

The Appearance of Christ in Human Nature - Part 1

by John Gill

Christ's appearance in human nature brought light and joy to a world that was previously in darkness, and introduced the everlasting gospel.

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, 2 Samuel 23:4, Isaiah 27:4, Malachi 4:2, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:78, John 8:12, Acts 8:8, Colossians 1:23, Revelation 22:16

Topics: "The Light of Christ", "Salvation and Redemption"

Description

John Gill preaches about the appearance of Christ in human nature, comparing it to the light of the morning when the sun rises, emphasizing that His coming dispels darkness and brings joy and hope to humanity. He explains that Christ's arrival was foretold and serves as a beacon of salvation, illuminating the path for lost sinners and fulfilling prophecies that reveal His nature and mission. Gill highlights that this light is not only for the Jewish people but also for the Gentiles, signifying the universal reach of Christ's gospel. The sermon underscores the righteousness of Christ's rule and the peace that comes with His presence, marking the end of the stormy dispensation of the law. Ultimately, Gill points to the transformative power of Christ as the Sun of righteousness, bringing healing and light to all who believe.

Transcript

THE APPEARANCE OF
CHRIST IN HUMAN NATURE,
AND THE DISCOVERIES OF HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE,
COMPARABLE TO THE
LIGHT OF THE MORNING
2 SAMUEL 23:4

And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

In a former discourse we considered the preceding verse, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Now of this same Ruler, it is here said, He shall be as the light of the morning when the

sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. "He shall be;" that is, He that ruleth over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." As the favor of an earthly prince is like a cloud of latter rain, and dew upon the grass, as the wise man says (Prov.16:15; 19:12): so his government, being mild and gentle, he is like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, pleasant and acceptable like the rising sun, bright and glorious; like a morning without clouds, that forebodes no ill, distress, affliction or adversity to his subjects, but all the reverse.

This is still more true as it is applied to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Saints, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom ruleth all; the administration of whose government is just and righteous. He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He is, and shall be, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, as a morning without clouds. There are various metaphors applied to Christ similar to this; as, when he is said to be the bright and morning Star (Rev. 22:16): the phosphorus, the forerunner or introducer of the morning light.

The day spring from on high that hath visited us (Luke 1:78); that brings on that bright and glorious day of the gospel dispensation. He is the day Star that arises in the hearts of his people; and that Sun of righteousness that arises upon them with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2). So that the expressions of his grace, and the nature of his government may be fitly signified by the beautiful metaphor and figure here made use of. And I. This may be applied unto him as coming into the world by the assumption of human nature.

II. To the discoveries he makes of himself to his people, in and after conversion. III. To his government as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God: especially with regard unto his rule and government as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign. Note: Roman Numerals II and III (see above) are part of Sermon V. I. This may have respect to his coming into the world; his appearance in human nature, where he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds.

It was foretold of him, that his goings forth should be prepared as the morning (Hosea 6:3): which is to be understood, not of his going forth of old, from everlasting, in the counsel and covenant of grace and peace; but his coming forth in time, his appearance in human nature, to work out the redemption and salvation of his people. The first hint of the Messiah, as a Saviour for lost sinful men, was as the dawn of morning light. The sin of Adam brought a darkness upon him and the whole world.

The first man was created with a great deal of light and knowledge. He was made after the image, and in the likeness of God, and which greatly consisted in knowledge, not merely of things natural, civil, and moral, but things divine. In the knowledge of God, his nature and divine perfections, will, and worship; of which Adam had a large share. But not content therewith, and being ambitious to know good and evil, he lost, in a great measure, the light and knowledge he had. Darkness overspread him; his understanding immediately became darkened; and so is the understanding of all men that descend from him by ordinary generation.

Their understandings are darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. This darkness, this blindness, is universal: there are none free from it. God's elect, while in a state of nature, are so. Dark with respect to their knowledge of spiritual things: yea, they are darkness itself till they are made light in the Lord. This is the case of all men universally. Jews and Gentiles are all under the

power of sin, and liable to the consequences of it, and the elect among the rest; for there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeks after God.

