

## Harmony of Arrival

When one considers the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the flesh, the common consideration amongst believers is the material poverty that Our Lord stepped into on His entering our world. I, along with countless others writers, poets, preachers and hymn composers have waxed lyrical on the nature of Jesus' incarnation, drawing much fruit from the humble commencement materially of His entering into the flesh and highlighting the meekness and humility of Our Saviour.

Yet on reading the book 'The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah' by Alfred Edersheim, and the beginning of his study on the birth of Jesus in the flesh, something struck me like a thunderbolt. Alfred Edersheim made the following observation:

"If we think of Jesus as the Messiah from heaven, the surroundings of outward poverty, so far from detracting, seem most congruous to His divine character." This erudite observation initially caused me to pause and consider such a point made. It's words challenged how I truly felt about what constitutes riches and poverty and how though I had long held a Christian viewpoint on this crucial matter, I could never really articulate it beyond a surface level understanding. Yet before I expound on my deep lack of wisdom in regards to this most heavenly of truths, I want to examine Mr Edersheim's assertion that Our Lord's humble entry in the world through the flesh of man was not at odds with His divine character but was instead in complete harmony. To do this we must begin with the woman chosen to carry, deliver and care for the child Jesus and the man whose task it was to shelter and provide for this woman and her young one, namely Mary and Joseph.

Mary was selected by God according to the wisdom of His eternal counsel and providence held deep within His wondrous heart. Yet there are indicators of the character of Mary that give us a great insight of this remarkable young woman. In Luke 1, we find a beautiful song of praise offered up to God by the young Mary. This comes when she visits her cousin Elizabeth, whose own song of praise on the leaping of the one who would be John The Baptist in her womb at the sound of the one who was carrying the Messiah, fills her with the joy of the Holy Spirit and prompts her to sing loud praises to God. Mary happily acknowledges her "low estate", thus demonstrating a joyful acceptance of her position in this world for in her humility she is led by the grace of God to see that He "scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." (Luke 1:48-53)

Mary is a wonderfully humble soul, a heart full of joyful thanksgiving for the glory of God and the simplicity of gratitude that such a mighty God as the God of Israel has condescended to know such a lowly sinner such as her. What riches of heart and soul are being shone by the grace of God through the words and life of Mary. Such humility is key to those so greatly blessed by God as He will not share His glory with anyone who believes themselves worthy, yet He is abundant in grace and lifts up those who see themselves as for what they truly are, sinners before a thrice holy God.

Humility is absolutely vital for any believer. In humility we see the true might, power, grace, mercy and love of God and therefore humility is a heavenly attribute and loved by God for it exalts Him to His perfect fullness. In this joyous gift, the humble heart is lifted up from it's daily concerns and fears and is given the eyes of heaven so that they may see how intricately they are cared for by this same almighty God. It fosters a ever deepening communion that offers a shimmering reflection of the eternal perfection of communion held within the Trinity itself. Thus the deep love of God held within Mary's heart was a wonderful reflection, if but dimly, of the love Christ had known for all eternity. This is part of the congruity of His entrance into the world in the flesh and His eternal divine character and nature. The Father event His only begotten Son by His providential will into a family rich in the humility that He always possessed throughout all eternity.

Another interesting trait of Mary is demonstrated when we at the arrival and worship of the shepherds at the birth of Christ that cold night in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. In Luke 2:19 we read that at this incredible sight of shepherds worshipping the infant before her, Mary kept all these things in her heart and pondered them. Mary's thoughtfulness and deep meditation on all that she had witnessed flies in the face of modern Charismatic liberalism that dictates that emotion and sensation are the keys to substantive faith and communion with God. Such

experience driven souls dismiss the deep reverence of study and consideration of the will and Word of God, instead favouring a shallow and unsatisfying diet of theologically lightweight music and mediocre life coaching sessions that wouldn't be amiss in any secular counselling session. Yet as Mary's actions show, when deep consideration is utilised on the out-workings of God's will, the heart but cannot help but be moved to reverential wonder but stills the anxious heart and stirs unrivalled wonder in the very soul. Such awe before God's awesomeness and majesty, rich with a yearning to understand and know Him evermore is but the consistent glory given unto Christ Jesus by His heavenly host since the dawn of Creation. Ever since the Book of Genesis and the line of Seth walked with God, Jesus Christ has been the worthy subject of utter awe and reverence by all who but ponder on His wondrous ways and attributes.

Furthermore such a drive to ponder the providential moving of God's hand powerfully dispels any sense of deprivation and poverty that may have been circling in Mary's mind at the time. Consider the materially meagre delivery of the infant Lord Jesus, and though humble of heart, Mary was still very much a sinner just as you and I and so could've easily been stung with the sadness of not being able to provide a suitable environment for the birth of a child. I know the pain of this feeling and it is a deep wound that pulls open each time it begins to heal but a touch. Yet by the grace of God, the depth of thought combined with the awe struck reverence of Mary directs her possibly saddened heart to healing in the presence of Christ Jesus even when but a babe in the flesh. Again there is a wonderful congruence of existence in the incarnation of Christ Jesus in the flesh that He had always known, the delight and comfort that trusting servants and indeed Creation itself had found within His wondrous presence. Where else but Christ Jesus can a heart find such fullness of all good and glorious attributes that it demands the heart to sit and be still in His staggering presence. This is the enormity of wonder that the modern Christian often sadly misses, unknowingly substituting this depth of joy in searching after the one whom their soul loves, with a flimsy sensation founded on ever changing surges of emotion.

