

Christmas Is Jesus (The Incarnation and the Crucifixion Linked in Old Testament Typology)

by Colin Peckham

Jesus Christ is the meeting point of God and man, and His birth and death are two sides of the same coin, representing God's plan of salvation.

Topics: "Incarnation Of Christ", "Atoning Sacrifice"

Description

Colin Peckham delves into the profound mystery of how the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God communicates with humanity by becoming Man through His Son, Jesus Christ. Drawing parallels from the Old Testament Tabernacle, he illustrates how God dwelt among His people, with the Ark symbolizing the deity and manhood of Jesus Christ, culminating in His incarnation and crucifixion. The torn veil in the Tabernacle signifies Christ's sacrificial death opening the way for humanity to enter God's presence, emphasizing that only through Jesus Christ can God truly meet man.

Transcript

'God is a Spirit, - infinite, eternal and unchangeable - in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth' (Shorter Catechism).

How is this incomparable Being, the Wholly Other, to communicate with insignificant man'

In His infinite wisdom God became Man. He projected Himself into the human race in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was a man as other men, but 'God was in Christ' (II Cor. 5:19). Within that visible human form dwelt Almighty God. This is pictured for us in the Old Testament.

In the book of Exodus we read how the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. On the journey they constructed a tabernacle where God dwelt among His people. It was erected in the centre of the camp. The outward covering was of badger skins.

If one were to gaze across the camp of Israel it would not be all that significant simply because it resembled all the other tents surrounding it. It may have stood in its own enclosure, but there was nothing there to strike awe into one's heart. It was just another tent, and, like the other tents, would be covered with the dust of the desert. Just so Jesus was just another man - a man like other men, without any significant physical characteristic or noteworthy difference, but - 'God was in Christ'

In the desert the great significance lay within the Tabernacle. Beneath the badger skins were the coverings of rams' skins dyed red, signifying Christ's death. Beneath the rams' skins were the curtains of goats' hair, speaking of the prophets' clothing, and signifying Christ's prophetic role. Beneath the goats' hair were the beautiful curtains of fine twined linen, signifying Christ's righteousness - embroidered with blue, (His heavenly character), purple, (His regal character), and red, (His earthly character).

In the Holy Place was the Table of Shewbread, ('I am the bread of Life' - John 6:48), the Golden Candlestick, ('I am the light of the world' - John 8:12), and the Golden Altar of incense, ('He ever liveth to make intercession for them' - Heb. 7:25).

In the Holiest of all was the Ark - a box made of shittim wood, signifying Christ's humanity and completely covered with gold, speaking of His deity and all beautifully blended in one unit. Here we have typified the deity and manhood of Jesus Christ. 'God was manifest in the flesh' (I Tim. 3:16). God and man - one Christ, one glorious Person, is presented to us here. The wood and the gold were moulded together. At the heart of the place where God met with man, is a revelation of the incarnation. God deigned to identify with man by actually uniting with him in this intensely intricate, personal and mysterious way. God and man blended together in Jesus Christ. 'God was in Christ'.

The Ark was covered by the Mercy Seat, which was a slab of pure gold. It formed the lid of the Ark. Only once a year the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of the people. When he did so, on the Day of Atonement, he sprinkled blood on that gold slab. The blood from the earth trickled on to the gold which represented deity. Again there is this strange and marvellous union. This is where God meets man! 'There will I meet with thee' (Ex. 25:17-22). Here is Christ's sacrifice. Here is God in Christ shedding His precious blood as an offering for our sins. Here is Calvary.

Here then is the Incarnation and the Crucifixion typified in one item of furniture - the Ark. It is here, in Christ typified, that God meets man. His incarnation and His crucifixion are inextricably linked together. Bethlehem and Calvary are inseparable.

In the Ark were three things:

The golden pot containing manna - a picture of Christ's life and provision for His people.

The tables of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments, which Christ alone kept perfectly.

Aaron's rod that budded, a picture of Christ's resurrection.

The Veil of blue, purple and red, separating the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies illustrates again in its three colours, the Divinity, Kingship and humanity of Christ. The veil was His flesh (Heb. 10:20). When Christ died, God rent the veil from top to bottom. He was 'smitten of God'. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him', (Is. 53:4,10). When the veil was torn asunder, the way into the Holy of Holies stood wide open. Man could now enter God's presence. When Jesus died, He became the way to God. Through His rent body, through His death, the way into the presence of God was at last open. We have access through Christ's death into the very presence of God.

Therefore, whilst the external appearance of the Tabernacle was merely that of a tent, (the humanity of Christ disguises His deity), inside, the glory of God and His marvellous plan of salvation were portrayed. It spoke of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, of God meeting man in Christ. Only in Jesus Christ does God meet man, and the Tabernacle is a beautiful type of His person and work.

To a lonely life and a broken heart
He gave Himself away;
It was not to live, He was born to die,
That first glad Christmas Day.
O what blessed birth! O what sacred death!
How sad this world would be.
If there never had been a Christmas Morn,
Never a Calvary!
-Noel Grant (N. Ireland)

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