The way of peace, righteousness, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, they know not: and in such circumstances as these Adam found himself. As soon as he had sinned against God, he was immediately deprived of his gracious presence: enjoyed no more communion and fellowship with him in the way he did before: an emblem of which was, his being driven out of the garden. So he drove out the man (Gen. 3:24); signifying that sin had separated between God and him. There was an eclipse, as it were, between God and him: in consequence of which, it was a night of black darkness.

He found himself in a most wretched state and condition: a most uncomfortable frame of soul: in the greatest anguish and distress: trembling at the thoughts of coming before that God, against whom he had sinned; and therefore attempted to hide himself from his presence amongst the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). He knew not what would be the issue and consequence of things. He could see no way of escaping the wrath of God. He had no hint of a Savior. He was as much without the knowledge of one, or any hope of salvation by one, as the blindest heathen that ever lived upon the face of the earth.

This was the case of the first man. Now all at once, behold, an hint was given of the Messiah: a discovery of a Savior for lost, sinful man, in that threatening to Satan, the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen.3:15). This was the first dawn of morning light to lost sinful man: and there was, at this time, a ray of light darted into Adam's mind, which he never was sensible or knew any thing at all of, in a state of innocence, amidst all the light and knowledge he then had.

It was indeed a glorious ray of light which darted into his mind, upon this single hint of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head. From hence, he might and did conclude, that he and Eve should not die, since there was a seed, a son to spring from them, and one that should bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the works of him who had been the ruin of them. O! how it must gladden his heart! what cheerfulness must be in his countenance, which it is not possible for us to describe.

And this, like the light of the morning, was of an increasing nature. As the morning light spreads upon the tops of the mountains as soon as it appears, and gradually diffuses itself throughout the horizon; so this light, this morning light, which sprung up in this first promise of grace, diffused itself greatly: partly by means of sacrifices, which God appointed to be offered up from that time, and partly by prophecies, which were delivered out at certain times, respecting the glorious person that should appear in our world as the Savior of lost men.

This light., this morning light of divine grace spread itself or was spread by means of sacrifices, which were immediately ordered to be offered up. Adam was soon taught the way and method of offering sacrifices as an atonement for sin; as typical of the sacrifice of the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head. By these means he was more and more enlightened into the way, and nature of the method of his salvation and redemption: and still more when the Lord God was pleased to make, of the skins of slain beasts, coats for him and Eve, and clothed them which were emblems of the robe of righteousness, and the garment of salvation, to be wrought out by the woman's seed, the Savior of men.

And Adam taught his posterity the way and method of offering sacrifices; for we may observe that his son Abel, by faith in the promised Savior, by faith in his atoning sacrifice for sin, offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4). Hence it is, with reference to these early sacrifices, and the institution and practice of them, that Christ is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev.13:8). By

these, and succeeding sacrifices, under the Levitical dispensation, which were numerous, this morning light, respecting a Savior, salvation by him, and acceptance through his sacrifice, was spread more and more.

This morning light of divine grace, shining through a Mediator and Savior, was likewise spread more and more by means of prophecy. Various and numerous were the prophecies concerning Christ the woman's seed; for he was spoken of from this time forward, by the mouth of all God's holy prophets, from the beginning of the world: they all had respect to him. He was the sum and substance of their prophecies; for so the disciples and followers of our Lord said, we have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write (John 1:45).

Moses wrote of him, and all the prophets did so; the Spirit of Christ in them signified what he should be, and what he should do; testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Every prophecy relating to him, spread more and more light concerning him. The light that came therewith was like the morning light, a spreading and increasing one. By and through these prophecies it was known from whom he should particularly descend. The first hint is only that he should be the seed of the woman; and it would have been enough to have been born of any woman, to have completed that prophecy.

