

The Mystery of Incarnation (6 of 9)

by Art Katz

The mystery of incarnation is the union of God and flesh, where God comes in the form of man to reveal himself to humanity, and it's essential for believers to recognize and respect the humanity of others.

Duration: 50:23

Scripture: Malachi 4:5

Topics: "Incarnation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God with boldness and authority. He highlights the significance of understanding the redemptive saga and the role of Elijah in the conclusion of God's plan. The speaker also addresses the need for believers to be willing to suffer and endure anguish in order to attain corporate life in Christ. He shares a personal experience in Brooklyn where his preaching had a profound impact on a Pentecostal church, leading the pastor's wife to question her own salvation. The speaker concludes by expressing his desire to not only explain the mystery of God but also to reflect and embody it in his own life.

Transcript

My first thought is that all that we're discussing, unprecedented as it is, has everything to do with the bringing of many sons to glory. Can they be brought to glory in the absence of these considerations? Or are these considerations the very completion, the very grace that would be needful for the attainment of sons? Not only on their own experience, but that of the patterned son before them. Is that a remarkable thing? To acquire a tested sonship performed by another, through inheritance, by faith and appropriation? Isn't that remarkable? Can it be that's why we see so little of present sonship now? Because it has not thought to tap the remarkable tested experience of him who was the patterned son himself in his humanity.

I'm excited by this. So Lord, we thank you. What considerations, what choice? Maybe it's waited till now.

We had to go through all of these preliminaries on sin and atonement and suffering to come to this capstone. So continue, my God, and fit it in so that when we sit down together in small groups, we can internalize, take in, consider the practicality, the outwork, and the reality of this dimension of consideration in which you have been silent until now. So Spurgeon says, what God has engaged to give, we must inquire after.

I guess this is like seek me, if you will seek me with all your heart, all your soul, you shall be found of me, but you shall be found of me for this missing dimension, which is critical to the attainment of your own true identity in Christ. What God has engaged to give is not automatically ours. We must inquire after, or we manifest, we show that we have neither desire nor faith.

How many of us will press into this now that we're learning that there's a remarkable legacy available to us if we will but seek and acquire it? It's like someone telling you you've inherited a fortune, but you need to get to the bank, you need to present yourself and file your claim. Oh that God the Holy Spirit would work in us with all his mighty power, filling us with all the fullness of God. The Lord will have us active in obtaining this grace.

Let us then bestow ourselves and seek him in whom are all our fresh springs, both in his humanity as well as in his divinity. That was Spurgeon's concluding thought. Then I have here later reflections that I want to trot out and see what you think of it.

Why is it that we're more willing to receive of the deity of Jesus than of his humanity? It's easier to condescend to God than it is to condescend to man, even the son of man. Is there something about man that makes us walk? Is it easier to receive of God because we recognize his unquestioned supremacy, but to receive of man raises tensions and conflict of another kind that has to do with our vanity. Our vanity dare not show itself before God, but it can show itself before man, even the son of man.

So I'm just raising this question. Is there a hang-up about man? Because I've observed in my own humanity that believers are, what's the word, cautious or standoffish. They don't want to acknowledge your humanity.

They love the gift that is in you. They love the Christ who is in you, but they have little regard for you as a man. So it shows me that there's something in us that is resistant to man that needs to be overcome or we cannot receive the benefit that comes to us through the man, Christ Jesus, and through the men that God has given as good gifts to men.

Isn't that why we have suffered the ministerial mystique where a pastor does not dare allow his humanity to show. He just comes on the platform for the golden hour as the man of faith and power, and then he retreats. You can't find him.

Because if he allows too much of his humanity to show, his credibility will suffer a loss and you'll not be able to receive his word or his message or his ministry. That's a fixed factor in our contemporary American Christianity. And that's why so many of our ministers are deficient in their humanity.

And that's why they collapse in that very area. They have not opened themselves as men and to receive what they need as men, flesh and blood, and subject to temptation as others. And they hide themselves in a kind of a vapor of man of faith and power until it's brought down in shame.

