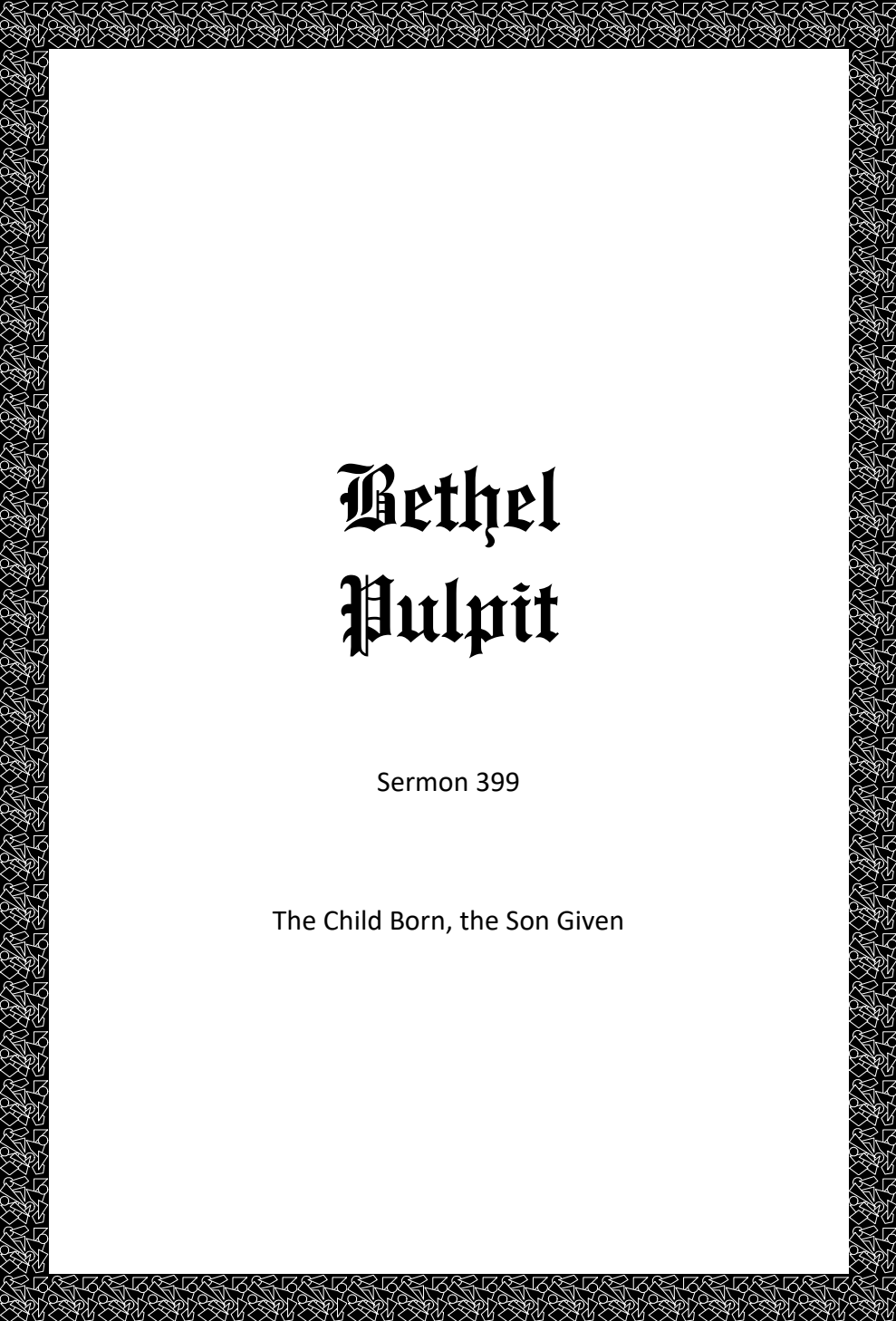




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 399

The Child Born, the Son Given

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 17th December, 2017**

Text: *"For 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" (Isaiah 9. 6).*

