

Lesson 8:
*Knowing Christ (1)—
His Incarnation*

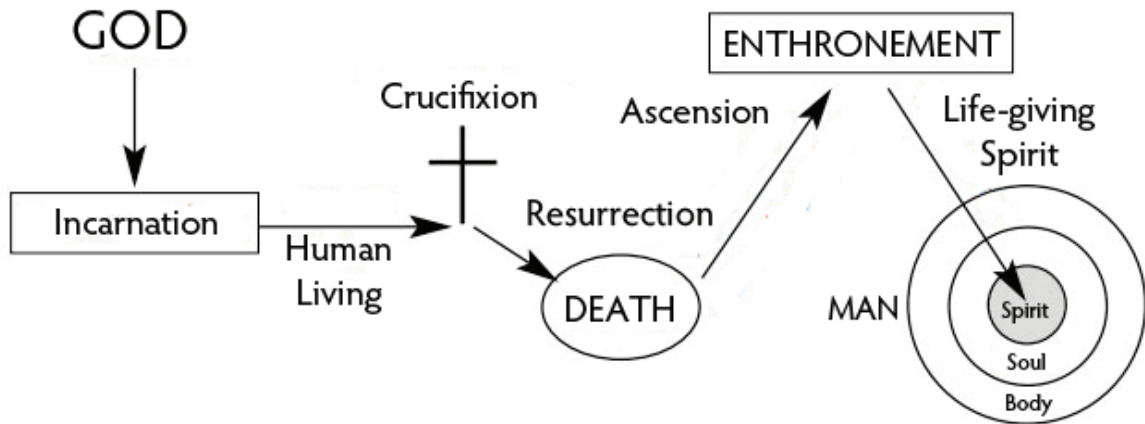


Fig. 1 - Schematic of the processes Christ went through

Philippians 2:5c-11 Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The Lord Jesus is God, who created all things, becoming a man. He is God putting on humanity. He is God entering into man to be joined to man. He is God in life, nature, position, person, authority, glory, power, and wisdom. When He became a man, He put on the image and likeness of a man, possessing the human life and nature, living a human life on earth, and having the flavor of man. God in Christ became a man in order to accomplish redemption, thus solving God's problems and attaining His goal. In order for man to have God's life and become His expression, God became a man; He came in the likeness of man. In order for man to be joined to Him, God came to be joined to man. The Lord Jesus is God becoming a man. Even though He is a man, He is still God. He is God yet man and man yet God. This is our Savior!

I. The first step that God took toward accomplishing redemption was to become flesh (John 1:1, 14).

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God desires to gain man; He wants man to receive His life, to be joined to Him, to be the brothers of Christ, and to deal with His enemy, Satan. This was God's purpose in creating man, but the created man sinned and fell. God intended for man to be His expression, but man sinned and fell short of God's glory (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 3:23). God also desired that man would cooperate with Him to destroy His adversary, Satan, but man rebelled against God and followed Satan.

Under these circumstances God could have responded in several ways. He could have chosen to destroy both the man, whom He had created and who sinned and rebelled against Him, and Satan, whom man followed. This would have been easy. The more difficult way involved rescuing the man who had sinned and followed His enemy. If God had chosen the easy way, it would not have been possible for His eternal plan to be accomplished, but since God chose the difficult way of rescuing man, His eternal plan could be accomplished. In order to accomplish redemption for man, therefore, God had to become flesh. The accomplishment of redemption required the incarnation of Christ for at least six reasons.

A. First, in order to satisfy the requirements of His righteousness, holiness, and glory, God had to deal with man's sins.

However, in order to deal with man's sins, God had to stand in the position of a man, according to the status of a man. In order to bear the curse of sin, receive God's righteous judgment, and suffer the pain of death on behalf of man, God had to become a man through incarnation so that He could be in the position and status of a man.

