

## The Visible God

A sermon by Rt Rev. David H. Lindrooth

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**“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace, *there will be no end*”**  
(Isaiah 9:6).

This beautiful prophecy is ancient. It is thought to have been given roughly 800 years before the Lord’s birth! It’s worth reflecting on the number of generations of people who heard these words, and eagerly waited for the coming of a Messiah -the One who would be their Savior. Did they really know Who they were waiting for? Did they grasp the significance of His anticipated birth? And, did they recognize that the coming Lord was going to ask them to “follow Him” – and that following Him meant radical life change?

Of course, the words are still compelling today, helping us and urging us to prepare for the celebration of the birth of our Savior. But we can ask the same question: do we fully grasp the significance of the Lord’s birth? And in the light of that significance, are we prepared to respond to Him by listening to Him and living the heavenly life that He urges us to lead?

Fundamental to understanding the significance of the Advent is recognizing that finite human beings cannot (of their own) have any concept of an infinite God or His immeasurable Divine love and wisdom unless that information is given to us by the infinite God in a form accommodated to our limited reception.

The Old and New Testaments frequently taught this. Moses, for example, was told, **“No one can see God and live”** (Exodus 33:20). Early in the Gospel of John we similarly read: **“No one has seen God at any time”** (John 1:18). Later in John, the Lord tells the disciples, **“You have neither heard [the Father’s] voice nor seen His form”** (Jn. 5:37).

The explanation of these passages is that the Lord, being infinite, is not limited by either time or space. We, however, and therefore our minds, with all our thoughts and affections, are time-bound and finite. Everything we think of is defined by our limited experience of the world and its progression in time. Our point of view is determined by the world we live in and its limitations. These limitations, however, do not apply to Divine love and wisdom and its operations. So, by definition, our mortal minds are incapable of grasping the infinite because there is no ratio or measurable formula that we can create that connects the infinite with the finite. As is suggested in our lesson from True Christian Religion, our finite minds trying to grasp the infinite would be like **“trying to make eye contact with the limitless vastness of**

**outer space, or like being on the lookout [of a ship] in mid-ocean but not being able to see anything but endless sky and sea”** (TCR 787). The point is that we, being time and space dependent, are unable to quantify or define that which is spiritual and divine in origin - that which is not bound by space and time.

It is worth reflecting that while we are born completely naturally-minded without any understanding of that which is eternal in nature, the Lord wishes to prepare us to live to eternity in a spiritual world (of heaven) where everything is transcendent and above our worldly consciousness. We can know nothing of that life unless a knowledge of the Eternal is revealed to us and is defined for us in a way that we can comprehend.

There was another problem that the Lord needed to address with the Advent. Hell and its influences was also at play subverting our ability to understand God and His heavenly kingdom, even in circumstances where there was the possibility of a connection. This problem is caused by self-centered thoughts and feelings that every human being experiences due to our exposure to and adaptation of evil. At the time of the Lord's birth, these thoughts, springing from evil, were dominating human civilization to the point of making it impossible for people to differentiate between good and evil. The problem, simply stated, is that every selfish love produces thoughts that oppose and reject God. We are taught in the book Divine Providence (206-8) that the love of self in its most basic form wishes itself to be a god and rule over all. Therefore, by its very nature, it rejects, hates, and turns away from any true understanding of the nature of God, His Divine love and the leading of His providence. So, not only does the love of self turn a person away from acknowledging God, but it also focuses a person on the materialism that is the byproduct of that love.

With these factors in mind, it is truly astonishing that the Lord found the perfect way to reach out to us so that we could establish a connection with Him. He did this by being born as an infant with His Divinity comprising his soul. And then He manifested His love and His wisdom through allowing that Divinity to direct His life on earth, even to the point of His subsequent resurrection. In this way, He could establish the construct allowing us to see the unseeable. We mortals, through observing Jesus' life, can behold the workings of the infinite Creator of the universe in human form. By living His life as the Divine Human on earth, the Lord was able to fully reveal who He is and show us His purposes for the human race, inviting each of us into a relationship that is receptive to His Divine love and wisdom.

If He had not been born on earth, because of the reigning materialism and selfishness of the day, the human race, as a whole, would have perished. Why? Because people of themselves could see the life offered by selfishness, while, without the Advent and knowledge of the Lord as the Divine Human, they would not have been able to see anything of heavenly life and the transcendent happiness offered there.

There was a lot of change triggered in the Spiritual World (behind the scenes) by the Advent. We are taught that the Lord combatted the hells, reorganized them; re-established an understanding of goodness and truth, and differentiated them from evils and falsity. In so

doing, He re-established human freedom. But, if we put that aside just for a moment, the basic, most fundamental miracle of the Advent is amazing: He was able to make all of the reality of a spiritual world, which we could not see without the Lord, visible to us and understandable. This, of course, did not fully materialize until the whole Advent process was completed through the Second Advent and its gift of the Heavenly Doctrines in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Only here do we find a rational description of the Lord, allowing us to see the full nature of His life, glorification, and Divine purposes that He invites us to. So yes, it is literally true, as is said in our lesson from True Christianity, **“the New Church is to be the crown of all the churches because it will worship the visible God in whom is the invisible.”**

So, we can today celebrate the Lord’s invitation for us to come into tangible, understandable relationship with His Divine love and Divine wisdom, the fundamental creative and defining forces of the universe. His method of connection is offering us the understanding of who He is as the Visible Human God in whom is the Invisible, as is portrayed throughout the Three-Fold Word.