Why are we unwilling to acknowledge the gift of men to the church who gives good gifts? And he gives those gifts as men. And he's given them as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Why are we loathe to recognize that or to compliment that? There's something in us that is afraid that we're going to butter up these men and that their egos will swell if we acknowledge that they themselves are the gift, that the man is not just a passive, abstract conveyance for the operation of the gift, but the gift and the man are one thing.

That in fact an apostolic man is the thing in himself. And that just like we need to recognize humanity of Jesus or we do him a disservice, we need to recognize the humanity and the service of God or we do them and God who sent them a disservice. Why do we balk at this recognition? Is it because we have not subscribed to the mystery of incarnation? We've not seen it in Jesus.

We celebrate his deity. We think it's a magical thing. We have lost the human aspect of it.

And therefore in our own relationship as church, it's not functioning. As we've not seen it in Jesus and honored and esteemed it in him, how shall we in men that are visibly before us? And why is it that a prophet is without honor in his own home, in his own country? Elsewhere he's honored, but when he comes home and before his own people, he's not acknowledged or honored. That's a statement in scripture that I think is clearly visible.

Why is that? Others can celebrate the same prophet in Thailand and Oshkosh and Timbuktu, but when he comes home, he's just Joe Doakes and his frailty and the weaknesses are there to be observed and his credibility declines with the lack of respect for the man and his office. Does he forsake it in coming home? Did Jesus say he could not do any great things in Nazareth, in his own hometown? Because there they had the greatest difficulty in recognizing him. Is not this Joseph's son? Isn't this a piece of flesh like us? Why are you ascribing to him messiahship and lordship and being all swept up by his impressiveness? Isn't this Joseph's son? There's something stubborn in man that refused to recognize the God man and the man, God in man, but man is a cherished thing.

How much is the church losing for the want of respect and esteem for what God sends and gives in men and how many believers are themselves disrespectful of their own humanity and kick themselves because it doesn't rise to the level of their own standard and fail to esteem what they themselves are in God for the body. We need to raise the question about Jesus. Was he self-conscious about acceptance and that people would recognize and esteem him and was he wounded if they did not? What about his manhood that he did not live in some consciousness of himself, but in fact the scriptures seem to suggest he came to an increasing consciousness of his call even as he approached the cross itself, but it wasn't with him at the first.

Peter Forsythe describes Jesus as growing not only in stature and esteem, but even in his own consciousness of his own call. He was never self-conscious or needing the approval of men or else he would have been done in. So if he's the model pattern son, what is the implication for ourselves? Can we come to a place where we do not need the approval of men and yet at the same time there's something that is becoming to God in recognizing the good gifts that he has given the church in men.

It's a paradox and we have missed it and I think we suffer for the inability to acknowledge man, God in man. It's the issue of incarnation that is before us now, not in Jesus, but in his servants. Okay, so I'm just raising that question.

The crux of our problem is that an unwillingness to submit to a man, but only deity, especially of our conception of deity, that it's lofty and high and deserves our admiration. His deity, however, is inseparable from his humanity and is concealed within it. You can't celebrate the deity of Jesus independent of his manhood.

His manhood is the revelation of his deity and his deity is enhanced by his manhood. They are inseparable. There's a union, there's a remarkable synthesis, there's a dynamic between what is divine

and human that distinguishes Jesus as the son of God.

And that same dynamic ought to be working in us. We also have the divine in us, Christ in us, the hope of glory. We also have the Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of the Lord, which is the spirit of God in our humanity.

And somehow there's got to be a dynamic of the relationship between the two by which our humanity is enhanced and by which the spirit of God in us is glorified. But if you fail to reckon on the humanity, the God part is lost also in proportion. The two are inseparable and in remarkable interrelationship that the theologians could not identify or explain the mystery, they can only describe it.

But that mystery is with us as it was with him. The union of God with flesh. But if you're offended by flesh and don't like the man part, you can forget the deity part also.

