

The Zeal of God

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The zeal of God is a subject rarely referred to, and yet it finds an important place in the Scriptures. It is connected with the bringing in of the one blessed Person in whom God's thoughts of blessing for both Jew and Gentile are centred. This is plainly seen in the first verses of Isaiah 9, culminating in the precious prophecy of verses 6 and 7.

Further, it comes into evidence in relation to God's sovereignty in preserving a remnant in days of darkness and failure and in the presence of the enemies' attack upon the people of God. This is recorded in 2 Kings 19 and in Isaiah 37.

Lastly, the same feature of zeal must of necessity mark the actions of God as He deals in judgment with a rebellious and disobedient people (see Ezekiel 5).

Whilst recognizing that zeal characterizes God in each of these matters, we desire to dwell a little upon the deep feelings that were His as the Holy Spirit enlarges upon the Name of the One in whom everything was centred for God. As we read the first chapter of Matthew's gospel we are left in no doubt at all as to who this prophecy referred.

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace . . . The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

Does not every detail recorded of this blessed Person in the gospels show that the power and mind of God was behind all? How wonderfully unique His *birth* was! "the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; the word "Wonderful" in Isaiah 9 might be translated "miracle," and truly His birth was in full accord with His name. In these days of departure from the truth let us hold tenaciously to the truth, the all-important truth, of the virgin birth of our Lord. Upon it the whole fabric of Christian faith depends. It affected the stars; it moved the magi; it caused the angelic host to burst into praise; it astonished and rejoiced ordinary men like the shepherds; it caused consternation to a whole city and troubled beyond measure a monarch. Above all else it made redemption possible, and secured a company of sons for God, (Galatians 4: 4, 5). Never was there a birth like it!

His *life* was "wonderful." At the early age of twelve years learned doctors of the law were "amazed" at His understanding and answers; and over and over again as He moved through this scene we find that men "marvelled" and "wondered" at His sayings and His deeds. How wondrously unique He was! Satan had nothing in Him; indeed He completely defeated him, and that as a dependent Man. He "knew no sin;" He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." He could challenge His very enemies "which of you convinceth Me of sin?" His miracles were the evidence of the *wonder* of His Person; He wrote the *wonder* of His Name on the sea, the air; and the very character of His words caused men to *wonder*.

More than this, He afforded God untold delight; He ever did God's will; every word and thought of God was treasured in His heart; he glorified God and at the same time expressed the fullness of divine compassion to men. "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." He was here as a dependent Man, and yet the fullness of the Godhead was present in Him. How wonderfully unique was His life!

And what of His death? Was there ever a death like His? The very wording of John 19: 30 shows that, even from the physical view-point, His death was unique. His death was the subject of counsel before this world was, (Acts 2: 23); it was a death which was the direct result of *obedience* (Philippians 2); it is the only death which, instead of being marked by defeat, has completely robbed death and he who wielded death, of their power (Heb. 2: 14). Through that death the eternal thoughts of God have been given expression to, and the basis laid for a universal scene of glory, peopled by the myriads who have been secured for God. His death darkened the sun, convulsed the earth and robbed the grave.

How *wonderful* was His resurrection! Others had been called from death and even from the tomb by His own mighty power, but the language of John in John 2: 7, would tell us that *His* rising again was unique. His resurrection is the solid basis upon which faith rests; it is the assurance of the complete and absolute victory over death, and a triumph which is the present possession of the vast company who "in Christ shall all be made alive," (1 Cor. 15).

He has ascended. Elijah was carried up to heaven, but this blessed Man has "ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." He is unique as the only *Man* in heaven at this moment; Stephen saw Him there; Saul of Tarsus heard His voice from heaven. His birth; His life; His death; His rising again, all set forth the wonder of Him whose name is "Wonderful," and as we consider these things a little we adoringly recognize the zeal of God in relation to the coming into Manhood of this blessed Man.

How much more there is in that Name! He is our Counsellor. Let us not lean to our own understanding; rather let us sit at His feet, listening to His word. He is the "mighty" God, a word which suggests a "warrior." Why do we attempt things in our own strength? His counsel and His power are available at all times, and in every circumstance. He is "The Everlasting Father," or it might read, "The Father of Eternity." This would show that everything had its origin in Him (Col. 1: 17, and hence He has a perfect knowledge of every happening. He is the "Prince of Peace: . the establishment of peace is in His control alone, and "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

The "child born" is the Son of God; that Son has been "given" in order that we might, as set free from every hindrance, know something of the greatness of His Name and be found responding to Him in praise and adoration. "Sing forth the honour of His Name; make His praise glorious . . . All the earth shall worship Thee . . they shall sing unto Thy name," (Psalm 66: 2-4).