

The Babe of Bethlehem All the Fullness Bodily

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the profound significance of Jesus as the Wonderful Babe of Bethlehem, emphasizing His divine attributes and the mystery of the incarnation.

Duration: 31:54

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 40:12, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:1, John 3:16, Romans 8:1, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Fullness Of Godhead"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the greatness and incomprehensibility of God. He encourages the audience to contemplate the Lord Jesus and marvel at his person and ways. The speaker highlights that God is the creator and sustainer of all things, including the stars, which he calls by name. The sermon also emphasizes the faithfulness of God and his ability to save sinners through belief in Jesus Christ. The speaker concludes by reflecting on the hand of the Lord Jesus, which can measure all the waters of the world in its hollow, despite its small size. The sermon references passages from the Bible, including Isaiah 40:12.

Transcript

A very short Bible reading today, but a very familiar one. Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 6. Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, that his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. All this week, just that part of the verse has been going through my mind, and his name will be called Wonderful.

And we're just going to stop there today and think about that. His name shall be called Wonderful. The name in the Bible stands for the person, and so he shall be called Wonderful.

One of the names of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is wonderful. He's wonderful in all his ways and in all his works.

But what's wonderful to me today is to think of that baby in the manger of Bethlehem, and realize that in that precious little body, are we safe in saying less than ten pounds, that in that precious little body dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? And yet that's what the Bible teaches. That that little baby was not only perfect humanity, but absolute deity. Now please do not ask me how God, who fills the universe, can condense himself into the body of a baby if he did.

No wonder his name is called Wonderful. Marvelous to me to think that that little baby had all the attributes of God. Everything that is true of God the Father is true of him as well.

But that little baby was not God minus something, but God plus something. That something was humanity. Something happened in Bethlehem that had never happened in the history of the world before God became incarnate.

Now mind you, in the Old Testament, God had appeared in human form to people before. But that was not incarnation. That was an appearance of God.

That in Bethlehem's manger, God himself, in a human body, was there laying on a bed of straw. To think about the Lord Jesus, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, is the greatest occupation of the human mind. There's nothing more wonderful that you can think about.

And how grateful we should be to the Lord that he's given us minds to contemplate such a marvelous subject. To look upon the person of the Lord Jesus and realize that he's the creator. And that he sustains all things by the word of his power.

That he's the God of providence, that he provides for all the needs of his creatures. And while he does all of that, he holds the planets in their courses, the stars in their courses. And he calls every one of them by name.

He not only numbers them, but he calls every one of them by name. That's wonderful. Because, as Sir James Jean said, it is likely that there are as many stars in the universe as there are grains of sand on all the seashores of the world.

But our blessed Lord Jesus calls them all by name. And in the same psalm where it says that, the very next words are, he comforts the brokenhearted. He comforts the brokenhearted.

So great, so high, so near, so nigh. What a wonderful God he is. When you think of the human mind, it's a shame that it's use is so often prostituted to unworthy purposes, isn't it? When men, women, young men, young women could be thinking about the Lord.

And about the marvels of his person and the perfection of his ways. It's too bad that we ever have to descend to lower levels. And yet as I stand and gaze on that babe in Bethlehem, I have to face the fact that I can never fully comprehend him.

That's true of the thought of God. Although we can meditate on the Lord, although we can think of the Lord, we can never fully understand God. And that's a good thing.

If we could understand God, if we could understand the Lord Jesus Christ, our minds would be greater than him. And so it's wonderful that our God is an inscrutable God in that sense. Novation, in a famous treaty, wrote this.

He said, In all our meditations upon the qualities of the attributes and content of God, we pass beyond our powers of fit conception, nor can human eloquence put forth a power commensurate with his greatness. In other words, our minds can't think that far, and our words can't express his greatness. At the contemplation and utterance of his majesty, all eloquence is rightly dumb.

All mental effort is feeble. For God is greater than mind itself. His greatness cannot be conceived.

Nay, if we could conceive of his greatness, he would be less than the human mind, which could form the conception. He's greater than all language, and no statement can express him. Indeed, if any statement could express him, he would be less than human speech, which could by such statement comprehend and gather up all that he is.

Up to a certain point, of course, we can have experience of him without language, but no man can express in words all that he is in himself. So no wonder the psalmist said, The Lord is great and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is uncertain. And it boggles the human mind.

Our minds press against the outside of our heads to take it all in, but there's no way in which we can. There's no way in which we can ever fully understand the union of deity and humanity in one person. That's what took place in the person of the Lord Jesus.

