

“THE ULTIMATE THEOPHANY.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

December 25, 2019, 10:00 AM

Scripture Texts: Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 1:1-3; II Corinthians 8:9

Introduction.

Chuck Norris is a famous movie and television star, especially known for his show Walker, Texas Ranger. He is also a world-champion black-belt martial artist. Because of his character being unstoppable with insane near superpowers and skill there is a whole genre of Chuck Norris jokes, which are referred to as Chuck Norris facts.

Chuck Norris jokes/facts.

Superman wears Chuck Norris pajamas.

When the Boogeyman goes to sleep every night, he checks his closet for Chuck Norris.

When Chuck Norris gets pulled over, he lets the cop off with a warning.

When Chuck Norris steps on a Lego, the Lego cries.

Chuck Norris counted to infinity, twice.

Chuck Norris was born in a log cabin he build with his own hands.

That one got me to thinking there is someone about whom statements like that are actually true. Jesus was born in a manger that He created. Jesus rode on a donkey He created. Jesus was born to parents He created. Jesus walked on an earth He created. Jesus died on a cross made from a tree He made.

At the time of the incarnation, Jesus who is infinite became a day old.

Jesus who has power to create galaxies is now so weak He has to be carried.

Jesus who's hands can hold the oceans, now has fingers too small to hold Mary's finger.

Jesus who's words spoke creation into existence, how has to be taught how to say words.

Jesus who never hungered or thirsted, now cries when He is hungry and thirsty.

He who the universe couldn't contain, is now contained in a manger.

Theophanies, when heaven and earth meet.

We have been talking about theophanies this advent season.

We started with *Jacob* who had a very personal pre-incarnation visitation of Jesus coming to wrestle with Jacob in the middle of the night.

Jacob was so full of himself, self-reliant a wrestler came to break Jacob, to render him handicapped, helpless, dependent, so he would rely on God. He found God's grace in his weakness.

That theophany anticipated the ultimate theophany when God breaks into our dark work, confronts our sin, shows us our weakness and need, and then gives us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. God comes and takes away our fear.

Joshua had a preincarnation visitation of Jesus coming as the commander of the hosts of the Lord's armies. He didn't come to fight for Joshua or get Joshua to fight for Him. He came to get Joshua's eyes off himself.

The battle belongs to the Lord and the glory belongs to the Lord. He came to do battle with Satan and sin and death.

Gideon encountered an angel who is the Lord, who shows that God actually sees and hears and cares and comes to us.

God is present in his hardships, God is with him in his inadequacies, God has shown Himself to him, and He does this in the incarnation.

He has come to us who are poor and needy. Jesus says I have come, and I am with you and I will fight for you in my power, rely on me.

The theophany in the *Fiery Furnace* reminded us God doesn't save from, but saves in, and that when God saves, He saves to the utter most, not even a faint hint of smoke or fire left to detect. He does what no other god can do.

The divine came down and broken into the human, at just the right moment in just the right way, according to their greatest need, revealing the glory of God.

The Ultimate Theophany, in the fullness of time.

Theophanies declare God is with us. God doesn't just save from a distance, God saves by showing up Himself. Theophanies foreshadow the incarnation. The incarnation is God's final declaration that He will be our God and we will be His people.

Notice some of the similarities and differences between all the theophanies and the incarnation.

God initiates, they are all God's doing.

God comes, God is present. He is with us. We can't go to Him, so He comes to us.

God manifests His power and wisdom and authority and magnifies His character and glory.

But none of the theophanies are as great or as complete a revelation as the ultimate theophany, the ultimate display of God's being.

What makes the incarnation so ultimate are the differences?

In all the previous theophanies Jesus always came as a man, never before as a little baby. In the theophanies Jesus came in strength. In the incarnation He came in weakness.

In all the previous theophanies Jesus was on earth for only a few hours, this time He stays for 33 years. And even then, He doesn't surrender His human body, but keeps it forever. This theophany is not temporary but permanent. It is not short lived, but eternal.

In all the OT theophanies God came to one or a few individuals, or in the case of the exodus theophanies to one nation. At the incarnation Jesus came as the light of the world. In the fullness of time God has come to all of us.

The incarnation is not just a revelation of some aspect of God's character or nature, but the fulness of God, the radiance of His glory, the exact representation. To see Jesus is to see God. Not just veiled, but on full display. Jesus Christ came to earth to make God known. Jesus is the supreme revelation, the supreme and ultimate theophany of God.

The incarnation is the ultimate proof that we live in an open universe, and we live on a visited planet, that God is here, and He is not silent.

The incarnation is the mother of all theophanies. This is the theophany that trumps all the other theophanies. This is the theophany that puts an end to all theophanies. Jesus has come once and for all and finally. Jesus has fully taken on our flesh never to lay it aside again.

This is the revelation of all revelations. Jesus says those who saw His face saw the Father. This is a theophany more profound than the one Moses received and more than Moses asked for.

Moses asked to see the glory of God and got to see His back. Jesus is the fulfillment, what Moses longed to see we see.

Now if you are wondering how we can see the glory of Jesus since He is no longer here, the answer is clear in Scripture, we see Him clearly in the Gospel:

II Corinthians 3:18 We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

II Corinthians 4:4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

II Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Implications and application.

Because of the theophanies of the OT and most of all because of the incarnation of the NT, we have the confident assurance that God is with us always, with us in our need, with us in our inadequacies, with us in our brokenness and sin, in our fears and our fiery furnaces. We are confident He is gracious and merciful, full of steadfast love, who forgives our sin and iniquity.

II Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

This verse goes beyond the mere fact of the incarnation to the purpose and point of the incarnation. This is its meaning. He has made us rich in the only way that matters for all eternity. Jesus did this for us and for our salvation. For love, for grace, for future glory.

Do you know your poverty? Do you know the riches of Christ who became like us, who became poor so we could be rich? Have you been made rich by Christ's poverty, by Christ's coming, by Christ's condescension, by His stooping low to you and for you?

If you do not know Christ, if you do not confess Christ as your Savior and Lord, don't spend another Christmas missing the whole point of Christ's coming to earth, of Christ's Words being spoken to you this morning, of the whole point of the Holy Spirit convicting your conscience and calling you to repentance and faith.

We have beheld His glory, the glory of the one and only Son and this is cause for rejoicing, cause for celebrating, cause for giving and receiving gifts, cause for giving and receiving forgiveness, cause for reconciling our differences with those we love, with those around us.

Jesus is the ultimate theophany, the fullest utterance of the staggering love of God. Because of Jesus we will have eternal knowledge of the Son and the Father. Glory to God in the highest. Glory to God in the highest.

The incarnation is cause for *worship*, which is why we are here this morning. It is cause for worship not just at Christmas but every Sunday, indeed every day. And it is cause for *celebration*, which is why Christians should celebrate Christmas better than everyone else.

Conclusion.

Now as I say at this time every year, now is the time to go to our houses for feasting. Go and enjoy and celebrate your Savior's birth. Feast, Christians, feast. For all who believe you have a right to be very happy, He gave you the right to be the children of God and that is cause for rejoicing. In the words of Solomon, "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart."

Let your faith give you great joy, for to us a child has been born, a Son has been given and He is Jesus Christ the Lord and we have beheld His glory. Glory to God and Amen.