

2. Labour to see your interest in the gospel, if ever you would be brought to relish it, and entertain it. You need this Saviour, without him ye are undone; ye may have this Saviour; if ye miss him, it is your own fault. Your great interest for eternity lies in this gospel, however ye entertain it.

CHRIST PRESENTED TO MANKIND-SINNERS.

ISAIAH ix. 6,

Unto us a Child is born.

THIS is the first part of the glad tidings so much affecting the prophet. The world waited long for Christ's coming into it; and here the prophet gives the news, that long-looked for is come at last. The "Child is born." The word rendered *child*, is a name of the sex, "a man-child," and is just a lad, a lad-child; such was our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a name common to the young of the male sex, competent to them whenever they are born, and continuing with them during their younger years, till they be grown men. The word rendered *born*, doth signify more, even to be shewed or presented born. It is a custom so natural, that it has ever been in the world, that when a child is born and dressed, it is presented or shewed to its relations, for their comfort. So Machir's children were presented to Joseph their great grandfather, and on that occasion given him on his knees; Gen. i. 23; and Ruth's son to Naomi; Ruth iv. 17. So says the prophet, This wonderful child is presented, viz. to his relations. And who are these? He has relations in heaven; the Father is his Father, the Holy Ghost his Spirit, the angels his servants; but it is not these who are here meant. It is *to us*, the sons and daughters of Adam; we are his poor relations; and to us as his poor relations on earth, sons of Adam's family, whereof he is the top-branch, this Child is presented born, for our comfort in our low state.

DOCTRINE. Our Lord Jesus Christ is upon his birth presented unto us mankind-sinners, as his relations.

In speaking to this presenting of Christ as a born Child, I will shew,

- I. What is presupposed in it.
- II. To whom he is presented.
- III. How he is presented.
- IV. The import of this being presented to us.

V. Wherefore he is presented to us on his birth.

VI. *Lastly*, Apply the doctrine.

I. I shall show what is presupposed in it. It presupposeth,

1. The birth of Christ was expected and looked for. The church, his mother, Cant. iii. 11, had an early promise of it; Gen. iii. 15. And it was in virtue of that promise he was conceived and born; all mankind besides, by another word, viz., Gen. i. 28, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Though Mary his mother in a proper sense, was no longer than ordinary big with him; yet the church, his mother in a figure, was big with him from that time; Gen. iii. 15, for about four thousand years. Many a time the delivery was looked for; and she was in hazard of thinking it a false conception, it was so long a coming forward. Kings and prophets looked and longed for the day; Luke x. 24, "I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The whole church of the Old Testament also longed for Christ's day; Cant. viii. 14, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.

2. Christ is now born. The happy hour of the long-looked for birth is come, and the Child is come into the world. Angels proclaim it; Luke ii. 10, 11, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The fathers, kings, and prophets were in their graves, who died in the faith he would be born; and now it is come to pass. He was really born; a little Child, though the Mighty God; an Infant, not one day old, though the Everlasting Father. Wonderful birth! such as the world never saw before, nor ever shall see again.

3. Some have been employed to present this Child to the friends and relations; and they are still about the work. O honourable employment! more honourable than the office of presenting a newborn prince of the earth to a king, his father. Joseph and Mary had the office of presenting him to the Lord; Luke ii. 22. But who has the honour of presenting him to us? Why,

(1.) The holy Spirit has the office of presenting him internally to us; 1 Cor. ii. 2, 4, "For I determined (says Paul) not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." And by him his Father presents him to us; Matth. xvi. 16, 17, "And

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Thus sinners have presented to them in his heavenly glory, so as they get a broad sight of him, such as is to be had on earth, by faith; John i. 14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(2.) Ministers of the gospel have the office of presenting him to us externally, in the swaddling-clothes of word and sacraments. They are employed to present believing sinners to Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2, "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;" and to present Christ to sinners, to be believed on. They come with old Simeon, with the holy child Jesus in their arms in gospel-ordinances, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, and say with John Baptist; John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

4. *Lastly*, This child is actually presented to us on his birth. Few, if any, were witnesses to his birth, it was so very mean and low in its circumstances; but that there might be no doubt of his being born, he has been, and still is presented to multitudes, Gal. iii. 1.

