



Pulpit Ministry Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church. Lord's Day am 21st Dec 2008

Scripture Reading Isaiah Ch9:6-7

The Mystery and

Majesty of The Incarnation.

At this time of the year the world displays an outward association to one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Incarnation. However, it should not be thought that the world in any shape or fashion has any desire to defend this doctrine, the only reason as to why it is retained for a few months is because of the economic impact that it has! However, due to the 'unavoidable' emphasis that the world places upon the incarnation for a period of weeks every year, has led to the ideology amongst Christians that any such preaching or singing or even mention of the birth of Christ, should also be kept to this time of year, The incarnation has become '*a seasonal expectation.*' The Incarnation is a doctrine that is to be retained and defended by every Christian, year in and year out!

The birth of Christ is the keystone of the gospel preaching. The incarnation is history, however, its being part of the Christian faith is not merely due to history, rather its inclusion is because it is an integral part of the Gospel! The incarnation is not to be defended because it is historical fact, we are not arguing or defending history. The birth of Christ is to be defended and safeguarded, because without it there is no Gospel.

1) The Mystery of Christ's Incarnation. "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*"

i) The Humanity of Christ safeguarded.

The incarnation is a mystery. The mystery of the incarnation is that God himself condescended to earth and dwelt in human nature. He actually took our nature, he was made bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. It was not any humanity that Christ took, it was a prepared humanity, a humanity prepared and created by the Holy Ghost [of the substance of Mary]. Turn to Heb Ch10:5, "*A body hast thou prepared me.*" The literal understanding of that is, '*a body hast thou prepared for me to dwell in.*' A body in which Christ would fulfil the work of redemption. '*This was prepared, in the book of God's purposes and decrees, and in the council and covenant of grace; it was curiously formed by the Holy Ghost in time, for the second Person, the Son of God, to clothe himself with.*'

The prophet Isaiah [Ch9:6] carefully states that "*unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*" The prophet safeguards the humanity of Christ. The humanity of Christ is not a '*heavenly humanly*' Some have erroneously taught that the humanity of Christ came down from heaven. No, it was actually created by the Holy Ghost taking the substance of Mary's womb and creating a humanity that was identical to ours in every way, except for sin. Hence Isaiah says, "*Unto us a child is born.*" Christ's humanity was born. Turn to Luke Ch1:35 Mary is told by the angel, "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" The Holy Ghost created the humanity of Christ from the substance of Mary's womb, that not only is a mystery, but it is a miracle.

ii) The Sinlessness of Christ is protected.

Can something clean come out of that which is unclean, the answer is no. Sin being passed on through ordinary generation, makes us all subject to sin. However, Christ was not born by ordinary birth, it was a supernatural birth, he was exempted from the stain of Adam's sin, but his humanity was the same as yours and mine, sin excepted! A renowned sceptic once asked a preacher, '*if I told you that that young lad over there had no father, and that he was miraculously conceived in his mother's womb with no fatherly input, would you believe me?*' The preacher responded, '*if he lived the way Christ did, I would believe you!*'

iii) The Pre-existence of Christ safeguarded. "*unto us a son is given.*"

Not only does Isaiah safeguard the humanity of Christ but he also protects the pre-existence of Christ, [v6], "*Unto us a son is given.*" Christ's humanity was born, but as the Son of God he was given. The words of the angel in Luke Ch1:35 show this clearly, "*that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" Some have said that these words prove that Jesus Christ as the second person of the Trinity only began to exist at the incarnation, however, the Angel does not say "*that which shall be born of thee shall be the Son of God*", but '*shall be called the Son of God.*' The incarnation was the united of that which already existed with that which had just been created. Hence Paul says in Gal Ch4:4, "**When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son, to be born of a woman.**" Such is the composition of Christ's person that both divine and human are seen as one, spoken of as the Son of God! But they are not one, they are seen in one person, but remain distinct, God and man! What a mystery, but so necessary for our salvation!

