

THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST

1 John 3:5

Intro: I am continually amazed at how much truth is revealed in some of the shortest statements in Scripture. But we really shouldn't be surprised at this because the Bible is the Word of God, and God can accomplish so much in very few words. Our text tonight is an illustration of this fact. In 1 John 3:5 where the Apostle John was speaking of our Lord, we have in the first statement, His incarnation as well as the life that our Lord lived upon earth -- "And ye know that he was manifested." Next we have His mission -- "to take away our sins." And lastly we have His Deity -- "and in him is no sin." The first two statements give us our Lord's humiliation; the last gives us His glory. I invite you to consider this precious little verse as again we approach the season when we as believers remember the birth of our Lord. I used to say years ago that the world remembers the birth of our Lord. But with a few exceptions I am afraid that our Lord has been forgotten in all of the commercialism of the season, and in the emphasis that is placed upon Santa Claus. Businesses are too busy comparing their income with last year that they never take the time to reflect on how their lives compare with the One Whose birthday we commemorate at this time. But how different it is when we understand Who it was Who came, and why He came, and what qualified Him to be able to do when He indeed did. These are the truths that I want to consider with you tonight

Let us think, first, about:

I. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST: "And we know that he was manifested."

For those who may not be familiar with the word incarnation, the word speaks of the time when the Son of God came to earth as a man. The Son of God became a human being when He was born as a human baby with the virgin Mary as His mother.

But we do not usually speak of a birth as a manifestation. Lucille and I have received hundreds of birth announcements during the time that we have been married, and we have sent out four of our own, but I don't remember a single one on which the parents spoke of their birth of their child as a manifestation. That is not the ordinary way that we speak of the birth of our children. And so this word "manifested" ought to catch our attention immediately. Obviously John was speaking of a very special

birth. In fact, one commentator on the Greek text said that the idea of a manifestation suggests “a previous being.” That is, this person who “was manifested” had an existence before becoming a man; His birth was a new existence which He had not had before. Although the Apostle John did not mention our Lord specifically until we get down to verse 8, yet we know he was speaking of Christ because no one else fits this description. And this is why we do not speak of the birth of our children as a manifestation. We know that our children did not have a previous existence. But Jesus Christ did. Note what we are told in verse 8 of this chapter: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

So the Son of God is the One we are talking about. He came from Heaven, was born of the virgin Mary, and His birth and all of His life were a manifestation of the Person He was. Nothing He ever said, nothing He ever did, would contradict that His coming to earth was a manifestation. Instead, His birth, His life, His teaching, His miracles -- everything proved that He was a manifestation.

Now a manifestation has to be a revelation of something. It has to prove something. It has to make something very clear to all who have the eyes to see Him and the ears to hear Him. In other words, the fact that He was a manifestation indicates that there is something very unique about the Person to whom John was referring.

In John’s Gospel He spoke of the uniqueness of the Son of God when after he said in chapter 1, verse 1, that the Word was in the beginning with God, and that He was God, he added in John 1:18 that this Person whose Name was “the Word...became flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Even our Lord’s enemies believed that He was a man, but what they failed to realize was that He was God in human flesh.

In our text the Apostle John said, “**And we know that he was manifested.**” By the “we” he meant, “You know it, and I know it.” This was not knowledge possessed only by the Apostles, but it was basic to the faith of all of the Lord’s people. You will see no special and urgent need to believe in Him if you do not believe this. A person who denies this cannot be a true Christian in spite of whatever else they might say about our Lord. This is a vital part of our faith. We believe that Jesus Christ is God manifested in human flesh. It is not enough to say that He was a great humanitarian Who went about doing good. It is not enough to say

that He was a great Teacher. He was the greatest of all teachers, but He was the greatest of all impostors if He were not the Son of God because it was the Son of God whom He claimed to be. The Apostle John wrote almost 100 years after Christ was born. As far as we know he was the only living Apostle. But after all of the years He had lived since the Lord returned to heaven, there was not the slightest doubt in his mind but that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God Who became Man, and Who showed Himself to be the Son of God all through His life here on earth. For Him this would include His death and His resurrection.

I trust that all of us can say this as well: “We know.” Not we think, not that we hope, but that “we know”!

Secondly, let us consider:

II. THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING.

You and I will have to admit that for the Son of God to go through all of the humiliation that He experienced in becoming a man, there must have been an immensely important reason for His coming. It must have been that He came to do something that no one else was capable of doing. And if you think that, you are exactly right! He came “to take away our sins.”