And in fact, how many of the gifts that God has given to men are lost for that reason. And my most recent experience in Brooklyn that I've shared with others in the earlier part of the school, with a history with this Pentecostal church in Brooklyn, and poured out my soul in the three or four public times of speaking, were absolutely golden. So that in one of the last times the wife of the pastor has to say, Art, after hearing you today, I feel like I've never been saved.

I need to go back to square one and learn all over again. She was so remarkably moved. But the last time I spoke, and it became a critique of the church and its worship and its dullness and whatever the Lord had me to speak, they were offended and she was offended.

And though I make myself available, I spoke on Sunday, I wrote them a letter on Monday. I said, please, you have a choice whether you're going to be offended or blessed. And I want to make myself available while the memory of what I spoke is yet fresh in your mind.

I'm willing to come and share with you or the church or the elders and review what was said. And if I was in error in anything that was spoken, I wanted to recognize and receive that. Please, while the message is yet alive, talk it over with the congregation and with yourself as well.

They never did it. Never responded. I went overseas.

I came back and visited the church on a Sunday morning when they were serving communion and the text was from Ephesians that God has given good gifts to men. I came into the church like a leper. People looked away.

They would not acknowledge that I was present. The pastor who usually says, oh, Brother Katz is back. Good to see you.

We've been praying for you. We hope to hear some report. Not a word.

As if I was non-existent, a non-entity. People walked by me. And then they served communion about the fellowship.

And here's the man sitting like a lump, who's God's gift to them. So when it was over, I went up to him and I said, your failure to acknowledge my presence this morning in this service is a statement that you have not recognized or received the good gift that God has given you and the church in me. Does that sound like boasting? Is that vain? Because that man had received from me counsel and insight and depth of a

kind that in his 50 or 60 years as a Pentecostal, no one has ever dared breathe such words or had even the thought to speak it.

Corrective, deep, rich things. I watched the man cry over his kitchen table in things that the Lord identified for him through me. I was a good gift to the man and to the church.

But I said, your failure to recognize me as that gift this morning in total silence, not failure to acknowledge, in a courtesy that any human fraternal organization would have performed. The Elks and the Lions and the Rotarians would have done as much. But your failure indicates that you have not recognized nor received the gift.

And I believe that the Lord will withdraw it and he has. So why is it they couldn't humble themselves? They were so insulted and offended. Isn't the man capable of error? So in three or four times of the previous big news, blessed out of their socks and this time, maybe he missed it.

Can't you make allowance for that? Can't you confirm with him? Can't the situation be reviewed? Are you going to dismiss the entire relationship that God has given? A young brother said to me as we were driving in the car, Artie said, where do you see anywhere where the church today, the conventional church, even at its best, is open to receive apostolic and prophetic men? Because if they don't, what hope is there? I said, well, just for you to know that I'm presently pioneering such a relationship with this Pentecostal congregation. And for the first time is there's a possibility of bridging the enormous gap between conventional or prescribed Pentecostalism and a man who comes to them as one sent with apostolic or prophetic credentials. We're taking the first experimental steps and I tell you that I want to run away.

Many times I can't stand to sit there in that congregation and listen to the droll thing and the so-called worship and the lifeless messages, but I'm sticking it out and trying to be a presence because if we can affect it here, then there's hope for the church everywhere. All the more that this church in Brooklyn has the Jewish community growing right up to its doors. It never was a Jewish neighborhood.

It's becoming that and the Jews are buying up the houses right and left and coming. They even wanted to buy the church because they're looking out over this remarkable property with a vast lawn and parking lot that they would adopt to make a Jewish center, but he will not sell. But what a potential to touch the Jewish community in Brooklyn and fulfill the apostolic call to the Jew first if they have something in which they can communicate and move them to jealousy, if they can receive foundational apostolic and prophetic input and not be offended by it.