You have deity and humanity combined in one person. In other words, Mary is holding him in her arms. Mary gave birth to him.

And yet when she holds him in her arms, she's looking into the face of her creator. This marvelous person, the Lord Jesus Christ, has all knowledge. He has perfect knowledge of everything.

And yet coming into the world to live as a man among men, it says he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. How could that be? My mind isn't great enough to understand that, but I'm glad it isn't. I'm glad he's greater than the human mind.

God cannot die, but the Lord Jesus died, and the Lord Jesus is God. It's a contradiction. It's something we receive by faith without being able to understand it.

Just think of the Lord's greatness not only as creator and sustainer and provider, but as well as redeemer. Just think of God becoming a man so that as man he could die for humankind. And think of him going to that cross on Calvary and bearing in that body the sins of all the world, making atonement for all the sins that were ever committed, that are being committed, that ever will be committed, paying a sufficient price for it all.

And he didn't have to do it. He could have stayed in heaven where his bliss, his joy was undisturbed, and he would still have been true. He held the highest place above, adored by all the sons of flame.

Yet such his self-denying love he laid aside his crown and came to seek the lost. And at the cost of heavenly rank and earthly things, he sought me. Blessed be his name.

I think of the hand of the Lord Jesus. Let's think of the hand of the Lord Jesus as that babe in Bethlehem. And then turn to Isaiah chapter 40.

Isaiah chapter 40. And just read verse 12 with me. Isaiah 40, 12.

It says, Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, measured heaven with a span, and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Just think of it. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand.

I think of that little babe in Bethlehem. And that tiny little hand, perfectly formed, of course. Yet that's the same hand that can measure all the waters of all the world in its hollow.

And I think of that little hand, and it doesn't have very much of a span, does it? The span, of course, is from the tip of my little finger to the tip of the thumb. And usually the baby's hand would be quite curled. But supposing he did, for a moment, stretch out his hand straight.

A baby's hand is not very much. But listen to what it says. Who has measured heaven with a span.

That's the hand of God. Heaven's not incalculable to us. There's just a span of the hand to him.

The greatness of God. I think of the fact that that child coming into this world lived the only perfect life that's ever been lived. And it's absolutely holy.

Absolutely holy. It's interesting that of all the adjectives that are used to describe God in the scriptures, I think holy is the one that's most used. Holy, holy, holy.

The Lord God Almighty. And it's marvelous to think of that life so perfect. So morally perfect.

Never sinned. Never had a wrong thought. Never had an impure motive.

Like I do all the time. The only perfect life ever lived on this earth. He knew no sin.

He did no sin. There was no sin in him. I'm sure you've often tried to picture that home in your mind as I have.

It must have been strange for Mary to have a child like that in the home and have other children with a fallen human nature. Must have been strange for her. And yet the Bible just handles it so calmly, without any superlatives.

Just seems to take it all in stride. He could say the prince of this world comes and finds nothing in me. There was nothing in the Lord Jesus that Satan could really work on and find a beachhead.

You say, but the Lord Jesus could be tempted. He could be tempted from without. He couldn't be tempted from within.

That's what differentiates him from you and from me. We can be tempted from without, but we can be tempted from within also. He couldn't.

And the temptation, in the temptation we see the sinless one. I tell you, it causes me to worship when I think of it. Did you ever stop to think that nobody has ever tried to write the life of a perfect person? Have you ever read anything? I mean, apart from the Bible, have you ever read any novel or any book at all in which the author tried to write the life of a person you could find no fault in him at all? I don't think you'll find any such book.

And that's why Renan, the French skeptic once said, it would take a Christ to invent a Christ. It would take a perfect person to write the life of a perfect person. So foreign to every one of us.

But isn't it marvelous that we have four Gospels in our Bible? They certainly don't give the complete life of the Lord Jesus, but they give everything that the Spirit of God wanted us to know, and he's absolutely perfect. He's not only great and he's not only holy, but he's the sovereign Lord of the universe. Sovereign Lord of the universe.

What does that mean? Well, it means he's overall. It means he does absolutely as he pleases, according to the pleasure of his will. But it also, of course, means that what he pleases is always what is best.

What is fair. What is honest. What is righteous.

And what is just. Sovereignty wouldn't do for anyone but for a perfect person. It would be a terrible thing if I were sovereign.

That's something that really couldn't be trusted to a fallen human being. Perfectly suitable in his hands. And you see him sovereign over all the world, over all the universe, working out his own purposes.

