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SERMON XI.

WONDERFUL: THE NAME OF CHRIST.

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“And his name shall be called Wonderful.”—Isaiah ix. 6.

ISAIAH lived and prophesied in an age when vital piety had sadly declined amongst the professed people of God; and overwhelming calamities were beginning to threaten them. They were a sinful nation—a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that were corrupters. They had forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. Isaiah was sent to them with “heavy tidings.” Foreign invasion, a desolating war, and long years of captivity, in a strange land, awaited them. Still, God would not forget the few, who, in the midst of general corruption, were faithful in his service, and who wept, because of the approaching desolations of Zion. For their encouragement, the vision of the prophet was extended to a brighter day in the history of the Church—to the advent of Him who was to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.” He saw him in the manger of Bethlehem, and he exclaimed, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” He saw the beginning of his public ministry in the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, and he said, “The people that

walked in darkness, have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." He traced the progress of his kingdom on earth, and witnessed its glorious results; and he said, "Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever."

The name of this mysterious child, this mighty king, shall be called **WONDERFUL**. His name shall be expressive of his character and of his works. He is a wonderful Being; and the work he came to accomplish, is a wonderful work. The meaning and the appropriateness of this name, will appear, from the following considerations:—

First. In Him are mysteriously united, in one person, two infinitely different natures. This most important doctrine is clearly taught in the immediate context. He is a *child* born, a *son* given. We are at no loss to understand the meaning of the words *child* and *son*. They naturally and obviously signify a human being, possessing a material body and a natural soul. When the father of John the Baptist said to him, "And thou, *child*, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest," we know he meant, by the word *child*, a human being; and we have as good evidence, that the same is true of him of whom Isaiah prophesied.

But this child, this son, is called *The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father*. Can we be at a loss to understand what is meant by *the Mighty God*? Turn to every place where this language is used in the Bible, and you will find it, in every instance, used as one of the names of Divinity. Magistrates and angels are called *gods*; but no creature, however exalted, is called the Mighty God. Shall we, then in order to escape from the doctrine of the

divinity of Christ, give to the language, in this particular passage, a meaning infinitely different from that which it has in every other passage, where it occurs in the Bible? To do so, would be to abuse the language of inspiration, instead of interpreting it.*

But he is also called *The Everlasting Father*. Why is he so called? The name, *Father*, is generally applied, in the Scriptures, to the first person in the Trinity. The literal translation of the Hebrew text, would be, *the Father of Eternity*. Some, indeed, have supposed the language to refer to the future, not to the past; but there is no good reason for limiting the word, since it naturally means *eternity*. The prophet, therefore, could have used no stronger language to express the idea, that the Messiah exists from eternity, without beginning of days. This mysterious Being, then, is a man; and yet, he is the Mighty and Eternal God!

The same doctrine is taught, in language equally clear, by the prophet Micah: "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 old, from everlasting."† That this is a prediction of the advent of Christ, there can be no doubt. It was so understood by the Jews themselves. When Herod inquired of the priests and scribes, where Christ should be born, they answered by quoting this text: Matthew ii. 3—6. In this passage, we have distinctly presented the human and divine natures of Christ. He was to be *born* of a virgin, in Bethlehem; and yet his goings forth

* This language occurs in the following passages of Scripture, viz: Gen. xlix. 21; Deut. vii. 21; Neh. ix. 32, Job xxxvi. 5; Ps. l. 1; Ps. cxxxii. 2, 5; Isaiah x. 21; Jer. xxxii. 18; Hab. i. 2.

† Micah v. 2.

have been from of old, even from everlasting; or, as literally translated, *from the days of eternity*. As to his human nature, it began to exist, when begotten of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary; but his divine nature existed from eternity. Therefore, he is truly man, and truly God.