So that relationship is ruptured because of the offense of man. All the more when it's a man who's tested, who has come to you after being sent by the Lord in Asia and Africa and Europe and all over the world, somehow that the Lord can employ him to speak there and can't employ him to speak here. And even if he has missed it this once, isn't that all the more reason why that man should be taken and prayed for and prayed with and counseled and helped because we know that he's a gift to the church and the world, but here he has missed it.

So instead of dismissing him, let's consider him, but instead as if he's nonexistent, not even a moment's recognition. The same thing with the brothers in Israel where 13 of the leaders send me a letter that I'm a man in error and even a false prophet in our view in Israel. A man whom they used to say when art comes to Jerusalem, he brings the word of the Lord with him invariably.

So what happened now? Did he miss it this once? So what do you do? You dismiss him? Why don't you invite him at your expense and sit down with him and show him where he's in error, straighten him out because he's, he's proven to be such a consistent gift of God over the years, but he's failed here. Is that the reason for the dismissal? So the church, poor, we need to pray in their inability to extend the kind of grace, as I've said, that you would expect Rotarians and Elks to give in human fraternal organizations. And the church with, with the aid of the spirit cannot even begin to match.

Shame, but there's something in man in which they walk. But the Lord himself, what did he receive in his earthly tenure? What recognition, what rejection in his teeth, even in his suffering on the cross, come down and we will believe you to the last moment, the most antagonistic and vile rejection while he's, while a dumb centurion looking on the same man says, truly, this is the son of God. His Jewish kinsmen are upbraiding and mocking him in the same suffering.

This is what the Lord suffered. And when we will assimilate and take in some measure of that moral anguish, we will be less prone to be offended if we are ignored. It's a provision of what he has passed through for which benefit we can receive through faith and his human experience.

You think it's an accident that in the genealogy of Jesus, there's a prostitute and who else is there? Rahab and one or two other questionable, and even a Gentile woman, what's her name? Ruth. I mean, God has seen to it that even the genealogy of Jesus, there's a red thread of shame and question and questionableness that goes into his very natural descent. Well, we've had a red strand running through Ben Israel.

There's been scandal here, marriage and family and failure. And is that accidental or is that necessary? Is God dealing with the pride of man? And that if they want to be offended, they can find room. I've noticed this for you candidates to be prophets.

Be aware that there's not a message that you'll give in which there'll be some lapse, some illustration, some accent, some word that was improvident that probably you should not have employed because surely there'll be people out there to seize on that very thing and to be offended on that one basis by a word and to dismiss both you and the message. That's intrinsic as if God is saying, I defy you to see myself and my word through this earthen vessel. And you're going to find fault with the vessel and therefore dismiss the word.

This is God's lament over the condition of the church, the condition of Israel. And we need to overcome it. So that's why God gives us the mystery of incarnation.

Except for the necessity of a man that would suffer and die to retain our atonement, the theologians raised the question, if that were not necessary, if God could have provided an atonement for sin without the necessity for the human sacrifice of Jesus, would he still have had reason to bring Jesus as a son of man? Would there have been sufficient reason in itself independent of atonement for God and deity to come in the form of flesh as man? And my answer would be yes, every reason. Because left to ourselves, we would celebrate deity, not as it in fact is, but as we would think it to be in a way that is self-serving. We would love lofty and ethereal thoughts of a distant God, which is what Jews today prefer.

But because he came as man, we have a glimpse of God in a way that we would not otherwise have seen him. And it's a true glimpse. Jesus revealed in his humanity as man, what God in fact is.

And we need that revelation. And that revelation needs to continue to go out now. But through what means? Through the humanity that we ourselves are.

God, Christ in us, the hope of glory. Is the mystery of incarnation yet being continued? Only in those for whom it is a conscious and desired thing. And desire to see that fulfillment and see themselves in that mystery.

And I'll tell you this, and Mark has heard this many times from me, nothing offends Christians more than I should say, the words that I'm speaking, not my words, but the words that the Father has given me. This message is not my own. And in fact, it's not who is the speaker.

The mood and the accent and the voice is the Lord. I'm the vessel through which deity is expressing. And it offends believers to the hell.

