

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 22nd Dec: 10:30 AM. Carol service

Sunday 29th Dec: 10:30 AM. Malcolm speaking. Pot-luck lunch. Bring and share.

January Theme - Psalm 91, Worship and the Lord's Supper

Sunday 5th Jan: 10:30 AM. Church service

Sunday 12th Jan: 10:30 AM. Malcolm speaking

Sunday 19th Jan: 10:30 AM. Malcolm speaking

Sunday 26th Jan: 10:30 AM. Daniel Miller & Emma Whitworth are our visiting speakers from the East London international church of Christ.

Sunday 02 Feb: 10:30 AM. Toby Agerbak is our speaker from the NW region of the London ICOC.

The Nativity and the Holy Spirit

Introduction

When you think about the nativity, what comes to mind? Perhaps it is the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the stable, angels, shepherds, wise men, the heavenly host, or the guiding star. How about the Holy Spirit? Did you know that the Holy Spirit is mentioned more often in connection with the birth of Jesus than most of the rest of the New Testament? Let's have a look.

John the Baptiser

"the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the

wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13-17) "And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel." Lk 1:80

What 'prayer' was Zechariah making (v13) that had been heard? The likelihood is that it was the prayer Zechariah uttered while offering incense for the redemption of Israel. The purpose of that prayer was to beseech God to send Messiah. Gabriel is telling him that the son to be born (John = 'The Lord is gracious') will prepare the way for Messiah. The Spirit fills John even before birth because the Holy Spirit is equipping him for a specific task in God's plan of redemption. John's prophetic role required extraordinary spiritual empowerment to challenge the religious establishment, call for repentance, and announce the arrival of the Messiah.

Mary

"The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35ff)

"In terms perhaps reminiscent of the hovering Spirit at creation (Genesis 1.2), in Mary's conception of Jesus the Spirit effects a new creation." The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke, Roger Stronstad

The Holy Spirit is twice critically involved in the creation of something never before seen - creation itself and God become flesh.

Zacchaeus and Elizabeth

"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." (Luke 1:41)

“His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.” (Luke 1:67-68)

Elizabeth's baby (John) is already filled with the Spirit (Luke 1.15). Why does he leap in the womb? Because he comes into the presence of Jesus. This is the one for who he will be the forerunner. The Spirit is already at work, causing him to rejoice at the presence of Messiah.

Simeon

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God...” (Luke 2:25ff)

The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, which seems to mean on him continually. In Old Testament times we read of the Spirit coming upon people on special occasions, but a continuing presence is rare. Simeon’s endowment was something special. The Spirit had indicated to Simeon in some way not specified that he would see the Messiah, the Lord’s Christ (cf. Luke 2.11) before his death. Additionally, Simeon was ‘in the Spirit’ which includes inspired by the Spirit but seems also to indicate something more, a special sensitivity.

Conclusion

The Spirit prepares a foetus to bear witness to the most important person to ever live on this earth. He creates something never seen before, comparable to the creation of the universe. The Spirit rejoices at the hope of heaven realised on earth and enables human beings to prophesy. He rests on righteous people, giving them unique revelation, special discernment and guidance.

The way we celebrate the nativity focuses on Jesus, and so it should. But, we lose something significant when we miss the activity and presence of the Spirit. What does the involvement of the Spirit mean to you? How will it help you to rejoice in this Christmastide?

Andy B’s Substack

We are very grateful to Andy for preaching last Sunday. If you would like to connect with more of his material, you might find his output on Substack interesting and helpful.

<https://substack.com/@andrewboakyephd>



Watford Contribution Details

Church bank account: Three Counties churches of Christ HSBC

Sort Code: 401915

Account Number: 04759613

Watford Media

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watfordchurchofchrist6708>

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