

Reflections on the Incarnation IV

The Supremacy of the Word Made Flesh – Heb 1:1-4

Introduction – The Christmas story is an imposition on the world. It is the insertion of the Creator into the creation in a way that baffles our ability to comprehend. It threatens secular culture's sovereignty and demand for self-rule. Christmas is a problem because Christ brought true Light and Love and Life *but* declares supreme authority over it all.

God is Not Silent (Heb 1:1-2) – The whole creation all around us declares the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-4, Rom 1:20) because all of creation came forth by words (Gen 1). We are a word-centered creation because we were created by the Word of God. Theologians call the truth creation reveals “general revelation” and then point to the “special revelation” of Scripture as another means by which God has spoken to us.

Various Ways and Times – Throughout His story (or history), God was pleased to speak “*by means of the prophets*” this special revelation. He used dreams and visions, inspirations and voices, angels and miraculous signs, all manner of means. Calvin notes that the variety was an evidence of the imperfection of these means. They were still shadow-messages mediated to us through someone or something else than God Himself. But when the time (the story) was perfect, God sent His Son, the very Word of God, to come in the flesh (Gal 4:4).

Spoken Words by the Word – “*In these last days*,” that is, the last days of the age of shadows and prophets, mediation at a distance from God and old administrations at a temple made with dead stones, God spoke again “*by His Son*.” A new age had dawned because a new humanity was born; and this is why it is disparaging towards Christ to look for old-style prophetic utterances since the end of that old administration. The Final Word had come.

Heir of All Things – And what was this Son given? The Baby would be given all things by His Father. He would bind the strong man, the devil, and plunder his house. He did not come to gather people to elect Him King. And so, in declaring the gospel, we are not begging people to accept Jesus so that He can be Lord; we implore our fellow sinners to receive Him because He is Lord and Savior of the world. The Word had always ruled in an ultimate sense over all creation; but now, as a man He would rule over all mankind, all nations, and all that *a man* had been set apart to rule, for the first time. He was mercy, the great Deliverer, the Prince of Peace, the King of kings, from the day of His birth (hence, magi come and worship while other kings immediately feel the threat). But consider and see how the kingdom of God comes and how it grows (like the smallest seed in the garden).

Glory We Can Finally See (vv3-4) – In our sin, though God was always speaking, we could not hear the Word. In our sin, though God is light (1 John 1:5), we could not look at God; we could not see the Father. Some have said it is like not being able to look directly at the sun. But we can look at the loom of the sun for as long as the sun is the sun there is the radiance of it. In the same way, as long as God is light (eternally) there is the “*brightness of His glory*” which is the Son, also eternal. This is why Jesus, the glory incarnate, could say, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9, Col 1:15).

Transcendent, Eternal Glory – God has placed eternity in the heart of man (Eccles 3:11) and so we are built longing for the transcendent. But we are unable in our finiteness and sinfulness to reach out and find it. The Incarnation, Christmas, is the celebration of the coming of this transcendence to us in the flesh. This little Baby was really a finite, newborn man; but He also was transcendent, eternal glory – a glory greater than the entire angelic host that sang to His glory (v4, cf. Luke 2:13-14).

But we must take note: This is not a transcendent feeling, nor a transcendent “up in heaven” spiritual moment. This is transcendence incarnate. This is God and a baby. This is glory and the stuff of earth. This is the Word entering into the story.

Light Calls for Supreme Sovereignty – Light reveals. And this Light reveals that Jesus is “*upholding all things by the word of His power*.” Nothing in the universe could subsist for a moment without the continuing sustaining influence of the Word (Col 1:17). “*He alone hath an absolute sovereignty over us in all things; this should teach us our constant dependence on Him, and our universal subjection unto Him*” (John Owen). No part of creation is God, but no part of creation exists or sustains in any way apart from the sovereign will of God. No part of His ongoing story takes place apart from His exhaustive and infinite influence (Eph 1:11b). *Christians need to talk like that and live like that.*

Love Calls for Supreme Sacrifice – The virgin birth was a miracle with a purpose. He was named Jesus for He would save His people from their sins (Matt 1:21). God's love for His people is manifest in Christmas, but only because Christmas points to Calvary. Christ came to secure the salvation of His people. He did not come to try and save some. And the number of those for whom He died cannot be numbered, such that, it can be said that Jesus came that the world might be saved (John 3:17). *Christians need to talk like that and love like that.*

Life Calls for Supreme Lordship – That little baby really came, and He also really sits now at the right hand of God the Father ruling the nations (Dan 7:13-14). Both truths are incarnate truths for the Son of God was born a man, died a man, was raised a man, ascended a man, and rules as a man. You cannot affirm the one and deny the other. And that means He really is, right now, the King of kings. *Christians need to talk like that and swagger like that.*