Who do you think you are? As if this is a statement of presumption rather than a statement of humility. They would much rather hear you say, this is my message. I got this last night.

I've worked in the concordance. I looked up the scriptures and here it is. This is my message, my understanding, my interpretation.

They would prefer that. Why? Because men want to serve God from their own unaided humanity. They want to succeed humanly without the mystery of deity incarnate in humanity.

And when you suggest that you're operating on another basis, in fact, the very same basis by which Jesus operated, that appears to them to be unspeakable presumption and arrogance of pride. And because if you are true in what you're saying, that your words are not your own or the speaking is not your own, then what is the implication for them? And that means that what they're about in their humanity is fraudulent and a cheapy and a religious cop-out. That there's a higher way to serve and that there's a flesh and blood man who's actually demonstrating that and so you're without excuse.

Got the idea? They want men to come down to their level and succeed on their level because that's the level in which they hope to succeed. But when you say, God Christ in me, it raises uncomfortable questions that they don't want to consider and they are quick to dismiss. So this has been my experience.

Nothing more offends Christians than that suggestion or that assertion. And when Jesus said, you see me, you see the Father, he was just as offensive to his Jewish kinsmen as we are to our Christian brethren by making references of a comparable kind. We're exploring something of the mystery of incarnation and the resistance to the mystery even in the church itself.

And will the church be the church until it breaks that propensity and humbles itself and recognizes the remarkable mystery that it is in God's own wisdom and will, set forth first through his son and now intending to set it forth through many sons being brought to the same glory. And what does Paul boast in? Never in himself. He counts all things as dung that distinguished him as a man.

His Hebrew ancestry, his rabbinical training, his intellect, all the things in which he could have boasted and by which he might have attained great success, he counts as dung that he might win Christ. So when he says for me to live as Christ, the man's not woofing. He means it and it's evident.

What letters, what epistles, what insight, what courage, what depth, the cry of Paul in Romans 9 that he would wish himself a curse for his brethren's sake is not some little cheapy piece of sentimentality. It's a deep anguish of soul that so mirrors and reflects God's own attitude toward this ancient people. And at the end of Romans 11, that great outburst of praise, oh the depth of the riches, this is a man beside himself.

In fact, he said, I am beside myself for your sake and for his sake. Paul is the exemplification of all that we're speaking about. And so if it was possible for Paul, why not us? Where are the Pauls of our time? Where are the God-men and the men of God who can say for me to live as Christ? Why have we fallen short of that? Why can't we appropriate that full grace that was operative in him? So why is it that community is so difficult and rejected and shunned? You know why? Because it's made up of men.

If it was only made up of demigods and little angels with halos, it'd be a snap. But it's made up with men. And what drags, what terrible problems and difficulties and personalities and stubbornness and immaturity and selfishness and all those things that you don't see if you're only meeting on Sunday.

Because Sunday we can keep our nice religious face. But when you're with the same people on Monday and thereafter, then you begin to see and feel the drag, the weight, the difficulty. And it's an agony, it's a suffering.

Community is a suffering. But it's also the prospect of glory. So again, we're offended by men as they in fact are in their present condition and we're unwilling to suffer them in their present immaturity.

And we have idealistic notions of a community with that is peopled exclusively by men like ourselves. Then it would be a snap. But when it has to do with the reality of men and their present condition on a daily basis, that is struggle.

That is suffering and we're unwilling to bear it. So we need to sum up and say that the community in corporate life is the key. We're shunning it for the same reason.

We've not made our peace with man. Man as he in fact is. And even as we'd like to be idealistic and think of God as we think him to be, we don't want to consider man as he in fact is.

And yet these realities are foundational and we have to bear them if the glory of God is to be revealed and the bringing of many sons to glory because there'll not be one son being brought to glory in isolation from other sons. Only in the interaction, only in the struggle, only in the offenses, only in the difficulties, only in the misunderstandings. I can tell you that dear saints, nothing I have ever suffered from my Jewish kinsmen touches in the slightest way the greater indignities and the greater hurts that I've had to bear in the church and in community as against unbelieving Jews.