But by degrees this was opened more and more; that he was to be born, not in a common or ordinary way, that he was to be born of a virgin, and his name called Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23); and that he was to spring from Abraham the father of the faithful, in whose seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed (Gen. 28:14). Another prophecy gives us farther light into this matter, and informs us, he was to spring from Judah; from whom the sceptre was not to depart, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh, our Lord Jesus Christ, should come (Gen. 49:10).

Other prophecies inform us more particularly that he was to spring from David's family, and to be a branch or stem out of the root of Jesse: others give us an account where he should be born, and when he should appear in the world. One prophecy fixes the very place of his birth; Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel (Micah 5:2): and others point out the exact time of his coming; that he should come before the rule, sceptre or government was to depart from the Jews, before the second temple was destroyed--for that he should come into, and give it a greater glory.

Daniel fixes the exact time from the going forth of such a commandment; that there should be so many weeks, that is, so many years till the coming of the Messiah. The first promise of the Messiah, only gives a hint of the work he should do, which was to bruise the serpent's head: but other prophecies more clearly declare, that he was to do the whole will and work of God; obtain salvation for his people; finish transgression; make an end of sin; and bring in an everlasting righteousness.

That he was to be a Prophet like unto Moses; and a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec--that he was to be King over God's holy hill of Sion, and the sceptre of his kingdom a righteousness. Other prophecies also shew what he was to do in obedience to the will of God; and what he was to suffer in the room and stead of his people. That he was to be brought to the dust, and numbered amongst the transgressors: that he was to die and be buried, and lay in the grave, though not so long as to see corruption: that he should rise again, ascend up on high, sit down at the right hand of God, and there reign till all enemies were put under his feet.

These, with many others, brought on such light and knowledge concerning a Saviour and Redeemer, as plainly made it appear that this light, like the morning-light, was a growing, spreading, and increasing one. This, like that also, was attended with joy and cheerfulness, as the morning light is. The first hint of a Messiah, a Savior and Redeemer of lost man, was attended with joy and cheerfulness to Adam, as we have seen already; so every fresh prophecy, and after revelation of the will of God, concerning this matter, gave joy and pleasure to those to whom the discovery was made; as it did unto Abraham, of whom it is said, that Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad.

So every fresh discovery made by any of the prophets unto the church of God, in the several periods of time, were all attended with joy and cheerfulness. Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, speaking concerning Christ, says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9). As the morning light is a pledge of the rising sun, a sure pledge of it, whenever we see day break, or the morning light appear, we are sure that the sun will rise, and that it will not be long ere it is risen; so that light which broke forth and spread gradually under the former dispensation, was an earnest and pledge of Christ the Sun of righteousness arising in due time, with healing in his wings.

As yet, indeed, he was not risen; there was only the morning light spreading, but the Sun was not risen. There were still the shadows of the ceremonial law remaining. That law is by the apostle described, as a shadow of good things to come, which had not the very image of the things (Heb. 10:1). All those representations, under the legal dispensation, were shadowy ones. Christ is represented as the body and substance of them: the apostle, speaking of some of them in particular, adds, which were a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ (Col. 2:17).

Those continued under the legal dispensation, notwithstanding the morning light had broke forth; Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether (Sol. Song 2:17). That law which is comparable to the moon, was indeed the lesser light, and the light which rules by night. This seems to be intended in Revelation 12:1, where the church is represented as having the moon under her feet; the moon of the ceremonial law: and it may very fitly be signified by the moon, since that consisted among other things, in the observance of new moons.

Its festivals, and ordinances were regulated by the moon, and like that, were changeable; and because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, vanished away. There was in this season stars of light. As Gospel ministers are sometimes called (Rev. 1:20); so the prophets, teachers, and instructors under the Old Testament dispensation, may very properly be signified thereby, who held forth the word of God, which was a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths. But all this plainly intimated that the Sun was not risen: there was the moon of the ceremonial law, and stars which gave light; yet there was a comparative darkness under that dispensation, though the morning light did appear: a comparative darkness in the Jewish world and state.