The Visible God in whom is the Invisible – that is what was being talked about in that ancient prophecy in Isaiah: **“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given”** - the Lord came on earth to show us that He is THE Divine Human, teaching us His Divine ways, showing us His Love in examples in the New Testament. He is the God who is mercy and love itself, reaching out to us, and understanding our states of weakness because He, alone, is Divinely Human.

**“The government is upon His shoulder”** -He is the one with the power to lead us, using rational truths, out of temptation, fear, and the imprisonment of hell, and heal us of our selfish diseases. He uses these truths to lead us to heaven with profound, unfathomable wisdom.

**“His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** -He shows us all the Divine attributes of His love and wisdom and how they relate to our human needs. We are given to experience the blessings of these attributes through a life that is compatible with heaven.

**“Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end”** (Isaiah 9:6). -The one goal of the Lord in creation is a heaven gathered from the human race where the Lord’s peace and mercy rule and will grow to eternity. This is the goal that He has for you, a goal that He consistently maintains throughout your life on earth!

Without the Lord physically demonstrating His Divine Humanity through His Advent, we would know nothing about His life, His nature, and His character. Nor would we know how (with any accuracy) we are to respond to that life or open ourselves to receiving and benefitting from its qualities. Furthermore, since the Lord is heaven in its essence, we would not know anything about heaven, hell, or life after death. Our lesson from the True Christian Religion stresses, therefore, that it is essential for us to see God in order for us to enter into partnership

with Him (TCR 787). Without that sight, our faith is blind. The book teaches that the light of this faith without a visible God **“is like the light of a firefly, and the light at night over swamps and marshes that contain sulfur, or the light in rotting wood. Nothing stands out in this light except imaginary things that you think you see, but they do not exist** (TCR 339).

Key to understanding the essence of the Advent is that by being born and living on earth, the Lord fulfilled the Word. “Fulfilling the Word” was the basic way the Lord enabled us to discover the relationship that He offers. Prior to the Advent (before He fulfilled the Word), all the stories in the Old Testament spoke about His future life on earth. Through correspondence, they all taught truths illuminating how the Lord would operate in the future. Then, when He did come, the Lord basically did what the Scriptures had predicted, only in a more defined way. And so His coming literally “fulfilled the Scriptures”.

The story of His life, as found in the New Testament, can therefore be understood as an extension of the Old Testament. So, now, together with the correspondences of the Old Testament, the Scriptures today provide an external, comprehensive view of how the Infinite God descends and operates with humanity. Collectively, the Sacred Scriptures still show us how the Lord interacts with each of us, leading us as our Gentle Shepherd. With this in mind, we are taught that a conjunction with the Lord is only possible through the Scriptures, because it is here, through the stories, that He reveals Himself to us and is present (SS 62).

We are blessed to see and learn about the Visible God as He is present in the Word. But this knowledge itself is only the introduction into true faith. The whole reason for the Advent is to allow the Lord to enter into us and bless us with the richness of a Heavenly life – a life that comes only from Him. To achieve that, the Lord urges us to advance our faith through the recognition and acknowledgment that requires us to follow Him. Only through life can the Lord enter into our faith, deepening it and rendering it permanent. The Lord Himself spoke of this in the Gospel of John, where He said: **“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:21,23).**

So let us rejoice with the angels and celebrate our ability to see and have a relationship with the Visible God, in whom is the Invisible, like the soul within the body. Through His birth, He has given us, mortal, time-and-space-bound people, the incredible ability to comprehend His unbounded love for us and to behold the beautiful life that He invites us to enjoy in heaven for eternity. We celebrate because we can worship a Human God, who leads us tenderly, mercifully, consistently, and wisely. We know that “without Him, we can do nothing,” and miraculously, through His advent, He has shown us who He is and how we can partner with Him as we strive to love and serve Him to eternity.

**Lessons:**

Isaiah 9:2-7

John 15:1-10

TCR 787

True Christianity 787:

This new church is the crown of all the churches that have ever existed on this planet because **it will worship the one God, who can be seen, within whom is the God that cannot be seen, like a soul in a body**. This is the only way we can form a partnership with God, because we are earthly and we think in earthly ways; and such a partnership must be formed in our thinking and then in the desires that belong to our love. This occurs when we think of God as a human being.

Establishing contact with a God we cannot see is like trying to make eye contact with the limitless vastness of outer space, or like being on the lookout in mid-ocean but not being able to see anything but endless sky and sea.

Establishing contact with a God we can see is like making eye contact with a person in the air or on the sea, whose arms then reach out, inviting us into an embrace.

Any partnership between God and us must also be reciprocated as a partnership between us and God, and this second aspect of the partnership is not possible unless we can see God.