It's nothing to be kicked in the shins or spit at by unbelieving Jews, but to be told by someone in your own midst for whom you've given a sacrifice that you are yourself a traitor to the gospel and to bear and hear those insults or one with whom you've gone into the house of God and broken bread together and then makes a final tour of all the places which he knows because he has obtained those connections through the ministry and in each place he's insinuating and leaving the hint behind that something is wrong with Ben Israel and cats is not all that he's pumped up to be. Doing that with the connections that he's obtained from the fellowship, the community itself. So we've seen betrayal.

We've seen remarkable offense and there's not a word for it. It's an anguish, but we would be naive to think that the corporate life could be attained without that suffering. This is men.

This is vain men. This is ambitious men. That one guy who left made sure that he went to every household to tell the people why he's leaving because his wife heard from God that judgment is going to fall on Ben Israel.

We're still waiting for that judgment. It has not yet come. But he went and told to every household hoping to draw them out and that they would follow him out and that itself would bring the judgment.

He was going to affect it himself. And when he saw me the last time he said, Tats, the only difference between you and me is your early morning communion time. I didn't even answer him.

I'm sure there are many more differences than that. But his language and his mentality, the only difference between you and me, what are we in competition? He thinks himself a prophet of world class, but I don't know that he's ever left Bemidji yet. But the presumption, the pride, the arrogance of a man who has traveled with me in the world to come to a place like that and try to lead Ben Israel out so that I would be stuck with the judgment.

Listen guys, I can multiply. I'm not appealing for your sympathy. I'm just telling you community is struggle.

It's a reality. It's something to be toughed out. It requires grace and mercy.

And you run to the communion table because there you are replenished in the strength and life of God who knows exactly what it is through which you are passing and can alone supply the enablement. Well what about Jesus? They wanted to make him king and the next day they're ready to crucify him. Listen guys, we need to be realistic about man, but that's not a reason to despise man because man is made in God's image, but that image is marred and it needs to be rectified through the forsaking of sin, the cleansing and purging of his blood and the admission of his deity into man that we might be men.

It takes God to be a man. It's a mystery, but we need to embrace it because it's at the heart of the faith and not to shun it because it requires man. And this is why Jews have rejected the gospel.

That was God? A criminal on the cross outside the camp? Are you kidding? But the humanity of Jesus is the stable or cave amenable to God and offensive to man and therefore chosen. Humanity itself is in the mystery of God what the stable was for the birth of Jesus and the cave was for David. God requires somehow offensive externalities in order to bring forth his glory.

David would not have been David without a cave. Jesus would not have been Jesus without a stable. And God will not be God without the stable that man is in his humanity.

It's a remarkable contradiction of choosing the thing that is foolish and weak. But God chooses it and God provides it. And where does it say? What is man that God should desire him? What is man whose breath is in his own nostrils? Isn't it a paradox? God who gives us the uniqueness of man and the same breath.

What is man that he should acknowledge him? But God does acknowledge him. And if God will acknowledge man, what ought we to do? How do we dare despise what God acknowledges? And more than acknowledges, he honors. And how does he honor? He is willing to invest his deity into those human vehicles, into those human vessels.

That we might say, for me to live as Christ. Think of God's condescension. And however flaky and inadequate we are in our humanity, God does not shy or shun away from investing his deity in those very

earthen vessels.

And if he will do that and have that kind of respect for man, what ought we to have? We're more, what's the word, proud than God. He doesn't hesitate. So Spurgeon himself illustrates all that we've been saying.

And the seasoned tempered maturity he obtained almost from the first as a teenage convert. There's no other way in my opinion to understand what Spurgeon is. And maybe we can say the same thing about many of the great godly men.

That they were exhibiting things before they could be explained in terms of their own experience and their own chronology. Something they had gained early from their conversion. Gave them a knowledge of God and a sense of God.

A sense of eternity as we read this morning from the selections in Spurgeon. That is not to be explained in a natural way. They've acquired something.