B. Second, God had to deal with corruption in man's nature, which was an issue of the fall.

On the one hand, God needed to rescue the man whom He had created, but on the other hand, He needed to terminate the man who was corrupted. Hence, God was incarnated to become flesh and to put on humanity in order to bring humanity with Him through death and into resurrection. God terminated corrupted humanity through His death on the cross, and He rescued created humanity in His resurrection.

C. Third, God had to deal with Satan, who corrupted man.

Satan was originally an archangel created by God, but he rebelled against God and became the adversary of God. God does not want to come as the Creator in order to deal with one of His creatures. Instead, He wants man, another creature, to deal with the creature who rebelled against Him. Regrettably, man was deceived by Satan and entered into an illicit union with him. Man was corrupted by Satan. In order to rescue the Satan-deceived man from Satan's hand and also to destroy this rebellious archangel through man, God had to become a creature through incarnation. In order to deal with the creature who had rebelled against Him, God assumed the status of a creature and was joined to humanity.

D. Fourth, God had to enable fallen men to come near to Him.

As a result of the fall, human beings were far from God. It was impossible for them to come near to God. Because fallen sinners have no way to approach or stand before the God of glory, God came in the flesh in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7), concealing His glory in the flesh of His humanity. This enabled men to come near to Him, because they were approaching a man, not God.

E. Fifth, God had to reveal Himself so that men could know Him.

Men can perceive God's eternal power and divine characteristics through the things that He created (Rom. 1:20). Furthermore, men can know God's ways and see His wisdom through the Scriptures. But unless He came out of His sanctuary in the heavens to be among men as a person in the likeness of a man, it would not be possible to see God or know Him directly. Therefore, God became a man in order to be comprehensible to men. He presented Himself to men in bodily form so that men could see and know Him.

F. Sixth, God had to become a man in order to be joined with man.

God's intention in creating man was for man to be one with Him, but man sinned and thus could not be joined to God. Therefore, God joined Himself to man so that man would be joined to Him. This was accomplished through incarnation.

II. Being God yet Man

Isaiah 53:2 For He grew up like a tender plant before Him, And like a root out of dry ground. He has no attracting form nor majesty that we should look upon Him, Nor beautiful appearance that we should desire Him.

Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,

Hebrews 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

John 3:13 And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven.

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and He found him and said, Do you believe into the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is He, Lord, that I may believe into Him? Jesus said to him, You have both seen Him, and He is the One speaking with you. And he said, Lord, I believe; and he worshipped Him.

John 10:30 I [Christ] and the Father are one.

John 5:17-18 But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working. Because of this therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 10:33 The Jews answered Him, We are not stoning You for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, are making Yourself God.

Although the Lord Jesus was made like us, yet without sin, He is not only a man; He is also God. He is God yet man. He is God, but He became a man. He is a genuine man, and He is the true God. He possesses the human life and nature, and He also possesses the divine life and nature. He bears the image and likeness of a man, and He also bears the image of God. While He lived on earth, His outward form was that of a man, but inwardly He was also God. People saw His human life and nature, but He was filled also with the divine life and nature. He expressed the human image and likeness, but hidden within Him was God's image. Outwardly He had "no attracting form nor majesty," but inwardly He was full of God's glory and beauty (Isa. 53:2; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3). He descended out of heaven, but He was still in heaven (John 3:13). He spoke of Himself as the Son of Man (1:51), and He also spoke of Himself as the Son of God (9:35-38). He even said that He was one with the Father (10:30). He was manifested among men as a man, but He also let people know that He was equal with God and that He was God (5:17-18; 10:33).

III. The Principle of Incarnation

Isaiah 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us? And I said, Here am I; send me.

What is the principle of incarnation? The principle of incarnation is God coming into man. This is something that is truly of the Spirit and that requires the Holy Spirit to thoroughly shine in us so that it may become our inward vision. The incarnation of the Lord is to bring God into man. Before the Lord Jesus was born, God could not enter into man because He had not been incarnated. God's entering into man began with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Hence, in the Old Testament there was no such thing as

God entering into man because at that time incarnation had not yet begun with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Hence, in the Old Testament there was no such thing as God entering into man because at that time incarnation had not yet begun, and God and man had not yet been mingled together.

