

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (1)

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Matthew 3: 13-17.

This is profound doctrine. There are themes which have great depth which, as Christians, we are to think about. This is one such theme. It involves the doctrine of the Trinity which is obviously a truth that is beyond our powers of fathoming. Likewise, it touches on the truth that our Saviour is One Person, but with two natures - divine and human. These are delicate matters where it is easy to err and stray into heresy. We are grateful of the work of our forbears who considered these matters and put together the teaching we have in some of the Confessions and Creeds.

The fact that the Holy Spirit was at work in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus when He was on the earth can make us sometimes, but wrongly, feel uncomfortable. We owe it to God to think about it because it is there in the Bible. We may not be able to understand it completely, but we are to ponder it, as far as Scripture allows us, and then to bring that into our understanding, our worship and our service.

We remember that, whatever we are to say as we think further about this subject, this Lord Jesus Christ is ever the Person that the Father has glorified (See Ephesians 1: 9-10; 19-23; and 1 Peter 3:22).

A real humanity.

This is our one and only heading in this sermon. There will be a second sermon to take the matter further, but this is the main theme of what is to be said here.

We know that the Lord Jesus had, and still has, a human nature. The glorious Son of God whom God has highly exalted is, necessarily, fully human. If He were not, then we would still be needing a sufficient Saviour. He had to be both divine and human to bring about our salvation. He was always acting, thinking, and speaking in such a way that was utterly consistent with what was required of Him, having both divine and human nature. We speak of Him, therefore, as being the God-man.

It is important we defend the reality of His humanity as much as we defend the reality of His divinity. This we can see in 1 John 4: 1-3.

It is helpful to also think of Him in terms of some titles that are associated with Him. One of these titles is 'Servant'. He came into the world as a servant and that required of Him that He should have full humanity, not something fictional or lesser. Therefore, it meant that He would speak and behave in such a way that would show submission to God. Likewise, the title 'Mediator', showing us He was representing both God and man, meant that He would share in our humanity and take the place that was necessary to fulfill the task that was His uniquely, as Mediator, to do.

The implications of this are immense. He has to have humanity that will identify with and stand in the place of sinners. This is why He is baptized by John and the Baptist despite John's protest that he, John, should be baptized by the Lord. The Lord Jesus insists He should be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. This was the will of God that He should be numbered among the transgressors.

So in His humanity, He has to represent us, as fallen sinners, in order to be Mediator and Servant. But He also has to show us what it means for a sinless man to live in obedience before God, to love God and to love His neighbour as Himself. This is in order that He might well please His Father by living out a perfect life of righteousness that He might be able to confer the fruits of that righteousness on us. Whatever a sinless human life should be, our Lord had to show that in His life and ministry.

This meant that He would not live autonomously out of the resources of His sinlessness as if He had no need of God, His Father's help. Rather He would show at every turn that He was dependent on His Father for help, guidance, and power. Far from being independent of God He was utterly dependent upon Him and needed Him for everything He did and was. Some have recoiled from these implications but if He had not lived a life of perfect obedience, submission, and dependence upon God, it would not have been a life of perfect righteousness and it would not have qualified as a righteousness that could be conferred upon us.

We find Him, for example, praying very earnestly. This was not something of a performance or a fiction, but was real and sincere. He was showing us how we should pray. This is how a perfect man would live, relying upon God and showing this by seeking Him in prayer and worshipping Him. It explains why there are so many deeply submissive and modest statements our Lord makes about Himself (See John 5:19 and 30). He speaks of doing only what the Father shows Him or tells Him. He speaks of being sent by His Father. He always places Himself in the relationship of a Servant before His heavenly Father.

Because He is such a servant, the help He depends upon will be given to Him by the Holy Spirit. He will not rely upon Himself, even as the Son of God, but will rely upon the help His Father gives Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. So He shows us how we should, ourselves, live in dependence of the help of God