This doctrine was taught by our Saviour himself, when he silenced the Pharisees, by asking, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" They were, as they thought, prepared at once to answer: "They say unto him, The Son of David." But, another question involved them in inextricable difficulty; "He saith unto them, How, then, doth David, in spirit, call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"* It was true, that Christ was David's son; but it was also true, that he was David's Lord; for David had addressed him as such, long before his incarnation. How, then, could he be David's son, and yet David's Lord? Believing the Messiah to be a mere man, the Pharisees could not answer the question; and the same difficulty presses all who deny his true and proper divinity. For, if, as the Socinian contends, he was only a man; then, he could not have been David's Lord. If, as the Arian contends, he was a super-angelic being, but not possessed of real divinity; he was neither David's son, nor David's Lord. But, if, as the great body of professing Christians have always believed, he possesses both the human and the divine nature; all difficulty disappears. As to his human nature, he is David's son; as to his divine nature, he is David's Creator and Lord.

And this doctrine is distinctly taught by the Apostle Paul. He speaks of Christ as "made of the seed of

* Matthew xxii. 41—44.

David, according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness.”* He was the seed of David, *according to the flesh*. The word *flesh*, as used in the Scriptures, sometimes has its most literal signification, viz: flesh, as distinguished from other kinds of matter. Frequently it is used in a bad sense, meaning *depravity*. “They that are *in the flesh* cannot please God.” In other instances, it means human nature; as, when it is said, “Oh! thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come.”† In this sense it is evidently used by the Apostle. He teaches, then, that Jesus Christ is the seed of David, as to his human nature; or, as he is a *man*. Then the phrase, “spirit of holiness,” evidently means his divine nature. As to one of his natures, he is the son of David, and, therefore, a man; as to the other, he is the Son of God, and, therefore, truly God.

Some imagine, that the phrase *Son of God*, necessarily implies inferiority. This, however, is a mistake. With man, the Son possesses the same nature and attributes which the Father possesses; and, consequently, is equal to his Father. It is true, the Father exists before he has a Son, and there is a sense in which the Son derives his life from his father; but, as we have already shown, the Scriptures teach, that the Son of God has existed from eternity; and, therefore, in his case, the ideas of priority and dependence cannot be admitted. The phrase, “Son of God,” therefore, is used to express that particular and incomprehensible relation, which, from eternity, exists between the first and second persons in the adorable Trinity. The Jews so understood it; and, therefore, when Jesus called himself the Son of God, “they sought

* Romans i. 3, 4.

† Psalm lxxv. 2.

the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said, also, that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God.*"*

Accordingly the Scriptures abundantly teach, that Christ was the Son of God before he became incarnate. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. And when Jesus was about to finish his work, and bid adieu to earth, he prayed, saying, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."† And as the only begotten Son, he not only bears the image of the Father, but "is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."‡ Such language would be wholly inapplicable to the most exalted *creature*. He who is the brightness of the Father's glory, must possess the divine nature and perfections.

The doctrine of the divine and human natures of Christ, is beautifully and strikingly taught by our Lord, when he says, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." How can he be both *the root*, and *the branch* of David? Just as he can be both the son, and the Lord of David. As he is God, he is the root of David; as he is man, he is his offspring or branch.

Often, during his ministry on earth, did he display these two natures in intimate and mysterious union. As a *child*, he "increased in wisdom and stature." As a man, he oft sat weary by the way-side, and often needed repose in sleep. Yet he opened the eyes of the blind, caused the deaf to hear, and the lame to leap for joy. At the grave of Lazarus, he wept like a man; but he called the dead to life with the voice of God. Like a man, he slept in the hinder part of the vessel, when the storm raged on the

* John v. 18.

† John xvii. 5.

‡ Heb. i. 3.

lake : like God, he said to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still." Like man, he fainted under the weight of his cross, as he ascended to Calvary, and then expired on the cross in deepest agonies : like God, he rose on the morning of the third day, conquering death and the grave, and resumed his place on the throne of God.