In his sovereignty, he decided to make man and to give man a free will. And you know what happened. Man chose in that will to sin.

But God is not defeated. He's still as sovereign as ever. And so throughout the course of human history, you see God in his great power and in his sovereignty, allowing man to sin if he wants to.

And then overruling that sin for his own glory, for the eventual good of the person if he desires it, and for the blessing of others as well. You see him in his sovereignty going to the cross of Calvary, the one who controls the spheres, going to the cross of Calvary and allowing himself to be nailed to a gibbet of wood to deal with the sins of mankind. When I read my Bible, I realize that no man ever wrote this book.

I mean, God used human instruments to put the words down. But no man could have ever conjured up such a plan of redemption as God has set forth in this wonderful book. God is sovereign.

That means for me, the Lord Jesus is the potter. I'm the clay. And the potter works and molds that clay.

And the clay must yield to the pressure of his loving, skillful hand. The greatest glory of the creature, like ourselves, the greatest glory of the creature is subjection to the Lord, to allow him to have his way unhindered in our lives. And not only so, but when I think of that little one back there in Bethlehem, I realize that he is the righteous one.

Sometimes we use these words and we don't have a clear conception in our minds as to what is meant by them. But when I think of righteous, I just take the first part of the word right. To be righteous means he always does.

Let me give you an illustration. One day they brought to the Lord Jesus a woman who was taken in the act of adultery. They said, here she is, here she is.

And the law says that she should be stoned to death. Now, if the Lord Jesus had said, well, we're going to make an exception in this case, he wouldn't have been righteous. If he had said, I know, but there are certain good things about her, and I'm going to overlook the sin this time, he wouldn't have been righteous.

If he had said anything that would seem to have condoned the sin, he wouldn't have been righteous. Because the righteous law of God said, as the Lord Jesus upheld the law, he said, that's right, let him that is without sin among you pass. You see, he upheld the law.

And they all left quickly. Probably because they were guilty of the same sin. The Lord Jesus magnified the law and made it glorious.

He didn't make an exception. He acted absolutely righteously in the matter that upheld the law of God. The Lord Jesus is unchangeable.

This is a wonderful attribute for us to think about in a day where everything seems to change and we ourselves change. We change, he changes not. His love can never die.

His truth is not ours, the resting place. We are his truth. This means that as to his person, as to his attributes, as to his qualities, there's no change at all.

His methods change. As you see him working down through the years, you see him testing man under various schemes, but he himself never changes. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

That means, of course, that the promises that he made to us in the word of God, they're still valid today. That brings us to the next attribute of God, which is his faithfulness. His promises are true.

His faithfulness, the surest thing in the universe, is the word. If we could only get people to realize that. They somehow think that believing God is taking a leap in the dark.

They somehow think there's some risk that you can do it and then be disappointed. Instead of realizing that absolutely the surest thing in the word of God, the surest thing in the universe is the word of God. And if he says that a sinner can be saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, if he says you can know you're saved when you repent of your sins and trust the Savior, there's no doubt.

If he says that when we come to him in faith, our sins are forgiven, the penalty of sin has been paid, and God will never bring up those sins again and again. If he says that those who trust the Savior will spend eternity in heaven, he's faithful. And he'll never stop until he sees every one of them safely home in heaven.

If you think of the faithfulness of the Lord in the seasons of the year, in day and in night, in springtime, in harvest, we take it for granted, don't we? We seldom lift our voices in thanksgiving to him. But he is the ever faithful one. And we honor God when we come and believe his word.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And all of that and more is true of the Lord Jesus Christ, his name. In fact, he's greater than all his attributes that we could talk about here today.

It's just impossible to find words that exhaust the subject. No vocabulary will ever be invented. And throughout all eternity, the person of the Lord Jesus will be beyond our powers of complete comprehension.

How good at this Christmas time, instead of being occupied with tinsel and toys, to let our minds be occupied with this most wonderful of all subjects, the perfection of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall we pray? And after we pray, I'm just going to ask you to sing acapella, O Come, Let Us Adore Him. Father, we bow in worship today when we think of the marvel of the incarnation, God taking upon himself human flesh, so that he could go to a criminal's cross and die for the sins of the world.

We think of the greatness of his person. We think of his moral character, perfect in every work, and we bow in adoration today. Thank you for his faithful promise for all who have come to him in simple trusting faith.

We pray for any who have kept him outside the door all these years. They might have the wisdom to open the door and let him in. We ask it in his worthy name.

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