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A sermon preached by the late Mr. J.E. Hazelton on the 22nd Decr 1901 from the text "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." 1. Peter 1.20.

The manifestation of God in the flesh is a precious truth which is gladdening to the hearts of all the Lord's dear people, and when Emmanuel, "God with us" is manifested to the heart by the revealing and anointing Spirit of God, He is a joy-inspiring and a faith-producing sight. Emmanuel, God with us, then becomes a living bright reality, and the things of Jesus the most precious possession of our souls. This is true Christmastide, not the revelry of the world, not the loud and vulgar feasting which obtains on the right hand and on the left. Whilst we rejoice in family re-unions at this season, let us see to it that as God's professing people we desire and long for a blessed manifestation to our own souls of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. I never wish to talk of the doctrines of Scripture as of theological subjects, but my desire is to press them home upon the conscience and experience of those whom I am permitted to address. We want a LIVING CHRIST brought home to our hearts by the power of God the Holy Spirit. We want a strengthening and comforting Christ in this world of sin, sorrow and trial.

How great is the mystery of Incarnate Love! It was none other than He whose glorious title is "I am that I am", the Almighty, self existent God who was the cradled Infant, and who from time to time slept upon Mary's breast! It was God manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel God with us, who increased in wisdom and stature, who grew in favour with God and men! The hands that made the universe, and from whom the glittering world in the heavens flew like sparks of fire, worked at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth, and it was from the face of God manifest in the flesh that the drops of labour fell as He in Joseph's workshop laboured from day to day. Let us ever seek for grace to remember and feel that our Lord's humanity was a real one! A real humanity of God now, but it is Humanity in everlasting union with His eternal Godhead!

Our Lord's humanity was pure! We may see a lake sleeping before us in the summer time, and it will look like a sea of crystal loveliness, but when the storm arises that lake will become nothing more than a muddy inland sea. So it is with poor fallen humanity. However amiable it may be on the surface, when storms and temptations come, the dross rises to the surface and the inward corruptions of our own fallen nature are to be seen, but with our great and glorious Lord, His humanity was pure and without a taint. "Which of you" said He, "convinceth Me of sin?" Oh! the storms to which He was subjected, the contests which He bore. He was like a golden goblet of crystal water. However much He was shaken no sediment of sin arose. Every pulse of His sinless nature beat responsive to His Father's will. One flaw in a marble statue will utterly ruin it. One grain of sand in the casting of the telescope

lens will cause the glass to be unsuitable, and so one flaw in the pure humanity of our blessed Lord, one grain of sinful sand in His life, would have unfitted Him for His work! He who is manifested in these last times unto us is pure, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. Our suffering Surety is described as a Lamb without blemish and without spot, and that untainted purity made Him exceedingly sensible to all contact with sin, and do we not get a glimpse here of the intensity of His sufferings in this respect, for He breathed a sinful atmosphere, He had to do with sinful men, and from the beginning to the end of His career He was thus a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

We see Him subject to physical weariness, a pilgrim by the well! We behold Him, our Sin Bearer, finishing His glorious work at Calvary, and offering Himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to His Father and His God.

Now He "who was foreordained before the foundation of the world" was manifested in these last times for you. Who are those described here? For you who by Him do believe in God. It is one thing simply to believe the record which God has given to us here of His purposes of love and mercy; it is another thing to believe upon God - that is no small mercy, but as Josphe Hart says, the best of all is to be brought by Divine power to believe IN GOD, that is to run for shelter to the hope set before us, to hide ourselves under the white robe of Christ's righteousness, to abide in the Rock of Ages cleft for poor lost and ruined sinners, and this precious, glorious Christ, is manifested today to everyone here who by Him thus believes IN God. "O my dove" says the Holy One in the Canticles, "that art in the clefts of the Rock", and those who are in the cleft of the Rock know somewhat of what it is to have a precious Christ manifested unto them. To take refuge there as poor, lost and ruined sinners, and taking refuge there, to contemplate the perfect humanity of the adorable Son of God.

Those words in connection with all the invitations of the Gospel come with unspeakable tenderness to us, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," because they come welling from human lips, and because the blessed music which they sound vibrates in a human Heart, even the heart of Emmanuel, the heart of the Man Christ Jesus. For me in human nature He once walked this earth and wept, suffered and died. For me, in my stead, He now pleads above, and from His glorified human lips I hope one day to hear the gracious welcome, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Now one word in the first place about the purpose of the Incarnation - Verily He was foreordained - there was a purpose - before the foundation of the world, and next a few words as to its design in relation to those who have believed in God.