And the heck of it is that that acquisition is available to all of us. Who believe for it, desire it, and have the faith to obtain it. Lord I want the full measure that you desire that I should receive and take into myself of that reality through which you yourself have passed.

I cannot hope to begin to emulate or experience it for myself. But I want to receive as a tempering in my soul that through which you have passed and that you are willing to communicate as part of our legacy and inheritance in your humanity as well as your deity. We would be a different church.

So the entire person of Jesus is but as one gem. This is Spurgeon now writing. He is altogether complete not only in his several parts but as a gracious all glorious whole.

You cannot separate the deity from the man and the man from the deity. He is the thing in himself as Paul himself was. Oh Jesus thy power, thy grace, thy justice, thy tenderness, thy truth, thy majesty, thine immutability make up such a man or rather such a god man as neither heaven nor earth has seen elsewhere.

Thy infancy, well I'll just quit the thys, your infancy, your eternity, your sufferings, your triumphs, your death, your immortality are all woven in one gorgeous tapestry without seam or rent. Remember that they couldn't divide Jesus' garment, it was without seam. They could only gamble over it because the garment was the statement of the man.

He's indivisible. You can't know where deity ends and man begins. It's one together in his person in exactly the same way that God intends it for us.

All woven in one gorgeous tapestry. Therefore to condemn the human part and only celebrate the deity part is to miss it. Now you mirror of all perfection, each spice is fragrant but the compound is divine of humanity and deity.

O sacred symmetry, O rare connection of many perfects to make one perfection, this is me. Jesus brought up to heaven at the throne not only his wounds but his perfected humanity bodily in which and by which they were obtained. It is that Christ, *italics*, that is made incarnate in us for he had obtained in his humanity that which was the distinctive of his deity, humility, servanthood, love.

It is that Christ that God desires to be formed in us and not some dubious construction to which we append the name Jesus. It is that Christ which is the hope of glory and too great an achievement to be lost with his ascension and poured out with his spirit. This is the answer for every nation because by it is that righteousness by which prosperity is obtained being made the righteousness of God in him.

This was my message to Africa, righteousness exalts a nation but which righteousness? The righteousness of God in him. To African believers who can assimilate and take in the righteousness that comes with the whole man. This is the reality that must be set forth before God's people not just for their admiration but for their appropriation.

It is that Jesus alone that saves to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. In all this he is the patterned son bringing many sons to glory. Not a bad statement.

I would even say that the statement is so good that it is beyond my own inspiration. That the very statement is itself the outworking of the mystery. Christ in me is inspiring a summation of what Spurgeon is saying in a way that, and this was all together, this is not second, third draft of something.

This is it, this is the first statement spontaneously just typing it up sitting at the computer. So what am I saying? That the very mystery is working even in the contemplation of what Spurgeon is putting before the reader and the way that the reader is commenting is itself the outworking of that life. Believest thou this? And now I'll really embarrass myself by telling you my prayer early this morning and not just once but several times.

That Lord, that you not only set forth the great subject, the neglected subject of incarnation of God in the flesh before this people, but that in this servant that you have set before them they would even glimpse the measure of the reality. What think ye of that? Is that vanity? Is that vain boast? Or is this the kind of attitude that is pleasing to the Lord? This is what he wants, that's why he's given this sacrifice. This is the reality by which sons are brought to glory and which they can say to some measure, if you see me you see the Lord.

If you hear me you're hearing him. This is not me, this is not my talent, this is not my little distinctive. This is deity in humanity with a Brooklyn accent.

What else did you expect? That's the flesh, that's the frame, that's the earthen thing by which the deity is being expressed. But the source of the energy and the inspiration, the expression is him. I believe that, pray for me, or I am of all men most to be pitied.

I want to be not just the expositor of the mystery, I want to be the reflection and the statement of it. You can come and touch and feel and see that there's a possibility. If God can do this through a Jewish piece of flesh pushing 80, what's the prospect for yourself? It's the prospect that he intends and we are living beneath that glory.

