

Also Preached 83/12/25 12/14/95 12/21/2008

There are so many good stories about Christmas: Historical stories: No fiction could have so captured the souls of men as the events of Christmas. It is such a good time.

According to my records, I have preached on this text twice in the last Twenty Eight Years, the last time in 2008. But this is a different sermon on the same text although some things from the old sermons are included.

Christmas wonderful stories:

Angels: to Mary; to Joseph; To Zacharias; to the Shepherds

Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem: Christ being born: laid in a manger because the inn was full: the Lamb of God, laid in a manger. So much symbolism; so much meaning.

Wise men from the East: the joining of Special revelation and Natural revelation: The Star of Hope: The rage of Herod; The flight to Egypt.

These are the best known ones: events so simple they could not have been imagined by the wise men of the earth: here is the world's true democracy: stories that touch the hearts and lives of the most humble men, and the most sophisticated.

But there are some lesser known stories: I want to speak of one of these today. It was the eighth day from the birth of Christ, He must be circumcised. Under the law, Mary had to observe the seven days of purification. When the purification was complete, on the 40th day after the birth, she must present herself in the temple and offer two turtledoves: the offering of poor people. This was to remind us all that that which is unclean cannot bring forth that which is clean. This is not to mean that Christ was unclean, for he was not, but he stood in the place of sinners, was made under the law, and must go through everything that any Son of the Covenant had to endure.

Two ceremonies here: the circumcision of Christ; the purification of Mary. At that time they would also have made the payment necessary for the redemption of the Firstborn, also required of Israel after their deliverance from Egypt. This would have meant some expense to Mary and Joseph, and the offering of two doves indicated that they were of the poor of the land.

Maybe some of the gold given by the wise men was used here. Oops, I know that some think that they didn't come until a couple of years later, but I am not convinced. Sometimes we are too smart for our own good and hang too much on tiny pieces of evidence. But we will let that go.

I. Her purification,

A. The necessity for her purification and the redemption of Jesus.

1. Why should she be purified, if Christ was sinless? And she a virgin?

2. The ceremonies were God speaking to the nation, and Jesus was born under the law and must fulfill all the law as the last Adam.

B. A wonderful thing happens: A holy man comes in: Simeon. He is of unknown age, but he is described in the following terms:

C. Just and devout: Outwardly before men; inwardly before God. The two are not the same.

D. Waiting: patient: Those who know God know the necessity of patience. God does not move according to our felt needs, or according to our demands. He is not a cosmic vending machine: Time is part of His creation, and it is also his servant, and everything comes in its own time. A very important aspect of wisdom is to wait for the time of the Lord.

- E. Holy Ghost upon him: He came by the Spirit. He was a true prophet.
- F. Took the child up and blessed God. He was filled with joy and gladness.
- G. His famous words:

1. "Now let me go." I have fulfilled my life's work. This also is in the will of God. What a great blessing was conferred upon this holy man: what holy distinction, to be a separate witness to the person of Christ. Why would anyone have made this up!!! Nothing else is written about Simeon, but he must have been known in Jerusalem, and there must have been many alive when Luke wrote, who would have known him.
2. "The Lord's Christ." The Messiah. He saw with his physical eyes the humanity of Christ.
3. "Before the face of all people": not done quietly. There is no Christian conspiracy: these things before all people: in public; before multitudes; in the temple. etc. Christ is a light; not put under a bushel; but on a candlestick; The facts of Christianity have been examined, analyzed, debated; books have been written to "expose" the church; but they have all failed, because the light shines clearly and brightly.
4. Light to the Gentiles: Christ was always intended to be to all the world. Jesus is the Light of the World: not physical light, but spiritual light.
5. Glory of Israel: Israel's glory: the promise of Abraham. But Israel had to reject Him; for otherwise he would have belonged only to one nation, not to the whole world. What wonders; how manifold is the wisdom of God. Even the wrath of men shall praise him.
6. They rejected their glory; but this sent the gospel to the whole world.

II. His prophetic words to Mary.

- A. "This child is set." This word means appointed, to be put here for a purpose. It is used of a city that is set on a hill: purpose and design. Paul said he was "set" for the defense of the Gospel; It is used in Rev. 4 when John said that a throne was "set" in heaven.
 1. The life of Jesus Christ is the ultimate proof of predestination: He was the Son of God, but he went in the way that was appointed for him. Wisdom is not to chafe against God, but to fulfill the purpose for which you have been appointed.
 2. The most important fact of the universe was decreed by God before the foundation of the world: Jesus was appointed Mediator and Savior: all through the ages this is the central fact: Christ is the Mediator:
 3. We need a Mediator: because we are creatures: Christ is the Mediator in the Garden of Eden, before there was any sin in the world. A finite being as man cannot come directly into the presence of God: he must have a Mediator. We need a Mediator: because we are sinful: Our sins must be taken away.
- B. The prophecy speaks of both the Dark Side and the Joy of Christmas:
 1. The Dark Side
 - a) To Israel and the world.
 - (1) The fall of many in Israel. Israel would be set aside because of their rejection of Christ.
 - (2) This was because they would speak against Christ. Mary, and we, must be fortified to the truth that the true Christ will not be received by all. Vs. 34.
 - (3) Those, both of Israel and the Gentiles who turn away from Christ, experience a kind of second death, as Calvin says. They not only are dead in Adam, but are now dead to Christ the Redeemer.
 - (4) Christ is appointed by God and comes with authority: His witness can be denied, but the consequences in the soul cannot be denied.
 - b) To Mary in Particular. Vs. 35.
 - (1) Mary is warned and fortified concerning the Cross. The Gospel is about the Cross of Christ, and it is now preached to Mary and Joseph through Simeon.
 - (2) And so we must remember: that little babe in the manger does not save the world by coming as a babe. He was born that he might die: He must die if our sins are to be taken away.

