

The Word Became flesh.' John 1:1-34.

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the profound implications of Christ's incarnation, highlighting His divine nature, the gift of grace, and the believer's relationship with God as sons through faith in Him.

Scripture: John 1:1

Topics: "Grace and Truth", "Incarnation of Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound nature of Jesus Christ as both divine and human in his sermon 'The Word Became Flesh.' He explains that Christ, the eternal Word, was with God and was God, coming into the world to bring light and life specifically to humanity. Darby highlights the significance of Christ's incarnation, His role as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and the transformative relationship believers have as sons of God through faith in Him. He contrasts the law, which reveals sin, with the grace and truth that Jesus embodies, inviting all to trust in Him for salvation and reconciliation with God. Ultimately, Darby calls for believers to live in a way that reflects Christ's love and righteousness in their daily lives.

Transcript

Helps in Things concerning Himself 1 (1891) p. 265 - 276.

What characterises the Gospel of John, is the bringing forward, at the beginning, of the personal glory of the Lord Jesus; and then, at the end, the gift of the Spirit, the Comforter, whom He promised to send when gone.

In this part there are three distinct subjects. In the first place we have the divine nature of the Lord - what He is in Himself. Secondly, what He is in incarnation - the Word made flesh, as come into this world: and then, in the third place, you have the work that He does in this world. The first part is a little abstract. "In the beginning was the Word." What gives its value to all is, that He was God. It is the divine nature of the Lord, though still looking at Christ as the One who is revealed to us. This chapter begins before Genesis, for the third verse is the beginning of Genesis. When everything else began, He was there already: He never had a beginning: He made everything: all that had beginning of existence He was there to create. Nothing more distinctly marks the eternity of the Word than that He was there before everything. Then you get His personality, "The Word was with God;" and thirdly, not only was with God, but "was God;" and lest we should have any confusion about it (ver. 2), He always was God. The eternity of His existence, the distinctness of His nature, and divinity of His Person - all just in that one word. When we are brought into

the same glory as He is, His Person is always maintained safely - personally distinct. When Moses and Elias were in the same glory as Christ, the Father's voice comes out, and says, "This is my beloved Son." If you take Stephen, heaven is opened to him just the same - he is a son of God too; but Christ was not looking up into heaven at some object that was to make Him like it. Stephen was looking up to become like something - Christ was an object to heaven. Having stated His divine Person, we get Him in His connection with us. (Ver. 4.) "The life was the light of men." He was not the light of angels, but specifically and definitely the light of men. The delight of Christ being with the sons of men, He becomes a man. It was the Son Himself come down here - the power of divine life walking through this world, and specially for man, as He became a man. This One in whom life was, was the light of men in a special way. Here He is speaking of what He is.

The thoughts and counsels of God were just this, to have us conformed to the image of His Son, before ever the world was. Of course it is not so yet, but "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We shall be perfectly like Him in glory. "And he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." The thought of God is this blessed thought, that Christ having taken us up, He is never satisfied until He sees the fruit of the travail of His soul, in having us in the glory perfectly like and with Himself. We have got into the relationship, though we have not all the fruits of it - we are sons, though we have not yet a bit of the inheritance.

The light was perfectly adapted to man, but as regards this unbelieving world, "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Now you cannot have light shining in darkness, for it is light and no darkness; but then it was God in the world, and they would not own Him. That is where I get what man is. They who found out this, "to them gave he authority to become the sons of God;" no one could be that before. It is not that we have power, but the moment the Son comes into this world, this blessed relationship of son is brought out and revealed. He says this is what He has given us. We are brought into the same place as Christ. He has, in His own Person on the earth, shown the place of a Son - a Man, too, who would not go out of the place of a servant - there He showed the perfect pattern of our place upon earth, and He has given us the title to take this place as sons. The blessed Lord is in Himself the expression and pattern of this place. We are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus; we have the consciousness of it, and are really born too. "The darkness comprehended it not" - but as many as received Him, to them He gave the title to take their place as sons. Just think what a place that is, when the world is passing away; that He who was from the beginning, comes in to show us light and life. Here is a Man who is in this place as Son (not like the law, which says you ought to do this and that), and who can bring us into the same place.

When the poor leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean," He put forth His hand and touched him. He says: "I will not put you out of the camp; I will come to where all the defilement is." He touched him as man, His divine authority sends away the leprosy.

Then it goes on, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In this latter clause we get riot merely what He was in His nature, but the fact that the Word was made flesh. It is put in contrast with "The law was given by Moses;" "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," not only were there. We get this wonderful truth, that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was here as really a man as any of us, only sinless.

The law did not tell man what God was, or what man was; but it came and told man what he ought to be. That was all the law did. It was a perfect rule of life as it came. What was the God they were to love with all

their heart? You might take Him as the Israelites did, the One who brought them out of the land of Egypt; but there was no other revelation of God except terror. If you are going to have righteousness, law detects your sin and says, you have done it - opens your eyes. When I come to what I get here, it is altogether opposite. It is God come as a man into the world of sinners. He comes veiled in humiliation. He so comes into the world of sinners in grace, that instead of saying, "You must behave yourself rightly," He comes Himself, not to judge, but to save. If I take the law, God never came out, and man could not get in. Now, what I get in the Person of Christ is that God did come out, and man is gone in. When I know Christ I know man has gone into the holiest of all in virtue of Christ's work. Grace comes abounding over all the sin, and truth comes too; not telling us what we ought to be, but what we are; and man does not like that. When I come and tell a man that truth came by Jesus Christ, he does not like it, for truth says, man is lost already. There was a Man down here after God's own heart - perfect holiness and perfect love, and when He came, every one was the opposite. No men are like Him. You never saw selfishness or self-seeking in Christ. I see perfect grace come out to poor sinners because they could not go in; and, on the other hand, perfect truth told about them and about Him too. It was no sending out a message to them, but He came to them. Here He was, walking up and down in this ruined world, seeking the confidence of man.