We're wanting to succeed in our unaided humanity, maybe a little help, but we don't want that union by which he receives all the glory and we are nothing. Got the idea? What do you think I did on the break? I took a walk and I'm talking over to the Lord. I said, God forbid Lord, that I who am so privileged to set forth for the first time considerations of this kind should in any way be boastful or take to myself any kind of credit or that what I'm sharing would in any way be tinged or corrupted by any vain notion on my part because I recognize the danger and that the Lord must be all in all.

This is the mystery of saints and we've not been this way hit too far and we will miss it a little bit. There'll be stumblings and fallings. We will lapse, but we've got to walk in this and grow in this, cherishing our humanity as we cherish the deity in our humanity that makes our humanity humanity.

We're not men without God. He would know no man after the flesh, but as I shared with someone yesterday, check the Greek word there. There are two Greek words for flesh.

One is sarx, S-A-R-X, that I believe actually refers to the literal body and the other word flesh, like the flesh is at enmity with the spirit, is a word that is suggestive of our soul-ish life. He would know no man after their soul life, but he would not despise their humanity, but he would recognize the man in his totality, not just by the outward and the external, but by the thing that makes the whole thing whole, where you can't separate the deity from the humanity. Maybe that's what the world is waiting for, when God will have set prophets in the earth, where you cannot say where the man ends and where God begins.

They'll have the same audacity and authority as Elijah, who says it shall not rain nor dew, but according to my word. Who the heck does he think he is, that he can command the elements and hold them back for three and a half years and bring a global famine? He's only a piece of dust himself, fed by ravens, and yet he speaks it with audacity and complete conviction. And what happens? There's no rain nor dew for three and a half years.

So where does Elijah end and where does God begin? And what kind of a history did Elijah have, that he would end and that God could begin? Because the same man, after his greatest feat, of challenging Israel about his apostasy, runs away because he hears that Jezebel is threatening his life, and hides in the wilderness. Take my life, I'm not better than my father's. He vacillates, he's up one day, down the next, showing his humanity.

And yet in that humanity, God brought an entire nation to repentance. The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God.

And that Elijah must come again before the Lord, and when he comes, he'll come corporately. He'll be a corporate son, and you'll not be able to tell where his humanity ends and where deity begins. He'll speak with the authority of God and the audacity of God, and yet he'll tremble for his own frailty after his greatest accomplishment.

How do you like them apples? Will you be part of that? Let's pray. Lord, you're not just giving us little classroom stuff. This is the nit and grit of the whole economy of God.

This is the whole redemptive saga. This is the way this thing has got to conclude. Elijah must come first.

But what manner of man is he that speaks with the authority of God in absolute boldness and uncompromising insistence, and nature obeys him? Lord, what are you saying? We are so removed. We're so caught up in our own little petty world and life, and we think ministry is doing this and that, and a guy calls up, and how do I reprove a brother? Tell me how. Step one.

Step two. Lord, the mystery, Lord. If Elijah comes, and he must come, he'll come in this mystery, or he'll not come at all.

He'll be a union of man and God, so inseparable you can't tell where the one begins and the other ends. And he will not have attained that in a moment. It's not magic.

He will have obtained it through process, which you did not show us. You're discreet. You keep this undisclosed.

We don't know how Elijah was brought up in the school of prophets to be that man, but we desire, my God, to see that fulfillment and to be part in it. So come, Lord. May we receive the full benefit that is already wrought in Christ and his humanity, that we might take it into ourselves, Lord.

His humility, his suffering, his anguish, his soul crises, the things through which he's passed, and the totality of human experience can be ours to temper our souls and to bring dimensions, my God, that fulfill the glory for which you wait in sons. Help us, Lord. Give us the faith to appropriate our total legacy given us in your great Son who took upon himself flesh that we should have this prospect.

And we thank you, Lord. Turn this mystery into reality, we pray, Lord, in these last days for this dying world and decrepit church. And we thank you and give you praise.

In Yeshua's name.

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