hearts, there was first a powerful work of the Holy Ghost to convert us!

A large part of the miracle power of God in our salvation is displayed in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ to be our redeemer.

He was born of a virgin, and is our Immanuel, God with us!

Isaiah foretold these twin miracles about Messiah, Who came down to earth to save His people.

They are impossible events! Nobody can be born by a virgin! No man can be God manifest as a human being! Yet those are exactly the twin miracles that God promised to us through Isaiah.

Isaiah also reported God's promise that a child would be born unto us, and a Son given to us. That in itself is no miracle – it happens all the time.

But the names assigned to that child, that Son! Wonderful, counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! These are miracle characters in such a child, in such a Son.

But most astounding of all, that child, that Son, would be the mighty God! How can a male child be God? How can God promise to do such an astounding and impossible thing as this?

The promised Son is a real human being like us, made like His brethren whom He would save, and yet He is God of very God at the same time!

This is the repeated promise of Christ our Immanuel, of God with us!

These things are unheard of, outrageous, audacious, and quite simply unbelievable. They are impossible, and yet they are a part of God's mighty power to save His poor lost people whom He loves.

Paul underlined the true nature of Christ when he wrote that "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily!"

How can a virgin born man possess in His body the fullness of the Godhead?

The prophet Micah foretold that Christ would be born in Bethlehem, but also added that His going forth was from everlasting. He is God, Who alone is eternal, and His coming incarnate as a man was eternally planned! There was never a time in all eternity, when Jesus was not going to be incarnate in our humanity as God Himself, the second person of the Trinity.

In order to effect our salvation, God had to produce a perfect offering to be sacrificed in our place and for our crimes. No animal, and no mere mortal, could ever do.

Such a suitable and powerful offering would have to be deity clothed in our flesh, our kinsman redeemer, a perfect and sufficient sacrifice to take our place, as our substitute in God's judgment for sin, to die for us, to save us.

Christ had to be God manifest in human flesh, miraculously born of a virgin, or else we could never be saved, and our sins could never be taken away.

This inconceivable work of God's salvation could only be planned and purposed by God Himself. No man's scheme could ever hope to provide our salvation.

In other words, our salvation is impossible, in a way far beyond God's rescue of Jonah by a great fish. Great fish exist, and it is conceivable that a great fish could rescue Jonah.

But God's salvation of sinners is outside the bounds of what we think of as possible.

But with God, all things are possible! Therefore, along the way, God worked unspeakable miracles, never thought of by mankind.

Contrast that with how lost men think. They suppose they can be saved by things that they can do, things that are in the realm of possibility – sacrifices, good works, sacraments, rituals, positive thinking.

But all of our "good works" are filthy rags before a holy God! None of that can possibly take away our sin or please God.

All of our salvation ideas involve doable acts, but God demands impossible things, like obeying His law perfectly, which no man can do.

This helps us to grasp the true nature of saving faith, because the impossible nature of our salvation also makes it impossible for rebellious sinners to believe it.

Ironically, as long as Jesus is seen as a mere moral teacher, who urges moral duties that men can do, He is acceptable to us.

But it is the impossibility of it all, that requires the miraculous gift of faith to believe it, and to trust in Christ and His Gospel!

That is what makes the Christmas story so beautiful: God is working out the completely impossible presentation of His Lamb, and along the way, those who are a part of it, as God's instruments to bring it about, are given inexplicable faith by God to believe what is impossible!

So when Joseph, Mary's husband, found her to be with child, he believed God's word by the angel, that her conception was by the Holy Ghost, and so did not fear to take her as his wife.

What's more, Joseph believed the commandment of God, that Mary's son would be the God that would save His people from their sins!

All this was impossible to believe, yet God worked mightily in Joseph's heart to believe and obey.

Likewise, Mary and her cousin Elizabeth believed the impossibility, according to God's word, that Mary would conceive by the Holy Ghost the Son of God, the savior of His people!

Finally, the shepherds in the field believed the angels when they told them of the birth of Christ the Savior. They believed the joyous promises made to them. They believed the incredible sign of a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, as humble and inauspicious as it was. They testified to these truths to their friends and neighbors, and they rejoiced at the glory of what they had seen and heard!

The incarnation, as well as the imputation of our crimes upon Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh, and His resurrection – all impossible and unbelievable – were carried out by the almighty power of God, Who did those things which are impossible, to save His people.

We who have trusted in the Lord have been made to believe these impossible things that God, by His mighty arm of strength and power in Jesus Christ, has brought to pass.

Our trust in God's word and promises is far more miraculous than was the trust of the men of Nineveh in God's promise of judgment against them.

And yet in each of our minds and hearts, we have trusted in the Lord, and cried out for mercy, and He has saved us!

This ought to fill our hearts with great singing and unspeakable joy on this Christmas eve.

We love to sing that old carol:

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still,
the dear Christ enters in.