- (3) Galatians 3:1. The Holy Spirit is received by the hearing of faith, faith in Christ who is evidently set before us, crucified .
 - (4) Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, was crucified, dead and buried, and rose the third day, according to the Scriptures. As Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10 record, from eternity it was planned by God to give the Son of God a human body and nature that He might appear in our behalf, fulfilling the law and paying the penalty for our redemption.
 - (5) This is the shadow that hangs over Christmas, that followed the Lord Jesus until He wept in Gethsemane and gave Himself up to be crucified, dead, and buried for His people.
- c) The Strife of Christmas:
- (1) Herod and the babes: "Tell the weeping mothers of Israel about the joy of Christmas!!!" Warfare is associated with Jesus Christ: A sword through your soul, Mary. In warfare some rise and some fall.
 - (2) This Christ, this babe, is bring about the rising and the falling of many in Israel: not all will hear; not all will believe; not all will value what He came to give; no, their portion is of the world; they seek the things of the world; they do not seek the things of God; or if they do seek the things of God it is in order to gain the things of the world.
 - (3) Jesus is a sign that will be spoken against: Jesus himself put it: Matt. 10:34ff. Every step that you take in the knowledge of Christ; every progress you make in the kingdom of God means that you give up something of yourself.
 - (a) Jesus is a true physician: He does not cry "peace, peace...when there is no peace."
 - (b) Truth cannot make peace with lies.
 - (c) Families themselves are divided. (Don't think this strange); Not that Christ is at fault.
 - (d) Following Christ means taking a cross!
 - (e) Following Christ means confessing Christ. This is a surrender to truth: a throwing down of pretense and imagination. Love for Christ is required: you can't be on both sides.
 - (4) In the confrontation with Jesus the thoughts of the heart are revealed. Jesus is the living word of which it is said: "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12
2. The Light Side: Tidings of Great Joy, as the Angels sang. For from that death of Christ comes resurrection and life to all who believe.
- a) Angels, shepherds, wise men; the babe: Mary and Joseph.
 - b) Peace on Earth: goodwill toward men.
 - (1) Forgiveness of sins.
 - (2) Newness of life; power of God.
 - (3) Eternal life: resurrection of the dead.
 - (4) New World: Saved world: Blessings instead of cursing. He came to save the world: John 3:16.
 - (5) Jesus was "set." His throne is ordered to accomplish all this and much more: He is the Prince of Peace.
 - (6) He is "declared" to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead.

Conclusion and Applications:

1. The word of God: essential word (Christ) or the written word: the application is the same, for Christ uses the Scriptures now through His ministers, just as he spoke the word and used the Scriptures while he was on the earth.
2. The word of God does the operations that no human can do: diving the joints and marrow: the very center of the flesh: the most secret most hidden and fortified areas.
 - a. These operations reveal the secrets of the heart: so that a man cries out: I am a sinner; I need Christ. But on the other hand, it often happens that the secrets of the heart are revealed and men cry out, "Away with Him; I will not be humbled and ruled by God and His Christ, and will not have Christ to rule over me. Not the way the bible says."
 - b. The preaching of the cross brings a kind of death, a putting away of the old so that we may walk in the new; or a kind of death to Christ and His gospel if we turn away from those things that are promised us.
 - c. This also brings about a kind of death to those who preach the gospel, for to preach the Gospel is to bait the world, as the old puritan said. If I yet pleased men, Paul said, I would not be the servant of Christ.
3. See II Cor. 2:14ff. The apostles were life unto life and death unto death.
4. No, Christmas is not just about peace and joy. The curse of sin, inherited from our first Father and Mother, Adam and Eve, hangs upon the human race; The horror of death weighs us down.
5. Jesus Christ came into the world to confront the core realities of the human condition: Man as the image of God; the rebellion of sin; the horror of sin and death.
6. This would mean conflict; this would mean warfare. This would mean agony. It would mean that for him, and it would mean that for his followers. For his death would mean their death; As they followed him, they would also know the enmity of the devil, the hatred of friends and family; they would be despised by the world, misrepresented, and lied about. Just as he would give up himself for the will of his heavenly Father, so they would be called to give up themselves for the will of God.
7. But in the cross is the glory of God revealed. The joy of Christmas is not in escaping the cross or in fleeing from the conflict: No the joy of Christmas is the certainty that the battle is joined, and that triumph and victory is assured: for the Babe in the manger is none other than God himself, and in Him is assured our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Amen and Amen

May God bless you.