Someone reading this word for the first time might have expected to find a word like this in the gospels, and yet in the providence of God it is found written a few hundred years before the Saviour's birth. What a light this throws on the divine inspiration of the Word of God! Why, the prophet speaks as if this thing had already taken place. It was so sure; it was so certain. It must have been somewhat of a mysterious word to the Old Testament church, but they must have seen a beauty in it, as little by little the coming of the Son of God was revealed to them – of the house of David, and then in a place called Bethlehem, and then born of a virgin, and then here, who this glorious Person was going to be: a Child born, a Son given.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Beloved friends, there seems to me this morning to be a special, gracious weight on these two words: *unto us* – a personal interest, poor, lost, ruined, guilty sinners who apart from this must have perished to all eternity. These two words are vital words: *"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."* You say, Well, who does this belong to? You may say it belongs to the elect of God; yes. It belongs to the Lord's people; yes. But it is revealed to each unworthy sinner brought to feel their need of salvation, seeing all their hope in this promised Saviour, this coming Saviour, and resting all their hope for time and for eternity on His coming, and what He accomplished.

"Unto us." I think that is specially my burden this time of the year. We do not want these things to pass us by. We meet at this season of the year. We hear the wonderful truth, the glorious tidings, the meaning of it. It is emphasised, this is vital. If we do not have an interest here personally, we are lost to all eternity. It should be our chief concern, led by the Spirit of God, to be led into these things, to have a personal interest in them. It is *unto us*.

Now in that well-known, beautiful passage I read to you this morning (Luke 2. 1-24), the Saviour's birth was gloriously announced. But did you notice the difference? The angel said, "*Unto you.*" The prophet Isaiah, speaking for himself and the whole church of God, said, "*Unto us.*" And there is a difference, because the Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, lost, ruined, unworthy sinners, not to save angels.

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love."

It is unworthy sinners who are more favoured than angels. "*Unto you.*" That is the angel's message. "*Unto you* is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Isaiah comes closer: "*Unto us*" – so unworthy, so undeserving of a privilege so divine.

"*Unto us* a Child is born, *unto us* a Son is given." May we be led into it by the Spirit of God. I often think, when we were children, we were interested in this time of the year. As we grew older, we began to realise something of what it means. Now here comes the difference. Some of us became deeply concerned that we might have a personal interest, and it is a solemn thing if you have not come to that deep concern for your own personal interest. And then came that blessed time when we could first join in and really sing the song of redemption.

"He left His radiant throne on high!
Left the bright realms of bliss!
And came to earth to bleed and die!
Was ever love like this?"

"For *unto us* a Child is born, *unto us* a Son is given" – a Child born, born into this world of sin and sorrow, a real Child, born of a virgin, the great mystery of the virgin birth. "*Unto us* a Child is born," and born into this world of sin and sorrow, born that He might die. Some people say that the birth of our Lord Jesus is not important, and they speak very unguardedly, because some of them are very godly people. They say there is no doctrine, there is nothing important concerning the *birth* of our Lord Jesus. Well, the simple answer to that is this: if the Lord Jesus had never been born, it very clearly means that He never would have come. Have you ever thought – there is a scripture where the Lord Jesus once said, "*If*

I had not come.” You think of what hangs on that – your everlasting destiny, your only hope. “If I had not come.” The point of the Saviour’s birth at Bethlehem is His coming.

But though the Son of God from all eternity, He must become a real Man, completely free from sin, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” – a real Man. He must be a real Man that He might take the dying traitor’s place, that He might be a substitute. He must be a real Man that He might be able to sympathise in our sorrows. But He must be a real Man in order that He might open the fountain and shed His precious blood, that sin might be atoned for.

All these things, beloved friends, are bound up with His birth, His sacred humanity, His coming to be the Son of God by covenant engagement, to come and save sinners, and that could only be by shedding His precious blood, because without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sins. The Godhead cannot bleed, but the Son of God took our nature, without sin, into lasting union with His divine Person, that in that body He might shed that precious blood, the sinner’s only hope. But again the Godhead cannot die. It is made very clear that the Son of God must die. So He takes that sacred humanity into union with His divine Person, that He might lay down that life in death. You say, These are high doctrines. Beloved friends, they are vital truths. “Unto us a *Child is born*,” that He might die, that He might rise again, and that He might live eternally.

“Unto us a Son is given.” You young ones, you girls and boys, be very clear on this: the Lord Jesus did not become the Son of God when He was born. He was always the Son of God. He was the Son of God before He was born. He was the Son of God from all eternity. He was one with His Father and with the Holy Spirit, the mysterious Three-in-One, one God. So He was a Child born, but He was not a Son born; He was the Son given. There is so much, beloved friends, in Scripture on the *gift* of the Son of God. His Father gave Him. In love He gave Him, and He sent Him. “Having yet therefore one Son, His wellbeloved, He sent Him.” And He gave Him for those who are unworthy, those who are guilty, that there might be a way of salvation opened up for them.