This was the message that John the Baptist had preached. Cf. John 1:29. And this is what David said about “our sins” in Psa. 103:12: “As far as the east is...” That is a distance which cannot be measured because there is no way to depict how far the east is from the west. It is a distance so great that the idea is we will never see them again. The statement shows God’s complete abhorrence and hostility toward sin. Cf. Westcott, p. 103.

John was speaking of “our sins,” i.e., the sins of all believers, and of all who will ever believe on Christ. And notice that “sins” is plural, indicating that no a single sin of any believer has been left behind.

This is a work which no man could possibly do for himself. We all are under the judgment of God. Our record stands against us. The wages of sin is death. By nature we are the children of wrath, facing eternal judgment because we belong to the human race, alienated and condemned by God because of our sins. Jesus Christ came to take away our sins. He came to remove them. He came to pay our penalty, to take our place, so that we might be justified instead of being condemned. This is the reason

for the birth of Christ. He came to be a Savior, and He is the only One Who is capable of assuming such a responsibility. But the question is: How could Jesus Christ qualify for such a work. This takes us to the third and last statement of our text.

III. OUR LORD'S QUALIFICATION TO BE OUR SAVIOR.

We have it in the words, "and in him is no sin."

If Jesus Christ had been an illegitimate child, or even the child of Joseph and Mary after they had been married, He would have been just as guilty and condemned before God as we are. He could not have been our Savior; He would have needed a Savior Himself. This is the reason it is so important to understand that He was the Son of God manifested in human flesh -- that He was both God and man, and that His birth as a real baby in no way changed His Deity.

One major reason we have more space in our Bibles devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ than to any other person from Adam to the New Heaven and the New Earth, is to convince us that Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man. This is what John wanted us to know according to this text. All of Scripture which speaks of Christ fully supports His Deity as well as His humanity.

The Apostle Peter, who was very close to our Lord, has told us in 1 Pet. 2:22 that our Lord "did no sin." This statement of Peter's is according to many commentators drawn from Isa. 53:9,

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Peter also said in 1 Pet. 1:19 that our Lord was "as a lamb without blemish and without spot." In 2 Cor. 5:21 Paul declared his belief in the sinlessness of our Lord. The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 4, verse 15, that our Lord was "without sin." In Heb. 7:26 we are told that our Lord was "separate from sinners." And in Heb. 9:14 we are told that our Lord offered Himself "without spot to God," that is, without any sin at all upon Him. Our Lord Himself challenged His enemies with the question, "Which of you convinceth [convicteth} me of sin" (John 8:46).

But the Apostle John gives us what is probably the greatest of all statements concerning our Lord and sin when he said, speaking of our Lord,

“And in him is no sin.” This speaks of “the eternal character of the Redeemer” (Westcott, p. 103). He did not have a sin nature. He could not sin even though He was a man because He was God. And notice the present tense of the verb here. John did not say that there was no sin in Him. That might have meant that somehow He had been contaminated by our sins when He offered Himself for us. Our sins were laid upon Him. He bore them in His body when He went to the Cross. He died as our Substitute. But He was without sin before He died, and He is still without sin. And He will forever be what He has been for all eternity. Look as hard as you might, subject Him to the merciless scrutiny of His enemies, and, if they are honest, they will have to come to the same conclusion: “In him is no sin.”

Concl: Do you see why it was important that our Lord come, that He be born of the virgin Mary, live a perfect life, die a sacrificial death, and be raised again from the dead? It was because no other person who had ever been born could qualify for such a work. We all would have to die for our own sins; He, being “without sin” because “in him is no sin,” was the only One Who could qualify as our Redeemer -- He was the only One Whose sacrifice could satisfy God, and meet our every need.

In closing let me relate this to the verses at the beginning of this chapter -- verses 1 through 3. Some day we shall be like Him. Then it can be said of us that there is no sin in us. We are delivered from sin’s penalty by the death of Christ. Day by day we are delivered from sin’s power so that we don’t have to sin. But when we finally see the Lord we will be so completely delivered from sin itself that God Himself will be able to say of us, “In them **is** no sin.”

How thankful we should be that we know who Jesus is, and that we know why He came, and that we also know that He is the only One Who can save us. Let us be praying that as this Christmas season, we may be able to pass this good news along to those who cannot join us when we say, as the Apostle John said, “**And we know...**”