II. To whom is Christ presented ?

1. Negatively, He is not presented to the fallen angels; he was not born for them, they are none of his relations, Heb. ii. 16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Their house was originally more honourable than the house of Adam; but Christ has put an honour on the house of Adam, above the house of angels. The holy angels are his servants, the evil angels his executioners; but holy men are his brethren.

2. Positively, He is presented to mankind sinners, those of the house of his father Adam. To them is the voice directed, John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. "To us a child is born," Luke ii. 10, 11. He was first presented to the Jews, shewed to Israel, John i. 31; but then to all the world indifferently, of whatsoever nation, Mark xvi. 15. Hence, from the uttermost parts of the earth, songs are heard, upon occasion of shewing him born to them, his glory appearing unparalleled. Particularly,

(1.) He is presented to the visible church, even to all and every one of them. There are indeed many in the world to whom he is not presented; they have neither his voice or fame, nor seen his shape represented in the word; but wheresoever the gospel comes,

there Christ is presented to every person as born to them ; Acts xiii. 26, " Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." He is now bodily in heaven indeed ; yet really, though spiritually in the word and sacraments, presented to sinners, and seen by faith ; though the most part will not behold him.

(2.) He is presented effectually to all the elect. Christ is revealed in them, Gal. i. 15, 16. Hence they believe on him, and so it is with all them, however others entertain him ; Acts xiii. 48, " As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They are all as Paul was, in a sense, chosen to see the just one ; and their seeing him with a spiritual eye, makes them willing to part with all, and purchase the field and treasure, and the one pearl.

USE. Since Christ is presented to us as a child born, then see well how you entertain the honour done you, in the Prince of Peace being upon his birth presented to you. Some at this season pretend to honour his birth, by observing a day they count the day of it.* But where is the divine appointment of that day ? is it not like Jeroboam's feast ? 1 Kings xii. 33, " So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart ; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense." And can men soberly think, that their feasting, eating, and drinking, as usual on that day, does indeed honour Christ ? But,

1. Embrace him, with old Simeon, in the arms of faith. Knit with him, open your heart to him.

2. Kiss the Son, receiving him as your Lord, and King, and God.

III. How is Christ presented ? He is presented,

1. In the preaching of the gospel, Gal. iii. 1, " O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you ?" To whomsoever the gospel comes, Christ is presented to them, as being in the word of the gospel to be discerned by faith ; Rom. x. 6—8, " But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ; or Who shall descend into the deep, (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead ;) but what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is the word of faith which we preach." In the word the bridegroom's picture is drawn, in his birth, life,

* This discourse was preached on the 26th of December, 1725, the day after what is usually called Christmas.

death, &c.; in his willingness and ability to save, &c. It is the looking-glass held before their eyes, in which they may see him; 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

2. In the administration of the sacraments. As in the word he is presented to the ears, in the sacraments he is presented to the eyes. In them there is a lively representation of Christ bleeding and dying on the cross for sinners; "This is my body," &c. Though he is not corporeally present in the sacraments, yet he is really and spiritually so, to the faith of believers, which realizeth invisible things; Heb. xi. 1, "Faith is—the evidence of things not seen." And glorious views are to be had of him there; Luke xxiv. 35, "And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of bread."

3. In the internal work of saving illumination. The Spirit of the Lord not only gives light, but sight, to the elect; not only opens the scriptures to them, but opens their eyes, and reveals Christ in them; Gal. i. 15, 16. This is that demonstration of the Spirit Paul speaks of, which is the immediate antecedent of faith; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, forecited; without which no man will believe. This is the finding of the treasure, the one pearl, Matth. xiii. 44, 46.

IV. What is the import of his being presented to us? It bears,

1. Our special concern in his birth. The birth of Christ concerns us nearly; why else is he presented to us? The holy angels had a concern in it, as servants of the family, to carry the tidings of it; the fallen angels found themselves concerned in it, as a birth that would be the ruin of their interest in the world; but we have a peculiar interest in it, as the birth of a Saviour to us; Luke ii. 11; the bringing in of a better hope.

2. Our relation to him. He is presented to us as his relatives. Sinners of mankind have a common relation to Christ; a relation to him in respect of his nature he assumed, the human nature; Eph. v. 30, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" a relation to him in respect of his office; he is born the Saviour of the world, and therefore our Saviour; John iv. 42, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14, "The Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world." He was born to save sinners, to seek that which was lost, &c.; therefore our Saviour, our seeker.