And now, having all power in heaven and in earth, he reigns, "head over all things to the Church." Being omnipotent, he "upholds all things by the word of his power;" and, in his infinite wisdom, he exercises a universal and particular providence. And "he must reign, till he hath put all things under his feet." And then he, God-man, will sit upon the throne of his glory, and judge the world in righteousness. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." His name is Wonderful.

Let no one object to this doctrine, because of its mysteriousness. You have a body, and a mind—two distinct and widely different substances, strangely united in one person, acting and re-acting upon each other. Matter, of which the body is composed, is divisible and inert. Mind is indivisible and essentially active. In every leading feature, these two substances are unlike, and opposite. Do you comprehend their union? Can you explain how the mind looks out through the eye? or how, through the ear, catches sound, and is charmed with music? Is not the mode in which your two natures are united, and in which they mutually affect each other, a profound mystery to you? And if you cannot comprehend the union of your own two natures; is it wonderful, that the union of the two natures of Christ, is incomprehensible? And if you have evidence of the existence of so great a mystery in your own person, may there not be abundant evidence of a greater mystery in the person of Jesus Christ?

Secondly. Jesus Christ is wonderful *in the work he came to perform*. He was *the light* of the world, the great "Teacher come from God." And, in this work, he was wonderful. "Never man spake like this man." His all-seeing eye penetrate the hearts of those whom he instructed, and saw, most clearly, all their secret springs. "He knew what was in man." With astonishing wisdom, he adapted his instructions to the people, imparting the most exalted wisdom to the unlearned. Unlike the philosophers of Rome and Greece, who confined their instructions to the educated classes, he descended amongst the masses of the people, and made them wiser than pagan philosophers. As an evidence that he was the promised Messiah, he sent word to John the Baptist, in prison, saying, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." He manifested wonderful skill, in striking the consciences of wicked men, and arousing them from their sinful security. Mark his answer to those who, though themselves most ungodly, brought to him a woman taken in adultery, and said, "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" He saw the vileness of their motives, and he knew perfectly the vileness of their lives. After they had importuned him for an answer, he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." This is one example. The Gospels contain others equally striking.

His public ministry was characterized by wonderful tenderness and benevolence. Love brought him from heaven to earth; and that love was expressed in every discourse he delivered. It was in Nazareth, where he had spent the earlier days of his life, that he delivered one of

his first discourses, after he entered upon his ministry, founded upon Isaiah lxi. 1; and the inspired historian says, "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."

Wonderful, indeed, is that light, which Jesus poured upon the dark minds of men; a light which, in its first dawnings, is as the twilight of the morning, but which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It reveals to the mind the most glorious being in the universe, and exhibits, in beautiful and majestic harmony, his attributes and perfections. It shines upon the narrow pathway to heaven, and guides the immortal soul in its journey to its glorious home in the heavens. It is a light, the first rays of which fall upon the mind in this world, the bright effulgence of which shall be seen in that world of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the light,

It was a wonderful *sacrifice* which Jesus offered on Calvary for the sins of men. He saw them slaves to sin, and under the curse of the broken law. That law is "holy, just, and good," and, therefore, immutable—immutable in its precepts and its exactions. "All had sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The fearful penalty of the law had been denounced against them. They were condemned already. No man, no angel, nor all men and angels could effect the deliverance of one sinner. All were lost. Then, said he, "Lo I come, (in the volume of the book, it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." He was "made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law." Standing in the stead of sinners, having become their surety, he was treated as a sinner. He was made "sin for us." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." He endured for us the penalty of the broken law; "and,

by his stripes, we are healed." Thus the law was honored, and God can "be just, and the justifier of him that believeth."