Athanasius one of the early Church Fathers who opposed Arianism and other heresies that surrounded the person of Christ used the burning bush in Exodus Ch3 as an illustration of the incarnation; '*the fire signifying the divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush springing from the earth [an earthly thing] the fire descending from heaven. As the*

bush was united to the fire, yet it was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into the fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of the fire so shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire.’ So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature was not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, but they became so united that they became as one, yet remained two. [Taken from Works of Thomas Boston].

Mysterious though all this may be, we must defend this truth! To reject this mystery is to destroy the gospel! Without the virgin birth, we have no gospel, we have no Christ who can take the place of man, he must be identical to me, he must be sinless to take my place, see how both the prophet and the angel by safeguard the humanity and deity of Christ, safeguard the gospel. If Christ only began to exist as God at the incarnation, there is no Covenant of redemption [for Christ could not have been present], indeed we have destroyed the Trinity.

1Tim Ch2:5, “*One mediator between God and man.*” To be an effectual mediator, the redeemer must have these two qualities, he must be God and he must be man. Christ’s deity gives all its power to his humanity, enabling him to suffer and die in the place of his people. He must be God in order for his sacrifice to be of any value.

2) The Majesty of Christ’s Person. “*His name shall be called.*”

See how Isaiah describes the Messiah, “*His name shall be called...*” The names that the prophet uses set forth the majesty of this Redeemer! In these names we see the:

a) Wisdom of Christ. “*Wonderful Counsellor.*”

The word ‘*wonderful*’ is applied here to denote the unusual and remarkable qualities of Christ, qualities that are majestic in their scope. One of these qualities is wisdom. Isaiah Ch28:29 describes Christ as being “*wonderful in counsel.*” Luke Ch2:52, “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature.*” His humanity increased in wisdom, for as God He was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, he therefore gives counsel to the children of men. Turn to Luke Ch2:47, Ch4:22; 32. Mark Ch1;21-22, Christ entered into the synagogue and ‘*He taught them.*’

b) The Strength and Power of Christ. ‘*The Mighty God.*’

His becoming man diminished none of his power, he remained equal in power and glory, he continued to be “*the mighty God.*” How quickly he would demonstrate his equality with the Father, at Cana with the wine, in the raising of the dead, the healing of the lame, surely he is the mighty God! For no man can do these miracles except God be with him! That was Nicodemus’ conclusion, that God was with Jesus, but further than that, this Jesus was God!

c) The Headship of Christ. *Everlasting Father.*

Isaiah does not mean that Jesus Christ is the Father, nor is he suggesting that in some way the Father became incarnate with Christ. Christ himself said [John 20;17], “*I must ascend unto my father and your father.*” It is true that there is one God, it is equally true that there is one Father in the Godhead, yet Christ is denominated ‘*the everlasting Father.*’ He is the father and head of an elect race. In the same manner in which Adam was the father of all living and the federal head of all mankind, so is Christ the everlasting father of His people. Child OF Go, he is the everlasting Father, he has not nor never will vacate that office, his blood has Fathered the Church, ‘as your father, I will be with thee, ever unto the end of the age.’ What earthly Father can give his son the assurance that he will never leave him, death fragments the father son relationship, other things too come between the parent and child, but with Christ nothing can separate us!

d) The Consolation of Christ. *Prince of Peace.*

As our redeemer Christ has not only effected peace between us and God, he keeps us at peace through trying times in this world until the occasion when he brings us into his kingdom of peace. Phil Ch4:7, “*The peace of God that passeth all understanding.*” Paul counsels God’s people not to be anxious over difficulties that present themselves to us. Rather we are to place them before the Lord in prayer, in response God will through Christ grant us a peace that defies the understanding of the world! Herein we deal with all our troubles, we focus on those things that are pure and wholesome...I.e focus on Christ and the majesty of his person. I have found that when we focus on the problem and upon the opposite, I.e. the dishonest and the impure, we become bitter and resentful and depressed.

He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people and rules in them. A peace that the world knows nothing of, it surpasses the understanding of the worlding, they stand back in amazement and wonder as to how that Christian can go through such a trying situation and display such serenity!

The incarnation goes beyond even the understanding of the Angels! ‘*Who can explore his strange design? In vain the first born seraph tries to sound the depths of love divine.*’