Now let's move on to Joseph, the man chosen by God to watch over Mary and the child Jesus. Not much is written on this humble man, for the wisdom of the Lord keeps the inquisitive heart from applying fatherly aspects to Joseph that belong to God the Father alone. Yet we are told in Scripture in Matthew 1:19 that Joseph was a 'just man'. Joseph is given this great commendation by God by a simple fact that Joseph was a man of God, a man of great faith and devotion to the Lord. As a result of this faith in God, he was justified before God Almighty and thus one of Our Lord's own. The fruits of this justification by faith was shown beautifully by the gentle but direct application of purpose and protection with all considered wisdom by Joseph as he took care of the expecting Mary. No doubt Joseph was riddled with great concern over the fact that his betrothed was carrying a child yet they had not consummated their own union yet for they were not yet married. The blood would boil quickly for many at man at such news, yet Joseph shows a heart that reflects the tender mercy of the one he would soon cradle in his arms. Joseph, knowing that he is but a sinner, does not rage with blind jealousy, instead his love for Mary is graciously superseded by his love for the Lord God. In this blessed peace that only the Lord can supply in times of such confusion and fear, Joseph is led to trust in the assurance of Mary that she is with child by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. Far from being unfaithful, Mary has been faithful to God's will and placed herself as his servant and now Joseph mirrors that same trust and humility by trusting firstly the words of his wife but more importantly the words of His God who gives Him assurance through a dream. Such was the just nature of Joseph that he lived the words of Solomon that no one should come to any conclusion on a matter until both sides had been heard. This is the manner of all courtroom proceedings (Proverbs 18:17), before a verdict is given the prosecution and the defence speak and make their case. He had heard Mary's words and acted lovingly and in faith towards her, unwilling to make her a public example out of rash raging jealousy, for if he had done so, the punishment for an unfaithful, adulterous woman at this time was death. Joseph, humble in his awareness of his own sin, heeding the patience and mercy of God, waited on God and was so met by Our Lord in a dream that gave the second voice needed to validate any claim within Jewish law.

Do you see the congruence of Our Lord's divine nature in leaving the halls of heaven for a season and enrobing himself in the flesh and that He lost no glorious attributes; that Our Lord God provided an entry in this world that fit wonderfully to His own pure heart in the form of earthly parents who loved the Lord with fullness of heart, depth of humility and great considered wisdom in the fear of the Lord. Such wonders were but dim reflections of the joy and purity of existence

Jesus had always known in the glory of the Trinity of course, yet they were congruent, they were joyously familiar to Him. Such is the deep love of the Father towards His only begotten Son that He provided so richly for Him, so that He might enter the flesh surrounded by the greatest treasure and glory this life can be blessed with, the care of God's own. Do you see how the One who is justice was supplied most wonderfully with two souls who walked in the steps of the Lord's Word by honouring His laws and commandments. Ah how wise and providential is the Lord God!

Yet the transfer of heavenly riches and glory of Our Lord Jesus from heaven to the flesh was not limited to Joseph and Mary. Consider how He was worshipped on His incarnation, first by the shepherds then many months later by the magi.

Think on how in the mists of eternity past, God crafted the plan of salvation so that His only Son Jesus Christ might be the Good Shepherd, the One who would seek after every single lost sheep that is His own and give His own blood for them so that they might be safe in His care for all eternity. What He was long before the arrival of the shepherds of Bethlehem that cold night, He was then surrounded by as they gave their heartfelt praise and worship unto Him. What joyous consistency in the provision and foreshadowing of the providence of God. However the congruence does not end there with our shepherd friends. The birth of a King is heralded by all His subjects, whether they be of great social rank or meagre; all must pay their homage to the anointed King. So by the grace of God, the lowest are lifted up to the position of first to know the arrival of the promised Messiah; those who were kept from the warmth and safety of the world as they watched over the weak and vulnerable sheep in the cold and often violent nights of ancient Israel. They were again pale but remarkable reflections of the homage and praise Christ Jesus had long rightly received from the angels of heaven and from the saints that walked with Him before. Those saints who were kept outside the sinful city walls of the world, much like Abraham outside the walls of Sodom and Gomorrah, they were exalted by God and given primacy in His call to worship.

Now think on the magi. Those wise men of the East, rich in power, wealth, influence and learning; the king makers of the ancient east. These men were the elite of the ancient world, society's highest rung had been called to travel many miles from the comfort of the plush and lavish homes, to bring gifts befitting a King. Our Lord God does demand the acknowledgment of all Creation, for He is a jealous God and will have none other than He be worshipped as God. So the mighty and the lowly are brought to bend the knee before Christ the Lord. This trembling worship before His might and power He had always known, even Satan must enter before Him to seek permission to act as we know from the events of the Book of Job. So here, all corners of society are brought equal before Christ, for there is no difference between Jew or Gentile, slave or Freeman, man or woman before Him as all will bend the knee before the King of Kings (Galatians 3:28-29).

So you see my friend, that it is a cute and convenient thought to believe the thought that Jesus Christ came in nothing poverty. However to focus on this conception is to create a world that is weak and devoid of the richness and glory that His eternal plan of the redemption of fallen mankind truly merits. As a result we diminish the glory of God and drain ourselves of a sense of wonder and awe that sharpens the mind and strengthens the heart so that in a season full of nonsense and greed, we are not swept away with the world but we hold firm to the truth that is the salvation of repentant sinners through the perfect blood of Christ Jesus.

When we mark and consider deeply, like Mary, how God crafted a seamless entry of His only begotten Son into this world, so that yes He was not wrapped in the radiant power and glory of heaven, but He was still very much cradled and brought forth into an arrival that shone with the hallmarks of the eternal divine attributes and glory of God. Such is the congruence of God's providential will, that it is known through the full revelation of Godhead that is Jesus Christ the Lord. So we join the shepherds and the magi, whether rich or poor, worshipping the eternal, unchanging Lord Jesus and thanking Him that He came so that we might be restored unto the Father by faith in Him. Amen.