Incarnation began with the birth of the Lord Jesus, but did incarnation stop at that time? The answer is no. Not only was the birth of the Lord Jesus incarnation, but every time someone is saved, that is also incarnation. When you and I repented and believed in the Lord, we received the Lord Jesus into us. That was incarnation happening once again.

The birth of the Lord Jesus was the beginning of incarnation in the universe. Since that time, incarnation has been occurring again and again, time after time, and day after day. Ever since the birth of the Lord Jesus, which was the first time God came into man, there have been many other times in which God has come into man. What is the story of our salvation? Our salvation is the story of God coming into man. Every person's salvation is a story of God coming into man. This is the principle of incarnation.

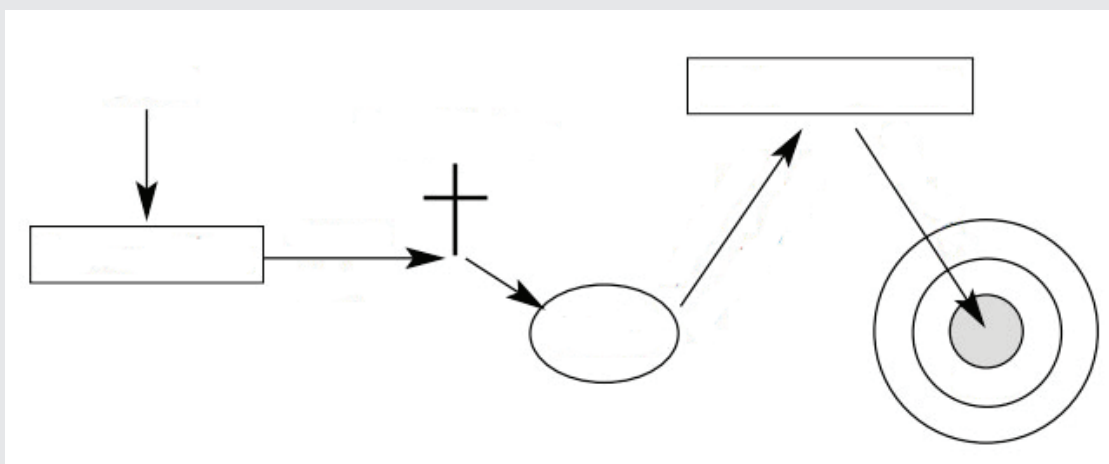
Therefore, we need to see that the first principle concerning Christ is incarnation—God coming into man. Do we have this principle in us? Are we incarnated people? The fact is that all of us saved ones have this principle in us. Through our believing in Him and receiving Him, the Lord Jesus entered into us. Thus, we became incarnated people. Strictly speaking, those who have not passed through incarnation have not been saved. Hence, we have to say from our heart, "Thank and praise the Lord! The principle of incarnation that is in Christ is also in us." Incarnation is God coming into man. As those who have been saved, God has come into us. We all have the story of incarnation on us and in us.

Study Questions

1. Why was the Lord's incarnation necessary?
2. What is the principle of incarnation?
3. What is the issue of incarnation?

Weekly Challenge

Fill in the blanks from memory without looking at the front of the guide.



Song

1 Christ has put on human nature and become a man like me,
He has died upon the cross that I from Adam might be free,
He has risen and as Spirit He has come to live in me
That He might be my life.

Chorus

Glory! glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! glory! Hallelujah!
For Christ is now my life!

Chrous

Vict'ry! vict'ry! Hallelujah!
Vict'ry! vict'ry! Hallelujah!
Vict'ry! vict'ry! Hallelujah!
For Christ is now my all!