3. An owning of our relation to him. The presenting of him to us upon his birth, is an open testimony given of our being related to him. Though we are poor and naughty relatives, he is not

ashamed to own us, nor does our unworthiness make him disown us; Heb. ii. 11,—“He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” He is born for our help, to raise up again Adam’s broken family; and since he comes to help us, and set us up again, the more poor, and needy, and worthless we are, the more honour redounds to his name at length.

4. *Lastly*, The comfortableness of his birth to us. Children are presented on their birth to their relations, for their comfort; and so is Christ to sinners of mankind. Never was there such a comfortable birth in the world as this. The whole world of mankind—sinners was born in sin, never so much as one of them all missed the contagion; and so are born children of wrath. By this means the whole world was sitting in a most miserable and deplorable case when Christ, as a public person, was born with a sinless, holy human nature.

V. Wherefore is Christ presented to us on his birth?

1. That we may see the faithfulness of God in the fulfilling of his promise. The promise of Christ was an ancient promise, the accomplishment whereof was long delayed; but now we see it is performed in its time; and thence may conclude, that all the rest of the promises depending thereon shall be fulfilled in their season.

2. That we may rejoice in him. The very birth of his forerunner was to be a joy to many, Luke i. 14; how much more his own? The angels sang for joy at the birth of Christ, Luke ii. 13, 14. And he is presented to us, that we may join them in their song; for it is matter of great joy; Luke ii. 10, 11. And whoever see their danger by sin, will rejoice on Christ’s being presented to them, as a condemned man on the sight of the Prince by whom he is to obtain a pardon.

3. That we may look on him, see his glory, and be taken with him, John i. 14. For this cause sinners are often invited to look unto him, Isa. xlv. 22, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Cant. iii. 11, “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.” The looking on the forbidden fruit has so vitiated the eyes of mankind, that the things of the world appear as in a magnifying glass; and there is no getting a right view of them, till we behold Jesus in his glory.

4. *Lastly*, That we may acknowledge him in the character in which he appears, as the Saviour of the world, and our Saviour. For he is presented as a young prince, to be acknowledged heir to the crown. The Father has made choice of him to be the Saviour

of the world by office, and given him to us for our Saviour, and presents him accordingly for our acknowledgement.

USE. I exhort you then to believe, that Christ is on his birth presented to you as his relations. And if ye enquire what is your duty on that occasion? I answer,

1. Embrace him cordially; Psalm xxiv. 7, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Old Simeon, when he was presented in the temple, took him in his arms with full satisfaction of soul; Luke ii. 28, 29. He is now in heaven as to his bodily presence; but he is presented to you in the gospel, embrace him by faith, with the heart believing on him for all his salvation, renouncing all other saviours for him, betaking yourselves to him for all, for a rest to your consciences and your hearts.

2. Kiss him, Psalm ii. 12, with a kiss of love; giving him your hearts, "My son, give me thine heart;" with a kiss of honour, honouring him in your hearts, lips, and lives; and with a kiss of subjection, receiving him as your Lord, King, Head, and Husband.

3. Bless him; his name; Psalm xcvi. 2, "Bless his name." He is God blessed for ever. But we are to bless him, as we bless God, declaratively, proclaiming him blessed; Psalm lxxii. 17; praying from the heart that his kingdom may come; Psalm lxxii. 15.

4. Worship him. So did the wise men of the east; Matth. ii. 11. He is the everlasting God, therefore to be adored; Psalm xlv. 11. "He is thy Lord, and "worship thou him;" thy Husband, thy King, thy God. Worship him with internal worship, consecrating your whole souls to him; and worship him with external worship.

5. *Lastly*, Present unto him gifts. So did the wise men, Matth. ii. 11. Make a gift of your hearts to him; Prov. xxiii. 26; of yourselves wholly, 2 Cor. viii. 5; to glorify him in your souls, and bodies, your substance, your all.

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, GIFTED TO SINNERS.

ISAIAH ix. 6,

Unto us a Son is given.

THIS is a second part of the glad tidings which did so much affect the prophet. And therein Christ is proposed, (1.) As a Son. This is not to denote the sex; that was done already in the former part.