

Christmas 2020

I must admit that what God taught me about the Incarnation many years ago was a life changing event from which I gratefully have never recovered. For me personally, the Incarnation, or the birth of Christ, is the most profound of all doctrines in the Scriptures. My life is anchored in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. It is the bedrock foundation of my life, and it should be yours as well. However, the doctrine of the Incarnation and what took place in that dirty stable in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago still staggers my inner man, but it also anchors me to the love that Christ has for me. I see what He did and I understand it in a way that was previously foreign to me. I guess that for many years I was like everyone else that grows up in a Baptist church believing that when Jesus went back to heaven after His resurrection that He went back with all of His divine attributes operating in exactly the same way they did before He was born. He left heaven as God and He went back to heaven as God. That was the way I saw it and understood it.

Now, without sounding blasphemous, if that was the actual case, then the sacrificial death of Christ would not have the same importance that it actually does. Some see it this way: Jesus died, but so what. To them, as soon as it was over He was back in heaven just like He was before He left, so there really was no great sacrifice. Personally, I always accepted that He went back differently than He came, but I simply assumed that when He arrived back in heaven that all of His divine attributes such as His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence were still in place and functioning just as before He left. Unfortunately, nothing could be been any further from the truth than that misconception. What God the Son was actually willing to sacrifice in order that you and I might be saved started way before the cross. His sacrifice began at the Incarnation in a way that you simply cannot see or understand by simply reading the Christmas story in Matthew or Luke. It simply cannot be seen.

Now, I know that years ago that I taught you in great theological detail on the Incarnation and I have done so in other Christmas services. It is inevitable, and I certainly do not want to bore you with a message that sounds eerily familiar – but I probably will. Personally, I am still overwhelmed by the magnitude and the eternal implications of what God the Son was willing to sacrifice to secure our salvation. Every time that I hear a typical Christmas sermon about the stable, the shepherds in the field, the magi that came from the East, and all of the other events surrounding His birth, for whatever reason, it somewhat depresses me in some way. Obviously all of those details have great importance and value as a part of the Christmas story, but too often that is all that someone sees and understand – just a story that they have heard all of their life. It makes me think that people really do not get it, that they simply do not understand what really took place, and that they have no idea relative to the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice before He ever made it to the cross. With that vacuum of understanding, the absolute glory and majesty of the birth of Christ is completely neutralized and virtually lost. This is God in the crib, this is the Creator of the universe sharing a stall with sheep and donkeys and cows.

Obviously, God has always done great things. From the creation to the flood to the Red Sea to all of the miracles of Christ to His resurrection, there is no mistaking that the God that we love and serve is a great and mighty God. However, when we come to the birth of Christ, it almost seems that it is perceived as a really sweet little story about a baby and a manger and a mother on a donkey. If that was all that it was, then it would be just a really sweet little story. However, what God the Father asked God the Son to do in the Incarnation was to make the greatest sacrifice that could possibly be made before He ever

got to the cross. He asked Him to no longer be God as He previously was and then to remain that way forever – and God the Son willingly accepted. Because He was fully God, God the Son fully understood what all of that meant before He exchanged His throne for a dirty stable. All of the Scriptures are “Christo-centric”. I.e., everything in the Scriptures, every work of God, every doctrine, every biblical event is simply the outworking of God’s will in glorifying His Son, and when His Son is glorified, God the Father is glorified. From the creation of the world in [Genesis 1:1](#) to the River of Life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb in [Revelation 22](#), every event is designed to point to the glory of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The point is actually very simple. We have to get Jesus right. We have to get right what Jesus really sacrificed. He is not just a kind of religious icon, a kind of spiritual emoji. He is not someone that we can trifle with as if He is unimportant and can be neglected and ignored. He Himself is the “**Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last**” ([Revelation 22:13](#)). When He was in the manger, no one, not even His mother, not one single person who saw Him even came close to understanding what had just happened. They had no comprehension whatsoever of the magnitude of the events that would continue to unfold. Honestly, there is no way for any of us to even appreciate what Jesus gave up to become like us. We have never been God, but He was God. He was God Almighty. He was the Creator God. He was the sovereign God of eternity – fully omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient of all things. There was no one else like Him, yet in a moment in eternity past that none of us can even comprehend, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit made the decision that in His incarnation, in His birth, and in His becoming the God-Man that He would make the greatest sacrifice imaginable. Not only would He leave His throne in heaven, but He would be beaten, spit upon, mocked, crucified, and then return to the throne of God as the God-Man forever and not as God the Son. As part of His sacrifice, He was willing to become the perfect example and willingly submit Himself fully to whatever the Father wanted Him to do. He would surrender everything that made Him God to the Father. Whatever God the Father wanted Him to do, that is exactly what He did. He lived His entire earthly life, every moment of it, every day of His life, and every breath in complete and utter dependence on God the Father – and He will continue to do exactly the same in eternity. He has fully subjected Himself to God the Father.