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given” – not two different persons; two different natures, one human, one divine, but just one glorious Person. “Unto us a Son is given.” We have that well-known, beautiful word on why He was given. “God so loved the world, that He *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What did He give Him for? “Unto us a Son is *given*.” He gave Him to be “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He gave Him to come into this dark, evil world, to be mocked, derided, spit upon, and He gave Him for Gethsemane, and the judgment hall, and Calvary.

You must never separate the Saviour’s suffering and death from His birth. He was born that He might die, and then rise again triumphant, having made an end of sin and brought in an everlasting righteousness. Here is the sinner’s hope. Now if your religion is real, as led by the Spirit of God you will see a sweet attraction in these things. You might not be able to claim a full interest in them, but you will be sweetly drawn towards them. You will find a resting place here, your only resting place. You will find a sure foundation here, your only foundation. In the spirit of it, you will be able to say,

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All.”

That is the religion, the only religion that takes a sinner to heaven.

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” So here the everlasting foundation of our hope is laid: a Child born, a Son given. So by faith we venture to Bethlehem, and we see this holy Child born of the virgin Mary, laid in the manger in the stable, and then this remarkable word follows: “And the government shall be upon His shoulder.” It almost seems a contrast: this little, helpless Child here is revealed in all His greatness, really as Zion’s glorious God and King, King of kings and Lord of lords. That is it: “The government shall be upon His shoulder.” He is exalted in heaven. What about that word we sing:

“No less almighty at His birth,
Than on His throne supreme;

His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
When Mary held up Him.”

Now do you believe it? That is almost the highest act of faith there can be, when you can look on a helpless Child lying in a manger and truly believe, and truly affirm that

“His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
When Mary held up Him.”

“And the government shall be upon His shoulder.” He was born a King. The wise men saw it. They said, “Where is He *that is born King?*” They had that divine revelation, led by the star. He was *born King*. Here we see His divine authority. He is in complete control. “The government shall be upon His shoulder.” We hear a lot about “the Government” today, and what the Government is doing, and what it should be doing, and what it should not be doing. The government is upon His shoulder! All this talk – there is Putin in Russia, there is President Trump, there is our own Prime Minister, there are the eminent people in the earth, there is Brexit, there are all these authorities in Europe, and it is a mass of confusion. God is not in most of their thoughts.

“But His eternal thought moves on
Its undisturbed affairs.”

All the mighty happenings in the world – nothing can take place without His divine permission. I know sometimes in our prayers we long that things might be different, that they might be better, and rightly so. But the Lord has a controversy with us. It may be that we have to endure many things. It may be that we have to be disappointed. But it is still according to His purpose, still according to His will.

“The government shall be upon His shoulder.” But it is in everything. It even goes beyond those mighty men, to every star, every rolling planet, the mighty oceans. They are all under His control. I do not know if you girls and boys thought much about the snow last week. There are people making their plans. Some are going to do this, and some are going to go there, and we wake up one morning and the snow is there, and parts of England are paralysed. The Lord is in control. He gives it, whatever the meteorologists say. “He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can

stand before His cold?” The Lord accomplishes His purpose. He makes a way here, but stops someone there, and He overrules it all for His glory and the good of His people.

“The government shall be upon His shoulder.” It almost seems as if the Holy Ghost has interposed this word there. “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given” – this helpless Babe; then, “the government shall be upon His shoulder.” It is everything. It is your life’s minutest circumstance. It comes down to everything in our little lives.

When the Lord Jesus became a Man, He preached a very short, very beautiful sermon on this point. He said, “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?” The other gospel says, “Two ... for a farthing.” But the point seems to be a worthless sparrow. If you pay an extra farthing, you get an extra sparrow thrown in freely. “The government shall be upon His shoulder.” “One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” And then He says this: “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” How low Almighty God stoops – the most insignificant thing in our lives. You do not know how many hairs you have on your head, and you do not really want to know, but the Lord could tell each of us the number of hairs on our head. “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

“The government shall be upon His shoulder.” So beloved friends, you have your many things this morning. You have your plans; you have your thoughts this week, things you are expecting to happen. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” By *the lot* is really meant what everyone naturally speaking would just say, luck, or chance. It is so contingent, what might happen, what might not happen.

