Colossians, Advent, and the Incarnation of God

Introduction

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son…" Galatians 4:4

GOD SPOKE THE INCARNATION by Michael Card

You and me we use
So very many clumsy words
The noise of what we often say
Is not worth being heard
When the Father's Wisdom wanted to
Communicate His love
He spoke it in one final perfect Word

He spoke the Incarnation
And then so was born the Son
His final word was Jesus
He needed no other one
Spoke flesh and blood so He could bleed
And make a way Divine
And so was born the baby
Who would die to make it mine

And so the Father's fondest thought
Took on flesh and bone
He spoke the living luminous Word
At once His will was done
And so the transformation
That in man had been unheard
Took place in God the Father
As He spoke that final Word

The Incarnation was not merely the arrival of a Savior into human history; it was God's decisive intervention in fallen humanity, the beginning of the new creation, and the revelation of God's eternal purpose in Christ.

We are not waiting for the eternal day to begin. In Christ, the eternal day has already dawned. Through His incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, enthronement and the outpouring of the Spirit, God has accomplished the decisive work of redemption and inaugurated the new creation. We now live in the present reality of what Christ has accomplished.

> *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in*

> *him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."* Colossians 1:15-20

All of these descriptions of Christ in Colossians are past and present realities. They are accomplished. And yet, we don't see or experience the completed version of these realities. The writer of Hebrews put it this way,

> "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him." Hebrews 2:8.

The "not yet" part of the finished work of Christ is what theologians call "the consummation." And it is the tension between the now and not yet of the plan of God that presents a danger during times like Christmas. The danger is that we can become occupied with remembering something that has happened in the past but fail live in the present reality in Christ.

So, let's take the time to look back, to remember, to understand more deeply, to appreciate, and to celebrate the incarnation of Christ. But let us also make sure that our efforts cause us to behold and appreciate - more fully and richly - the life we have in Christ now.

> *"If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set you minds on the things that are above, not on things that. Are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* Colossians 3:1-4

WEEK 1 OF ADVENT— THE NEED FOR THE INCARNATION

Fallen Humanity and the Necessity of Christ

KEY VERSE:

"And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds." Colossians 1:21

Day 1 — The Bad News Before the Good News

- The gospel is good news because humanity is in desperate need of salvation and restoration (Rom. 1:16-32).

- A gift is only appreciated when we recognize our need for it.

- Justification by grace through faith is God's answer to humanity's predicament (Rom. 3:21-24).

- We cannot properly appreciate the grace of God without understanding the seriousness of our fallen condition (Rom. 3:10-18).

Day 2 — Alienated from God

- Humanity's fundamental problem is relational: we are alienated from our Creator (Gen. 3:24).

- Sin is not merely a collection of wrong actions; it is a condition of separation from God.

- Humanity has exchanged the glory of God for the worship of created things (Rom. 1:21-23).

- Alienation from God produces alienation from His truth, His purpose and His life.

Day 3 — Hostile in Mind

- Fallen humanity is not morally neutral towards God.

- The human mind has become futile in its thinking and darkened in its understanding (Rom. 1:21).

- Humanity suppresses the truth because it does not want to acknowledge God (Rom. 1:18).

- Our fundamental problem is not simply ignorance but hostility towards the truth of God.

Day 4 — Given Up to Sin and Sinfulness

- Three times Paul declares that God gave humanity up (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

- Divine wrath is revealed in God's judicial giving over of humanity to its chosen rebellion.

- Humanity does not merely commit sinful acts; fallen humanity is inwardly corrupted by sin.

- Our sinful behavior is the manifestation of our fallen condition (Rom. 1:29-32).

Day 5 — Under Wrath and Condemnation

- Through one man's disobedience, sin entered the world and death through sin (Rom. 5:12).

- Adam stood as the representative head of the old humanity.

- Condemnation and death became the inheritance of Adam's race (Rom. 5:18).

- The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

- The need of humanity was not simply moral improvement but redemption, reconciliation and new life.

Day 6 — Why the Christ Had to Come

- Humanity could not rescue itself from its fallen condition.

- No religious system, moral improvement or human philosophy could reconcile us to God.

- The eternal Son entered our humanity to accomplish what fallen humanity could never accomplish.

- The incarnation was necessary because humanity needed a Redeemer, a Representative and a new Head.

- Where the first Adam brought condemnation, Christ, the last Adam, brings justification and life (Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:45).

Day 7 — Fellowship and Review

Why is understanding the bad news essential to appreciating the gospel?

What is the difference between committing sin and being inwardly corrupted by sin?

Why could humanity not be restored through religious instruction or moral improvement?

How does understanding Adam's representative position help us appreciate Christ's representative work?