Wonderful were *the sufferings* endured by the Son of God, in effecting the salvation of his people. "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Nor shall we ever comprehend the full import of his language, when, as he retired with his disciples to the Garden of Olives, he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" nor, the deeper anguish of his soul, when, on the cross, he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Wonderful was *the love* which induced him to submit to such humiliation, and to such suffering. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." His love was the more wonderful, as it was exercised towards his *enemies*, whose moral character he could not but abhor. It was such love as was never before manifested. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Wonderful is *the glory* which Jesus designed, by his sufferings, to secure to those who trust in him. The Church, composed of the redeemed, he will present to himself "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." To each of his disciples he gives eternal life; "a crown of glory and honor, that fadeth not away;" "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They shall stand in his presence, where "there is fulness of joy," and for ever behold his glory. Eternity shall be the duration of their joys, and the ever increasing

capacities of their souls the measure of their wisdom and of their bliss.

He is wonderful in his *providential dealings* with his people. Having triumphed over death and the grave, he ascended to glory, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Exercising all authority in heaven and in earth, he is now "the head over all things, to his Church." He has undertaken to conduct safely to heaven, all who have trusted, or shall trust in him. His unseen arm is their defence, and his hand supplies their wants. But he leads them often along a difficult way, and subjects them to many disappointments and sore troubles. At times, they are ready, in their distress, to say, "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." His Church, too, is called to pass through fiery trials. At one time, grievous error enters it unawares; and its beauty fades, and its strength is weakened. Age after age has witnessed the triumph of error, whilst truth was trampled in the dust. At another time, the enemies of Christianity rise in their might, and cause the blood of the most faithful to flow in torrents. Yet, all the while, Jesus Christ loves his people and his Church, far more than they who grieve because of the troubles through which they are called to pass. His purposes are infinitely benevolent; and he is leading his people in the right way. For the present, trusting in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, but unable to understand his ways, we can but exclaim, with the devout apostle of the Gentiles, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." We may yet rejoice to know, "that all things do

work together for good to them that love God ;” and that, in a better world, where we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, we shall forever admire “his manifold wisdom.”

Jesus will appear wonderful, *when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness*. When he dwelt on earth, he was seen in his humiliation. The glories of his Divinity shone but dimly through his humanity ; and his enemies, mistaking him for a feeble man, treated him with gross indignity. But, “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” His appearance will be wonderful ; for he “shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire.” “Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” And, says John the Apostle, “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works.” With infinite wisdom will he then bring into judgment every secret thing, and, with infinite accuracy, weigh every character in the balances ; and before the assembled universe will he vindicate all his dealings with men.

To all eternity his name shall be called Wonderful. His two natures, mysteriously united, shall never be separated. Humanity is for ever enthroned with Divinity. How often, during the eternal ages, will the story of his incarnation be told, and the wonderful history of redemption repeated to admiring intelligences, it may be, from other

worlds. For ever shall the peculiar song of the redeemed be heard and admired in the New Jerusalem; and for ever shall the eyes of all holy beings turn, with adoring delight, to the wonderful God-man!

REFLECTIONS.

First. It is a wonderful *salvation* of which we are partakers. It is *so great*. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." The Apostle attempts not to tell *how great* it is. No language could convey an adequate idea of its greatness; and no finite mind could adequately conceive of it. It is deliverance from hell; and who can comprehend the degradation and misery of a lost soul? We have seen men unhappy; we have seen them in great sufferings, mental and physical; perhaps, we have seen them in agony. But we have never seen a human being perfectly miserable, and in absolute, black despair. Oh! the fearful degradation and woe of a lost sinner; who can conceive, adequately, of his condition? From all this, the salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, delivers us. It is "*so great*."

But this salvation not only delivers from hell; it makes the penitent believer a child of God, and an heir of heaven. It raises him from deep degradation, to dwell with angels. It does more; it places him on the throne with the Son of God. For it is written, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." It gives to him a crown of glory, and honor that fadeth not away. It is a great salvation!

