

“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see”

Isaiah 53:1-2 (The Message)

Who believes what we've heard and seen? Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this? The servant grew up before God - scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look.

While we were living in Malawi we were woken one hot night by what seemed like an explosion. Our bed was shifting around and all the louver panes in the four large floor-to-ceiling windows were rattling in unison like a massed choir of false teeth. We were not far from the President's principal palace and in our half-asleep state we thought that someone had blown it up. There'll be civil war tomorrow, we concluded erroneously, and went back to sleep. Actually, it was a minor earthquake, but we were far enough away from the epicentre to be in any danger and too sleepy to be frightened.

Normally when these violent forces of nature erupt around us we quickly get shaken out of any complacency we might feel. Long ago God used some of them to concentrate the Israelites' attention on the seriousness and unprecedented importance of his arrival on Sinai at the making of the covenant. Thunder and lightning surrounded the cloud-covered mountain; a supernatural blast of a ram's horn rang out, and as God descended fire engulfed the smoking mountain which shook as if it was hit by a great quake. No wonder Exodus says the people trembled and Moses himself shook with fear.

Centuries later when God came to earth to actually live among us we might have thought that his arrival would be announced at the very least in a similar fashion, or maybe something of far greater magnitude that would be felt around the entire globe. But instead of being accosted by the forces of the world, a small group of shepherds came face to face with the heavenly as an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and a great multitude of the heavenly host praised God, **Luke 2:8-14**. But though Jesus' birth was not accompanied by any frightening stirrings of earth's elements, we could describe it as a seismic event in history. Yet, just like we slept as the ground trembled under us in Africa, most people slept through his birth too, and as Jesus grew most people erroneously concluded that he was just the carpenter's son.

Jesus' birth was not heralded with an earth-shattering fanfare to get our attention or to make his every step spot-lit. He came “**veiled in flesh**” in order that he could live among us and quietly go about his Father's business, living a life of perfect obedience and faith to the Father and a life of perfect love for all of us. He “**laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave,**” **Philippians 2:7** (Living Bible); he humbled himself to become a ‘nobody’, taking all of our corrupted sinful humanity, so he could do for us what we could not do for ourselves, and open the way to life for all of us.