

THE STEP OF HUMILITY

Mt. 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea

Over these past few weeks we have been looking at some of the steps taken by the Lord Jesus which contributed to Him coming to the cradle. We started in eternity ... because that was where God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit started and decided on the plan, and we considered how the Son shared all the privileges of Glory for He, - Jesus Christ, - is God.

The first announcement of His coming was as early as in the Garden of Eden, **Gen. 3:15** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. We also looked at Isaiah's prophecy, **Is. 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given This was previously introduced in **Is. 7:14** Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Then we considered how this Promised One shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots (**Is. 11:1**), ... and would ultimately establish His future Kingdom on earth, **Is. 11:6** The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

When we turned to Micah we saw how the little town of Bethlehem would play its part in God's plan, **Micah 5:2** But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

This morning we shall conclude our short series by considering **the step of humility** when God, the eternal King of Heaven, humbled Himself to become the Child in the manger.

THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST IN THE CRADLE

The very day Jesus was born was so ordinary ... It was neither taken notice of nor observed as being of any significance. ... There was no ceremony. There was no celebration. There was no coming together of the families in great excitement to welcome this new little Baby into the

world. ... The greatest day this world has ever known was when the Saviour was born ... and, in fact, we don't even know the exact date! ... It was 'just another day' ... the day the Lord Jesus, - the eternal Son of God, - came into this world in the humblest manner, in the lowliest of places, and simpler than we could ever imagine ... "He came down to earth from Heaven, Who is God and Lord of all, And His shelter was a stable, And His cradle was a stall."

... The wise men from the east 'knocked on Herod's door' ... because surely a Prince would be born in a palace?! But no, not this Prince ... These 'wise men' were wrong ... Wise as they were in earthly matters, they took the wrong path to find Jesus, and yet God had given them the desire to keep searching until they found the Saviour. ... That is what wise men and wise women do, - God keeps them on searching until they find Jesus.

... And the wise men found Jesus when they followed the sign in the sky which God had shown them. Never would they have found Jesus without God directing them ... and that is a simple picture of how His grace worked in our salvation also. You and I would never have found the Saviour if our Heavenly Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit, had not led us to Him.

Indeed, that is why it is called the Gospel of *Sovereign* Grace because it is through the work of God *the Sovereign* alone we are saved. God originated the plan, and He sent His Son, - His only-begotten Son, - to Bethlehem, to be lovingly laid in a little feeding-trough for the animals, - a manger. ... Jesus was not to be found in a beautifully-decorated cradle in the palace of Herod the so-called 'Great'. He was not to be found in religion, or in rituals, or in a temple. The place where you find Jesus is the place where He comes to find you. You see, there was no room for Him in the inn. Every space was taken by other people and by other things. Society was too busy with their own agenda, - too busy for Jesus,

Room for pleasure, room for business,

But for Christ ...,

Not a place that He can enter.

If it had not been for the grace of God, *every* door in Bethlehem would have remained shut to the Saviour ... and yet, *in* the grace of God, - as He had promised through the prophet, - **Micah 5:2** *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah,*

though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ... **The Humility of Christ in the Cradle.**

That is the first consideration in **the humility of Christ**, when He came to this earth to be born in a manger. The second step looks ahead to how God's plan for our salvation would proceed ...

THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

The writer to the Hebrews wrote, **Heb. 12:2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ... For God's plan to be completed, His Son had to fulfil the purpose for why He was given the name 'Jesus', **Mt. 1:21** And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

... Like any little baby, Jesus grew and developed ... After a few months He began to utter a few words, - *abba* would have been one of His first. ... Like any little baby, He started to lift Himself up ... haltering at first, but Mary and Joseph were there to hold Him, to take His hand, and to help Him with His first steps. He grew into His teenage years and He learned the craft of His father Joseph, a carpenter.

Then, one day He left the saw and the plane. He set aside the chisel, and He began to do what He came to do for He came to do the will of His *Heavenly* Father, as planned in eternity. ... He lived most of His life in Nazareth, among very ordinary people ... He was simply one of the townfolk. And yet, - and for His countrymen and women, - He came to die as Saviour. ... **Jn. 10:15** I lay down my life for the sheep.

At Calvary, He died as obscure and as alone as He was born into a lowly stable, for He died on a lonely cross ... He came by the way of the cradle, and each step took Him on His way to the cross ... **the step of humility.**

The Humility of Christ in the Cradle, The Humility of Christ on the Cross ... We also have another picture that still manages to hold on to **the humility of Christ** ... but in a beautiful Heavenly way ...

THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST IN THE GLORY OF HEAVEN

After the cross, the plan of God for His Son continued unabated. ... On 23rd December 1873, Frances Ridley Havergal wrote a twenty-verse hymn entitled “From Glory unto Glory”. Two of its verses say ...

“From Glory unto Glory!” What great things He hath done,
 What wonders He hath shown us, what triumphs He hath won!
 We marvel at the record of blessings of the year!
 But sweeter still than Christmas rings out His promise clear.

“From Glory unto Glory!” What mighty blessings crown
 The lives for which our Lord hath laid His own so freely down!
 Omnipotence to keep us, omniscience, too, to guide,
 Jehovah’s blessèd presence within us to abide!

In her hymn, she was describing how Jesus exchanged the **cradle** for the **cross**, and then how the **cross** gave way to the **crown**. ... The cradle was the first part of God’s plan for His Son on this earth ... The cross became the second part for it sealed the plan of salvation for His people ... However, the cradle and the cross are no more, - they are assigned to history ... they have finished, and they have served their purpose. ... The cradle will never be needed again. The cross will never be needed again. Their function is over ...

Where is Christ today? He is in Heaven. What is He doing? ...

Before the throne of God above
 I have a strong and perfect plea.
 A great high priest whose name is Love
 Who ever lives and pleads for me.

That is what He is doing! ... The hymn writer continues,

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
 My perfect spotless righteousness,
 The great unchangeable I AM,
 The King of glory and of grace,
 One in Himself I cannot die.
 My soul is purchased by His blood,
 My life is hid with Christ on high,
 With Christ my Saviour and my God!

He is in Heaven today interceding on behalf of His people before His Father. He is praying for us. He is praying for our protection. He is

praying for us to remain faithful. He is praying for His work to be done through us. He is praying that the gates of Hell will not prevail against His Church. He is praying that the sovereign will keep every member of the Redeemed until they are taken up into His glory ... for there is coming a very special day when this same Jesus Who came to Bethlehem over two thousand years ago is come back again to this earth, and the next time He comes ... His entrance won't be the same as the last time, - He will not come quietly or unnoticed, - for the next time He comes to this earth, **I Thess. 4:16** [*He*] himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ... **Rev. 1:7** ... and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. ... Every knee, - whether they want to or not, - will bow before Him and every tongue, - whether they want to or not, - will confess Him as Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11).

That is the reason the Father sent Him, - to bring Him glory, - the glory of the Lord shone in the Judean hills outside Bethlehem when the angels made the announcement of His first coming ... and the same glory will make the announcement of His second coming, **I Cor. 15:52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ... To God be the glory and He, - Jesus, - brought His Father glory in the cradle, glory on the cross, and what a great day of glory that will be when He returns for His Bride, the Church, and presents Her before the Throne, **Eph. 5:27** ... a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

... And that is *His Story*, - the account of how God sent His Son into the world to save His people ... and on this Christmas morning, we are privileged to be able to say with the apostle Paul, and with all Christ's redeemed, **II Cor. 9:15** Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Amen.