Now, what it meant to become the God-Man was that He would relinquish and fully surrender the use of all of His eternal attributes to God the Father and become totally dependent on Him – just as we are called to do. The incredible truth that is being faced here is that Jesus Christ gave up being God as He formerly was in order to save men, and **He will remain that way forever.** That is utterly staggering – that God the Son would willingly surrender His “Godness” attributes to become like us. In the Incarnation, the Son of God became the God-Man, and He will forever more be the God-Man. At the right hand of God right now is the God-Man. He is **not** there as He was prior to His Incarnation. The simple reality that we must understand is that in the Incarnation, what Jesus Christ willingly chose to do was **to restrict and to limit** the use of His eternal attributes, except when directed by His Father to do so. However, the reality that most people do not understand is that He chose to restrict and limit those eternal attributes **forever**.

This is what staggers me personally. This is what causes me to want to just get on my knees and weep. This is a sacrifice that cannot be understood or appreciated. What if you were God? Is this something

that you would want to do? Some people think it is a sacrifice just to come to church or to read their Bible. Where would that rate on a scale of 1-10? We know that as the God-Man that He is still fully God in every sense of the word. He will always be God – fully divine, fully omnipotent, fully omniscient, but He has voluntarily chosen not to exercise those attributes unless directed by the Father. Just as an example of how this works in His life, speaking of the Second Coming, He said the following in [Mark 13:32](#),

Mk 13:32 (NKJV) "**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

He has chosen to **function** in His “humanness” and in utter dependence on His Father. When He ascended into heaven, He was in a different “**form**” than He was before He came to earth in the Incarnation, and He has chosen to retain that human form forever. He made the ultimate of all sacrifices, one that cannot be fully comprehended. Before the Incarnation He was with the Father and the Holy Spirit as God the Son. Today, right now, He is there as a Lamb that was slain, as the believer’s Great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for them. He is there with “humanness” – something He did not possess prior to His Incarnation.

One of the amazing truths of this doctrine is that God the Son knew that He was going to make this ultimate of all sacrifices before the foundation of the world, before the dimension of time even existed. When the Trinity determined to create life as men now know it, the Son of God knew full well what it would cost Him to become the God-Man. I.e., by the act of creating the world and the universe as we know it, God the Son knew what it meant for Him, yet He proceeded anyway. His love for you is more than you can conceive. He knew exactly what would happen to Him and what He would surrender in that process, yet it did not stop Him. Because of men and women just like us, because of the worth and value of our life, because of how much He knew that He would love us, He made a choice, an irrevocable choice, an everlasting choice that He would make the ultimate of all sacrifices in order that we might be saved. **In the process, he would be the one who suffered the greatest loss imaginable, and it would be forever.** To not love Jesus Christ with all of your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength seems almost unforgiveable. For Him to give us everything, it would personally and eternally cost Him everything that made Him God before the Incarnation. What He voluntarily chose to surrender, to forfeit, and to give up is more than the mind can conceive.

So, just to picture Him as a baby in a manger is more than a mere misunderstanding of the magnitude of the actual sacrifice. God the Son had become the God-Man. He had made the ultimate of all possible sacrifices. As God the Son, there was no position that was higher, there was no place greater. So, to descend, to move down, to lower Himself, to function as less than God Almighty – what can anyone say. It is almost unthinkable, unimaginable, beyond belief, inconceivable. He had never been defiled with anything. He had never been exposed to hunger, or thirst, or weariness, or cruelty, or death. Yet, He willingly chose to be subjected to all of that and much more. He is God in a stable with sheep and smelly goats and hanging on a cross and being spit on and beaten. He was continually humiliated. Eternity cannot measure what He came to accomplish for those who actually never deserved anything.

Then to make it even more remarkable, God the Father knew exactly what the cost to His Son would be. Jesus knew fully and the Father knew fully. The Father knew what His Son was giving up and how that

sacrifice would be an eternal sacrifice with no going back to how things were in heaven before the Incarnation. Listen to the following passages that reveal something more than remarkable about the Incarnation. [John 5:30](#) says,

Jn 5:30 (NKJV) I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

[John 5:36](#),

Jn 5:36 (NKJV) But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

[John 6:38-40](#),

Jn 6:38 (NKJV) For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Anyone can see in these verse that there is another aspect of this sacrifice that God the Son made. It was that **God the Father is the One who initiated all of this.** In eternity past, God the Father in some mystical way unknown to us asked God the Son if He would be willing to make this sacrifice. God the Father knew exactly what He asked the Son to do actually meant for the Son. God the Father loved you so much that He was willing to let His only Son become the God-Man forever in order that you might live and that you might have eternal life. I say this with as much humility as I can, but if you do not appreciate that reality, then it is doubtful that you are even saved. If what I have described to you does not cause your heart to worship both God the Father and Christ the Son, I doubt you have eternal life.