It is an *eternal* salvation. All other deliverances are from temporal evils; and their benefits are confined to this short life. But it is the *soul*, the immortal part, that is the

special object of the gospel salvation. It saves from eternal evils ; it secures eternal bliss. Compared with its duration, ages dwindle to a point ; cycles of ages are as nothing. It is a wonderful—wonderful salvation !

And what is more wonderful than all, *it is FREE*. It is the gift of God. It is more : it is a *gracious* gift—a gift to those who merited only perdition. Its invitations are to “the chief of sinners.”

See, to the vilest of the vile
A free acceptance given !
See, rebels, by adopting grace,
Sit with the heirs of heaven.”

“Without money and without price” —this is the proclamation. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Glad tidings, these, to sinners lost ; who have no righteousness ; who can bring no price ; who are debtors, to an incalculable amount, and have nothing to pay. Come freely ; come, and welcome, the chief of sinners. For, saith the Saviour, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” This salvation is as wonderful in its freeness, as in its greatness.

And yet it is a *costly* salvation. Free, and yet costly ; and as costly as free ! The price of it, was the blood of the only-begotten Son of God ; his sorrows, groans, tears, and death. He gave his life a ransom for his people. Justice demanded it, and he honored the demand. Made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, he was made a curse, and thus redeemed them from *its* curse.

“There’s ne’er a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan.”

And will ruined men reject such a salvation ? Will they delay, for a moment, to accept it with joy and gratitude ? What punishment can be too great for those, who, for the trifles of earth, “neglect so great salvation,”

and trample under foot the blood of such a Saviour? Angels desire to look into its glorious mysteries; and will infatuated men, for whom such a salvation was provided, turn from it with cold indifference? How fearful the depravity, that can so harden the heart against the tenderest appeals, and so blind the mind to its eternal interests!

Will not the awakened, trembling sinner, come to Christ without delay? Your sins may be numerous and great; but greater far is the salvation of Jesus Christ. You may be most unworthy; but he came to save sinners.

Secondly. Let us, from this subject, learn to take our proper place, as *disciples*, to learn and adore. It brings us to the contemplation of that adorable mystery, *the Trinity in Unity*. The *being* of God, is infinitely above our comprehension. No wonder, then, that the *mode* of his existence should be so. And, then, the union of the human and divine natures; who can comprehend it? We cannot comprehend the union between our body and mind; no wonder, then, that we find a deep mystery in the God-man. Indeed, the Gospel itself, with all its rich provisions, is a *mystery*, in one of the senses of that word. It presents a plan of salvation, which no human wisdom could have discovered. It is, therefore, purely a matter of revelation. And it reveals to us the purposes of the infinite Jehovah, beginning, if we may so say, in eternity past, and extending through an eternity to come. Of such a Being, and such a system of truth, what can we know? Limited in our faculties, blinded by sin, we can do nothing more, even with the aid of Divine grace, than learn the elementary principles. "We know in part." Yet, we may know all that is necessary to a pious life, and to the salvation of the soul.

But, how does this subject, properly viewed, rebuke that bold spirit of speculation, which has so often characterized "philosophy, falsely so called," and which has driven so many into dangerous error, and even to infidelity! "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Our true position is at the feet of the great Teacher, receiving, with the docility of true disciples, his wise instructions.

Thirdly. Gratitude and praise are eminently becoming, in those who are partakers of this great salvation. Let their gratitude be shown, by the unreserved consecration of themselves to the service of their Redeemer. "For," saith Paul, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be made rich." Let us, then, say with this same Apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Fourthly. To the disciple of Christ we may reasonably say, "Rejoice evermore." He has a Saviour who is ever with him, causing all things to work together for his good, and who is able to save to the uttermost. Troubles may come upon his children; but his grace will enable them to "rejoice in tribulation." Temptations may assail; but, says an Apostle, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." The world may array itself against them; but they hear the

voice of their Redeemer, saying, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Calmly and joyfully may they look upon all the temptations, trials, and sufferings of this life, and exclaim triumphantly, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."