The children of Israel were not able to look to the end of that which was to be abolished. The way into the holiest of all was not so manifest as now, until the vail was rent asunder; and as to the Gentile world, that was full of darkness and ignorance. A time of ignorance that God winked at, took no notice of, but left them to walk in the vanity of their minds: and these are said to walk in darkness, and sit in the shadow of death. When our Lord actually appeared in our flesh, came into the world, and appeared in our nature; then he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds.

He came in like the light of the morning, which dispelled darkness, and introduced light: dispelled darkness in the Jewish state, and scattered the shadows of the ceremonial law. Dispelled darkness from the Gentile world when his gospel came amongst them; for he came to be a light unto the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel. So to remove and banish that night, of which the apostle speaks, when he says, the night is far spent; the day is at hand (Rom. 13:12).

By his coming into our world, the glorious light of the everlasting gospel was introduced. He came a Light. John his forerunner was not that light; but Christ was that light, and is called the light of the world (John 8:12); both of the Jewish and Gentile world. The light of the everlasting gospel which came by him, appeared very bright even unto all men; which teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.

This made that day, that glorious and illustrious day, which the prophets so much spoke of, the gospel day, concerning which, the apostle thus expresses himself, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. The coming of our Lord was like the light of the morning, sudden and swift: according to what was foretold of him that he should suddenly come into his temple (Mal. 3:1); or unawares, as he did. There were some indeed who were waiting for the consolation of Israel; as good old Simeon, and Anna the prophetess: but there were but few of this kind.

Christ came suddenly into the world and into his temple; at unawares to the greatest part of mankind. Like the light of the morning he came swiftly: he was, as the church desired he would be, like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether (Sol. Song 2:17). As soon as the time was up, which was fixed between him and his divine Father, God sent him; and he came readily. He was made of a woman; made under the law (Gal. 6:4). As the morning light is attended with pleasure, joy and cheerfulness to all kind of creatures; so the coming of our Lord was attended with joy, spiritual joy, to those who knew any thing of him, and that salvation which he came to effect.

The Angels who brought the first news of it say, that they brought good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people (Luke 2:10): and the first disciples and followers of our Lord, who had the first intimation of his being come, with what joy did they express themselves! In raptures, they said, we have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Christ the anointed one, the Son of God. So, wherever the gospel came with power, there was joy attended it; witness Samaria.

We are told, there was joy in that City (Acts 8:8). Thus it was wherever Christ was preached, or any notice was given of his being come, and of salvation being wrought out by him. The light which came by him was, like the morning light, spreading and increasing. He and his disciples went over all the land of Judea; and the gospel was published throughout the several parts thereof. It indeed was at one time limited and confined thereunto. The disciples were ordered to preach only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not go into the way of the Gentiles: but after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, they were commanded to go into all nations, teaching and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

They did so; their words went out through all the earth, and their sound unto the end of the world. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was about forty years after the death of Christ, the gospel was preached to all nations: to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23), as the apostle expresses it. He himself was a great instrument in this affair; for he went about, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, preaching the gospel of Christ. Once more; like the light of the morning he came irresistibly.

As there is no such thing as preventing the light of the morning, when it once breaks forth, nothing in nature can possibly do it; so there was no preventing that gospel light which came by Christ. The word of the Lord had a free course; it ran and was glorified. Though there were all the methods taken to prevent its spread that could be devised among the Jews, they could not do it; the word of the Lord grew and multiplied. Nor could it be shut out from the Gentile world: though emperors, and governors of provinces and cities, were almost all, to a Man, against it, (those spiritual wickednesses in high places;) yet the apostles triumphed in Christ, and made manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place; which was a means of reducing thousands of souls to the obedience of Christ.

The coming of Christ is said to be not only like the light of the morning, but like the light of the morning when the sun riseth. He is styled the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). He, whom John saw visionally, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth; for he himself is a glorious Sun. A luminous body, the sun: the greater light, made to rule by day. An emblem of Christ, who is the light of the world: from whom all light comes. The light of Nature; for he is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World (John 1:9).