“The government shall be upon His shoulder.” There was a remarkable case concerning this many years ago in Germany. There was a godly man falsely accused, and he was appointed for death. There did not seem to be any way out. In the end, the judges said that a lot would be cast between the one who was the accuser, who was really a wicked, guilty man, and this godly man being falsely accused. How the lot was being cast – you all know what dice are. There were two of these dice, big dice with a six on each one. There was much prayer. A crowd gathered, the two people up for trial there – the evil man who seemed sure to prevail,

and the godly man. The ungodly man cast his dice first. They both came up with a number six, so that was the end. In trembling and prayer, the poor, godly man picked up these dice, and he could not possibly get a higher number than those two sixes, but in prayer he cast his dice, and there was a cry from the crowd. As one of the dice had landed, somehow it had broken and split, and when it came up, it came up clearly showing a seven. So the miracle of it all – not just two sixes, but one came up with a seven, and the godly man was completely exonerated. That was an extreme case; that was a miracle.

But the Babe of Bethlehem, the government is upon His shoulder – those difficulties and problems you have at present, your sadnesses, afflictions, the ill health, old age, loved ones you are concerned about. “My times are in Thy hand.” One hymnwriter said, “O God, I wish them there.” “The government” – everything, every detail of our lives.

“All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree.”

May you see it this morning, but may you feel it in your little life, and your burden, and your concern, and your trouble, and your prayers, to be able to look away from yourself, to look up.

“And the government shall be upon His shoulder.” Just lingering a little while on this point: “On His shoulder.” We must mention that solemn thought that all the sins of His people were laid upon His shoulders, the dear Babe of Bethlehem, and He, and only He, was strong enough to bear that weight, and that only “with strength enough, and none to spare.” In dying, He for ever bore away all the sins of His people.

“The Lord, in the day of His anger, did lay
Our sins on the Lamb, and He bore them away.”

“Upon His shoulder.” Then literally we think of the judgment hall, and you think of the concerns of humanity upon His almighty shoulders, and there in the judgment hall, as He was so cruelly flogged and beaten, you think of all those wounds that were made upon His shoulders, and then He had to carry the cross, that weighty cross upon His shoulders, until He sank beneath it. At times a sinner, feeling the guilt, has that sweet realisation: all this was done for me.

“The government shall be upon His shoulder.” Of course, one of the great points concerning the Babe of Bethlehem is that He is our great and glorious High Priest. Let me remind you that Israel’s high priest under the ceremonial law had to bear all the names of the twelve tribes upon a breastplate – that is, over his heart; that is in his love. But he also had to bear the names of all the tribes upon his shoulders, six on one shoulder and six on the other, engraven on those precious stones, signifying the Saviour’s divine power to uphold all His people, and to uphold all their concerns, and to uphold all the concerns of this fallen world in His own way, for His honour and glory.

Now beloved friends, you have your burdens this morning, some of you more, some of you less, some of you tomorrow, some of them spiritual, some of them providential. There is a word for you: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” That is to cast your burden on One who is able to bear it, cast your burden where the eternal Father has placed it from everlasting. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord” – this dear Babe of Bethlehem – “and He shall sustain thee.”

“‘Cast,’ He said, ‘on Me thy care;
'Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear;
I will all thy needs supply.’”

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.” There is a lovely little word in Deuteronomy 33 where Moses blessed the tribes of Israel before he died, and he goes through the various tribes, and then he comes to the smallest, most insignificant of all the tribes: little Benjamin. In a sense he gave Benjamin almost the sweetest blessing. Can you remember what it is? “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long.” This is it: “*And he shall dwell between His shoulders.*” I take that in all its simplicity to mean on the loving heart of his God and Saviour. O to have an interest there! O do you long for it, that you might dwell between His shoulders – not just be there for a little time, but to dwell between His shoulders? And then for that word in the Canticles to be the urgent, earnest cry of your heart: “Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm.”

“O let my name engraven stand
Both on Thy heart and on Thy hand;
Seal me upon Thy arm, and wear
That pledge of love for ever there.”

Beloved friends, these are the things that really matter.

“For 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.” Now may we be enabled by the Spirit of God to leave these things at the Saviour’s feet, in the Saviour’s arms, in reverence, and humility, and worship, and godly fear, and thanksgiving.