Christ was fore-ordained to become Incarnate before the

foundation of the world. How chilling and withering is the thought that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was simply a coming of One who as it were inaugurates a new system of religion! The coming of the blessed Christ of God was from everlasting the great idea in God's eternal mind, and God will have this truth kept before the Church. In the Old Testament dispensation by type, by ritual, by varied lessons, by the word which the prophets spoke, God set forth the glorious fact that the coming of Messiah had been fore-ordained before the world's foundations were laid. God the Lord has thus laid in Zion a solid foundation upon which His people are to build their hopes, and I love from time to time to look at God's eternal settlement, and to think upon the glorious truth that the Man Christ Jesus was God's great purpose from all eternity! That God designed, before ever He created one world, to glorify Himself in the person of His Son, and in bringing many sons unto glory. This is the meaning of the teaching here - fore-ordained before the foundation of the world. The Man Christ Jesus was the great idea in God's eternal Mind, and as Christ is never separated from His people, God thought of the Church, that is of you and of me, before the earth's foundations were laid. Christ was set up from everlasting, hence when the Fall came, He to whom the Church had been united, undertook to come and save that Church with an everlasting salvation. Thus it is that the Lord will lose none of those whom He gave to His Son before the foundations of the world. Hence it is that the people who were thought of and loved before the foundation of the world were everyone of them saved when Jesus died on Calvary, and every one of them shall safe arrive at the Better Land and on the eternal shore at last. The words show us clearly the prior existence of God's dear Son. He was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; He was manifested in these last times for you, hence the Holy Ghost by the prophet has it, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." The Son was manifested at the appointed time, and it became God, it became Him, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. Thus, dear friends, the consideration of the birth of our Lord, does not take our thoughts off the Cross, but leads us to contemplate that wonderful passage from the cradle to the grave. It leads us to contemplate the great and glorious object of His coming, an object formed before the worlds were formed, and carried out into effect in Bethlehem and on Calvary, and being daily effected by the work of God the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of His people down all the ages.

Now let us pass on from this and (say a few words). I will more especially dwell on the design of this manifestation to you and to me. He was manifested in these last times for you, to show the blessed and indissoluble union that exists between your Lord and you. By God's dear Son coming in the flesh, He showed conclusively that His Church was identified with Him. Nothing less would do but that God's dear Son must wrap around Him the nature of His dear people. Thus it followed that wrapping around Himself the nature of His dear people, He should at the same time take upon Himself

the burden and load of their sins. It was this which from the cradle to the tomb caused Him to be a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

There is in the Gospels, so far as I have searched them, only one instance on record in which the Lord Jesus is said to have had a rejoicing thought, and this is the passage - "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes." That which caused the Man of sorrows to rejoice was the thought of the grace, of the exceeding love of His Father to His poor unworthy people, and that thought caused the heart of the Man of sorrows to rejoice.

He was manifested unto us in these last times for HEALING, POSSESSION and SERVICE. Has He been manifested unto us for healing? Let me illustrate it by a reference to His healing of the leper. There was that man suffering from the most incurable of all diseases, the disease called by the Jews, the "Shadow of death" and the leprous man in approaching Jesus was just a type of one feeling the curse of sin. "Lord if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He who was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, was manifested to heal that poor leper, and the cry of that wounded soul broke open the fountain of healing in the bosom of Jesus, and so today the solitary cry of every spiritual outcast appeals to Him. "I will" said He, touching the leper, "I will, be thou clean", and so when we were brought to feel the curse of God's law, when we were brought to realise anything of the burden and the guilt of sin, the same Holy Spirit who brought us to feel and realise these things, turns us to the Christ of God, and we find Emmanuel was manifested unto us in these last times as our Saviour and our Healer. In order to joy and rejoice in the birth of our Lord, we must know by experience what He was appointed to do, what He came to do, what He has done, and what by the power of the Spirit He is doing in the hearts and souls of His dear people. Am I a sinner, needy, lost, ruined and undone? Christ was manifested in these last times for you who by Him do believe in God.

But then this manifestation not only begins with salvation and healing, but the next thought is possession. If Christ has healed us He owns us! He healed us because He was fore-ordained to do so, and because we were fore-ordained to believe, and therefore having healed and cleansed us, He has the sole right of ownership. Can we go as far as this in our experience? Let me put it in this way, quoting our Lord's own words. "Is it not lawful" and He referred to Himself, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" Now can you have a more intensely divine and penetrating claim than this? "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" They were given to Me before the foundation of the world! Their names and numbers are written in God's book! For them I shed My precious blood on Calvary! To their hearts and consciences, even as to the flesh of the poor leper, that precious blood has been applied, and they know My healing power and grace!