The light of grace in conversion, is from him; and all after light also. Men are darkness itself until they are made light in the Lord: and the light of glory, that perfect, happy state the saints shall be brought into, and enjoy for evermore, it is all from Him. That glorious city is represented as standing in no need of the light of the sun, or of the moon, because the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev.21:23). The Sun is a glorious body. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (1 Cor. 15:41); but the glory of the sun is greatest: that is of superior glory.

A fit emblem of Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: in whom shines the glory of all the divine perfections. Any one that has a spiritual sight of things, can behold the glory of Christ as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He, having a spiritual sight, by means of the light of the everlasting gospel, does behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ's person, and the glory of his offices; and is changed into the same image from glory to glory.

As the sun is a lucid body, clear, and to appearance free from spots; so it is expressive of the spotless purity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the Saints, being washed in his blood and through his righteousness imputed, are said to be, all fair and without spot; much more may He be said to be so: fairer than the sons of Adam. If They are said to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: much more is He so. And if this light, which comes from the sun, in a natural sense, is what is most delightful to behold; much more must that light which comes from Christ, and shines from him.

Truly the light is sweet (says the wise man) and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun (Eccl. 11:7); O! how much sweeter is spiritual light from Christ; and how much sweeter must it be to behold him, the Sun of righteousness, arising upon us with healing under his wings! He coming, and grace and truth by him, caused a greater and stronger light under the gospel dispensation, than was under the legal one, when it was only as the dawn of the morning. Perhaps to this difference of states, respect may be had in Solomon's Song (7:10), where the church is said to be, fair as the moon; so she was under the legal dispensation: but it is added, clear as the sun; so she is under the gospel dispensation, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

From him, the Sun of righteousness, come the rays of light and love: and, as from the natural sun heat is derived, so likewise, from Christ the Sun of righteousness, heat as well as light proceeds. His coming inspired his people, his followers, with love to him, and zeal for him; and their hearts burned within them while he opened the Scriptures of truth unto them. From hence also springs all their spiritual fruitfulness. We read of precious fruits brought forth by the sun (Deut. 33:14); all the fruits of grace and righteousness are owing to Christ the Sun of righteousness.

Now when he appeared, he was as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; for all clouds disappeared when he arose; all the shadows of the ceremonial law: there was a disannulling of this commandment through the unprofitableness thereof. These shadows disappeared, when he the body and substance came.--A morning without clouds. There was not so much as a shadow of the ceremonial law, much less any of the storm or tempest of the moral law: that which is expressed by blackness and darkness and tempest, (Heb. 12:19); no, these were all over; the stormy dispensation is at an end; the rain is over and gone.

No more the thunders of mount Sinai; all the curses of that law are fallen upon the surety and Savior; he has borne them; he has been made, himself, a curse for his people, that he might redeem them from the curse of the law. So that now, the gospel dispensation is a morning without clouds; no storm, no tempest, no indication of any. A morning without any clouds of divine wrath and displeasure; here is nothing but peace proclaimed upon earth and good will towards men. The love and kindness of God our Savior towards man appears.

Peace is made by the blood of Jesus; reconciliation is made for iniquity; a Sacrifice offered up of a sweet smelling savor to God: a righteousness wrought out that is well pleasing to God; because by it the law is magnified and made honorable. The language of the gospel is, fury is not in me (Isa. 27:4); no, Christ appearing in our nature, doing the will and work of his God and ours, is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. I should now have proceeded to have shown you how it is applicable to his manifestation of himself to his people, in and after conversion; which is like the rising of the sun, dispels darkness and ignorance from their minds; and is of a spreading nature, like the light of the morning; and sometimes so clear that it is like the light of the morning when the sun is up; when there is a clear sky, and a serene heaven; a morning without clouds.

And how particularly it may be applied to Christ as a Ruler among men, and his rule and government of his spiritual kingdom, which ere long will be as the light of the morning when the sun is risen, a morning without clouds; and especially in his personal reign.--But I must leave these things, with what follows in this verse, to another opportunity as God shall give it.

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