God the Father knew exactly what the cost would be. His Son would descend from His exalted place as God the Son and become the God-Man, Jesus Christ. I do not know what to say or how to say it. I am overwhelmed at how much God loves me. For God the Father and God the Son to knowingly choose to do what they did so that I might forever be with them – it humbles me. Compared to what God the Father and God the Son sacrificed forever in order that we might have eternal life makes any “sacrifice” that we have to make seem so insignificant that it is not even worth mentioning.

So, the importance of the Incarnation cannot be overstated. Why is that? It is because **everything** that Christians believe about Christ and about salvation is founded on this doctrine of the Incarnation. Its implications are enormous – what the Son of God became, what He now is, and what He will be like in the future. Why is that? It is because **Jesus Christ is the only One by whom a person can be reconciled to God.** There is no other means of salvation. [John 14:6](#) says it this way,

Jn 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

The means of salvation is limited exclusively to Jesus Christ. In [Acts 4:12](#) Peter said,

Ac 4:12 (NKJV) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

There is no other name, no other means, and no other way to be saved apart from Jesus Christ. It is not how much someone goes to church, or how much money they may give, or how often they may read a Christian book or the Bible, or how good they try to live. Those are good things, but they do not constitute salvation in any sense of the word. In fact, before someone's salvation they can be great hindrances because they often give the **illusion** that someone is in proper alignment with God's salvation when they are not. In [1 Timothy 2:5](#), Paul wrote these words,

1Ti 2:5 (NKJV) **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, There is **NO** mention whatsoever of any salvation anywhere in the Bible except in and through Jesus Christ. There is only ONE saving message in Scripture and it is called the gospel. There is only one way of salvation – and only one. Anyone who is ever saved is saved through Christ and Christ alone. He is the centerpiece of the plan of redemption. He is the only means of redemption.**

I want to give you just a brief overview as to how important the Incarnation of Christ really was. These verses simply skim the surface of all that God the Father was doing in bringing His Son into the world. What God has done is perform a **redemptive** work through Jesus Christ **in order to deliver men** from every aspect of sin, and especially the eternal consequences of sin. The following are a few verses regarding the word **redemption** to place all of this in perspective. [Hebrews 9:11-12](#) says,

Heb 9:11 (NKJV) **But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

[Ephesians 1:7](#),

Eph 1:7 (NKJV) **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace....**

[Colossians 1:13-14](#),

Col 1:13 (NKJV) **He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

[1 Peter 1:18-19](#),

1Pe 1:18 (NKJV) **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**

[Revelation 5:9](#),

Rev 5:9 (NKJV) **And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,**

So, this work of God is a work of delivering men from sin at every level, and it includes the eternal forgiveness of all of our sins. Every day I stand amazed at how lightly and flippantly so many take what God has done.

The issue is really a very simple one. It is impossible for anyone to understand either the world or himself on his own. Man thinks that he can and that he does, but he is simply a fool. For the man, woman, or young person who is lost, they have no idea that the **“whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one”** ([1 John 5:19](#)). Every unbeliever has their own set of ideas about God and salvation that they believe to be right, but those ideas are all wrong. That is a very damning position – to think that personal ideas are adequate to provide the TRUE meaning to life, eternity, and the future. Personal ideas regarding eternal matters are worthless – and that is very offensive to the lost man. He wants to believe that his ideas are important, **when in reality they have no eternal weight or importance at all.**

What can the lost man know about God apart from God? What can he know about eternity or heaven or hell? If the lost man convinces himself that it is okay to believe what he wants to believe just because it is his idea about all of these issues, then he has ultimately committed spiritual suicide. Why? It is because personal ideas about God mean nothing, have no substance, and have no foundation other than an individual’s personal, empty, and meaningless vanity. Unfortunately, to the lost man all of that is very offensive and demeaning. They want the manger scene removed from the town square, the 10 commandments removed from any public space, the Bible removed from the courtroom, and the church convicted of hate crimes. He is what the Bible calls a **“fool”**.

The Incarnation is the supreme act of giving your life away and it was permanent. There is no sacrifice greater than the double sacrifice Christ made in His Incarnation and in His atonement. It is the sacrifice of Christ that is the heart of the Incarnation – and until someone understands what it was that He actually became in order to save them, they will never fully appreciate their salvation. Why is this so important for believers to understand? It is because if they do not genuinely appreciate or understand what Christ has done for them, then in all likelihood, their willingness to live their life for Him, their willingness to yield their life to Him and to His Lordship will not be that important or meaningful to them either. They will just continue to have a fairly mediocre spiritual experience. This is not something mystical, but rather one of the most important truths that someone will ever study. May God’s grace fall on you this Christmas season.