

A. Introduction — He Lived Among Them — by Soren Kierkegaard ^{-{2}}.

1. Soren Kierkegaard, the great Danish theologian of another century tells a story of a prince who wanted to find a maiden suitable to be his queen. One day while running an errand in the local village for his father he passed through a poor section. As he glanced out the windows of the carriage his eyes fell upon a beautiful peasant maiden. During the ensuing days he often passed by the young lady and soon fell in love. But he had a problem. How would he seek her hand?
2. He could order her to marry him. But even a prince wants his bride to marry him freely and voluntarily and not through coercion. He could put on his most splendid uniform and drive up to her front door in a carriage drawn by six horses. But if he did this he would never be certain that the maiden loved him or was simply overwhelmed with all of the splendour. As you might have guessed, the prince came up with another solution. He would give up his kingly robe. He moved, into the village, entering not with a crown but in the garb of a peasant. He lived among the people, shared their interests and concerns, and talked their language. In time the maiden grew to love him for who he was and because he had first loved her.
3. a very simple story illustrating our text
 - a. God chose to live with us — “Immanuel” – that He might show his love to us, and that we might fall in love with Him
 - b. Galatians 4:4-5 (NAS): “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”
 - c. in some fashion, the carols and Scripture readings that formed our time of worship this Christmas morning, brought a sparkle to some facet of the truth in this text
 - d. the story of Immanuel, of God living with us, is the story of the incarnation
 - (A) Christmas is the celebration of the point in history when the incarnation began
 - (B) Easter is the celebration of the point when His earthly incarnation was complete
 - e. let us meditate a few minutes on this wondrous fact of the incarnation

B. The Incarnation Fulfilled God's Eternal Plan

1. nothing in the incarnation, from start to finish, took place by chance
 - a. the incarnation is the visible manifestation of the wisdom of God
 - b. that this wasn't a haphazard event into which God had been pushed by the failure of Israel under the Law
 - c. no, this was part of God's plan in eternity, being carried out in time, according to the counsels of His will

2. it was so stated in the OT prophecy, as God declared His plans in advance
 - a. 'Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. ... Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.' (Isaiah 42:1, 9)
 - b. though on a different subject, the same principle is stated in Isaiah 46:9-10, 'Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, "My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure".'

3. it was so stated in the NT doctrine
 - a. Paul taught this truth in Titus 1:1-3 (NIV): "1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – 2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, 3 and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour." — to which we add
 - b. 1 Peter 1:18-20 (NAS): "18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" — that is, all Christ's redemptive work, was known, was settled, was determined, in the halls of eternity before this world ever came into being
 - c. and this is corroborated by the statement in Peter's sermon in Acts 2:23 (NAS): "this Man, delivered up

by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

C. The Purpose of the Incarnation: Our Salvation

1. it was God who first loved us, 1 John 4:19 (NAS): “We love, because He first loved us.”
 - a. it was God who took the initiative to woo us to Himself
 - b. man’s attempts to come to God were all failures
 - c. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8 (NAS)
2. it was God who, through the incarnation,
 - a. chose to enter this world in the Person of the Son
 - b. to carry out the process of redemption, as we just read: “... that He might redeem those who were under the Law ...”
 - c. a redemption that brought us into relationship with our God and Creator, also as we just read: “that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

D. The Incarnation Revealed God to Man

1. God the Son was born as Jesus, the Christ
 - a. to be a visible representation of the invisible God, Who was to show us the glory, grace and truth of God
 - b. John 1:14 (NAS): “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
 - c. and in like manner authoritatively to teach us of God
 - d. John 1:18 (NAS): “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”
2. this Man Jesus, by His life and words
 - a. showed the reality of God and the Way to God, satisfying man’s greatest need
 - b. ‘Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through

Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:6-9)

E. Conclusion

1. From all eternity, God has had a wondrous plan, which He has brought to pass in His full time
 - a. that He should enter into the stream of humanity, a humanity that was alienated from Himself on account of sin
 - b. as a man, a Second Adam, subject to the limitations of man as he was originally created
 - c. obedient to God, and so righteous where Adam had failed
 - d. taking His place among men, He took man's punishment in man's place
2. so that mankind, by faith, can be redeemed from their guilt under the law and brought back into relationship that God intended it have with Himself

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Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in (*braces*). Version identifiers are:

AV Authorized (King James) Version
ERV The Revised Version of 1885
NAS New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
RSV Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan
EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903
Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. “He Lived Among Them” from Rev. Brett Blair’s Illustrations, Holwick illustrations #19229