Some affliction comes upon us, some dark bereavement, the clouds gather, the rain falls, and the tempests rage, and a still small Voice asks the tried child of God this question - "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" The child of God is sent to do this or that, sent to do something or to live somewhere that is entirely uncongenial to his taste; he is subjected to some humiliating course of discipline from which his heart shrinks. "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" Is it not lawful for Him who redeemed us to do what He will with His own? He was all love in heaven, He was all love in Bethlehem He was all love in Gethsemane and on Calvary, and He is all love now, and do you think that there is ought but love in these strange mysterious dealings that His dear people experience? "What I will with My own!" Every redeemed soul is like a vessel launched upon the sea of time and having sealed orders on board. How often is this the case, especially in time of war! The Captain of one of Her Majesty's vessels is bidden to take his departure with his ship and sealed orders are given to him not to be opened until his arrival at a certain port, and so everyone of those to whom the Lord has been manifested are like vessels on the stormy sea of time, having sealed orders on board. But every order is inscribed by these words - "What I will", and that will is LOVE! What they contain God knows, and God Himself breaks open these orders from time to time in the right place, and in the right manner by Providence and various other means which He is pleased to use. Think, dear friends, again of this, this claim which the Lord has upon us. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will", and then come the sweetest words - "with My own?" He calls us His own, and well He may as we look at the glorious teaching of this verse. When He is thus manifested to our souls, we can respond "Lord, do what Thou wilt". My experience is that there is nothing breaks open the flood gates of affection as much as the gleam of love upon the heart which it loves, and there is nothing so directly and sensibly appeals to the redeemed soul as when the Lord Jesus calls him His own. When He does that I can say He is mine, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." Lord, it is lawful for Thee to do what Thou wilt with Thy own, and so Christ being thus manifested to the soul we feel that all His will is love.

I read a little while ago that Mozart, the great German composer was strolling out one evening, and he suddenly heard in a cottage one of his own pieces of music being played. He stopped and listened, and then knocked. A young woman opened the door. He went in and asked her to play him another piece. She did so, and then she said "You seem to know music, will you play to me", and so he sat down and in a moment he was swept away with the rapture of genius and lost himself and played. When he turned he saw the young woman was blind, but her eyes were streaming with tears, and she said, "How could you ask me to play?" So dear friends, you and I are often struggling under the stress of discordant circumstances of life. We do not get any music through our struggling, worry, wrestling with discordant things, and the Lord sees our broken efforts, and as we are dealt with by His Holy

Spirit, our wills are subdued, we say, "Come Lord Jesus and play upon us." Thou hast made us Thy instruments, for previously we were under the power of the Wicked One! Thou canst alone effect the music, and when the Lord Jesus plays upon one who, through grace divine has a surrendered will, oh, the chords that are produced of sweet and heavenly music!

Healing implies possession, and possession implies that we, as dealt with by divine Grace, should seek that our wills may be in blessed harmony with His, for it is lawful and loving that He should do what He will with His own.

Lastly, there is SERVICE! Manifested to us and for us that we may know the glorious truth of union! Manifested to heal! Manifested for possession and for service. Take another word of our Lord in relation to this. "If I will that He tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" This just means that the duration and tenure and nature of our service are entirely in His hands. Jesus comes to every child of His and appoints the service which they shall do. If He sees fit to keep us here, or calls us yonder, may we more intensely feel that His sovereign will rules all, and all He does is right. There are many gathered on the shores of the sea of time, expectantly looking across the water for His second coming without sin unto salvation, for which we are bidden to hope and expect, and He was fore-ordained, and who came the first time in the fulness of time, and in the appointed way, and has been manifested to our souls, claims us for service and for all that He has in store for us. He is manifested to all those who wait and hope for His appearing.

Now, dear friends, what is Christ to us? Do we know Him? Do we love Him? Do we follow Him? Do we delight in Him? Do we desire that our lives may be moulded and fashioned by Him? Is He the centre of our thoughts, for where there are waiters, where there are those who meditate and watch for and expect the Lord Christ, to them He shall most surely be manifested even as He was to Simeon, Anna and to those who watched for the Advent of their dear Redeemer.