I believe the first thing that ruined Eve was that she lost confidence in God and trusted the devil. Then she goes her own way, and the lusts come in - self-will and sin. Christ comes into the world that we might be like Him, and more than that, God comes in and walks through this world in perfect holiness, that men might have confidence in Him. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" - not judging it. For example: the woman that was a sinner, in Luke vii., and the woman of Samaria. If they were wretched and miserable, afraid to trust any one, here is a heart that they could trust, when they could trust no other, and that was the heart of God. He says to poor wretched creatures, "You may trust Me."

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." People say, "was in the bosom of the Father;" but the fact is, He never left it in His divine nature. "Is in the bosom of the Father;" - that is, that He who is the centre and sole object of the Father's delight, comes, that we may understand what a Father's delight in a Son is, I say, Where can I learn what God is - what His thoughts and feelings are? There in the One who is the perfect concentration of all God's thoughts. The Son tells what the Father is to Him. It is the only way of knowing it. Therefore, He says, in John 17, "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Then, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." He brings us into it: not as the world gives, for it gives away only what it can spare. The way that Christ gives is bringing us into what He enjoys Himself. "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you." "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." "I have given unto them the words that thou gavest me;" and then, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." He makes us sons, and is Himself the expression and model of what a son is. He declares what the Father is to Him, and brings us into the enjoyment of it. He has revealed God in grace to sinners, and the Father in love to sons. He tells His Father's name, as He is enjoying it then. He says He is not going to leave us to ourselves; He leads us now in our weakness by His Spirit. How can I know what God is? If you are a poor sinner, the way you can know what He is, is by looking at Christ, seeing how He received poor sinners. Then, on the other hand, having the title of sons, what is He to a son? I say, you look at Christ, the only begotten Son. He will make you know what a father is to a son who is thus loved.

The true character of repentance is not like Judas going and hanging himself. Love having come in, with the abhorrence of sin, there is perfect confidence in Christ, like the poor woman putting her tears upon Him. The conscience must be reached, to know God. If grace comes, truth comes as well, and the conscience is reached. Not one without the other; but there must be confidence. People say, "If I perish I will perish at the foot of the cross!" Is that what you call confidence? There must be the light of God coming into the conscience, and then confidence is produced. There is never full confidence though, till we come to the "best robe," and then there is no more about us.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." There are the two parts of Christ's work (the full result will never be, till the new heavens and new earth); "Behold the Lamb of God," the Person and work. God provides Himself with a Lamb, God's Lamb, for us no doubt. He who knows what righteousness is, and consequently what sin is, He provides a Lamb and a Victim for Himself. "The Lamb of God" - He came to be made sin, the One without spot before God. It is not merely that my sins are put away, but I get One, who having been made sin, has perfectly glorified God about it all. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him shall straightway glorify him." He does not wait for the glory of the kingdom. Sin has been dealt with once and for ever. It is the end of the world as regards man's history. "Now is the judgment of this world," God's work was done in it. The very wickedness that rejected Christ was the very thing that brought about man's salvation: it was the means for saving even the people who did it! The only part we had in the work that saves us was our sins. Man's history was over; then God's Lamb comes in - was made sin: and the whole righteousness of God, and His hatred of sin, comes out against One perfectly able to bear it, and all God's love to the poor sinner. There I get the work of the blessed Lamb of God.

I had a world of innocence; I have a world of sin, but a sacrifice; then I get a world of righteousness, that never can change. My rest is upon the work on the cross. "Behold the Lamb of God" runs on to the new heavens and earth. It is perpetual, and never can change. The work of His Lamb is always there; in fact there is no time with Him. "He will convince the world of sin," not wicked people in it. The Spirit of God comes down and says from God, "Where is my Son?" And the answer is, "We spat in his face and crucified him." There I have the work of Christ. The second thing is that He baptises with the Holy Ghost; and there I have the present consciousness and effect of what He has done, though as yet I have not all the fruits of it. It is a ministry of righteousness, because Christ is my righteousness in the presence of God: and a ministry of grace, because the Comforter is come down. He is the earnest of the inheritance, not the earnest of love, for the love of God is shed abroad in my heart.

Duties always flow from a relationship we are already in. Are you a child of God? Then conduct yourself as a child of God. We have the distinct source of this - we have the Object - we have the bread of God come down from heaven. The law never gave an object: the gospel does; it is Christ, and as I look at Him, I am changed into the same image.

And now is that where our hearts are? Has your eye been so occupied with that blessed One, that He is your Object? And then I add, is your conscience all clear? He appears in the presence of God for those who believe, but He has not got your sins up there. Have you the consciousness of that, setting to your seal that God is true? If it be so, are your hearts able to say with Paul - not "I have attained," but "This one thing I do?" Is that what fills your heart? We shall be sure to find out our weakness; but "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Is Christ the One that feeds your heart and that leads your heart?

God has come down that we might know the whole story for ourselves in Christ. Love coming to us, and righteousness going to God. What we have to seek in everything is to glorify God - a thousand circumstances in life, but only one Object. The question is, whether we are living Christ in the ordinary circumstances of life - in honest toil and labour, in the calling in which we are (though if we cannot abide in the calling with God, we must leave it). Is it the one object of our lives to show forth Christ, to manifest Him in our mortal bodies, to realise more of Him by the power of the Spirit of God - is that where we are? And with thankfulness of heart that He became that Lamb of God, and has given us the Spirit to dwell in us.

The Lord give us to know the grace that has sought us, the love that has bought us, and the glory that awaits us!

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