

## Christmas 2022

Over the last 8-10 years at Christmas, I have always focused on what we know as the Incarnation, or when God the Son came to earth and took on the likeness of men. The doctrine of the Incarnation is so pregnant with truth, that I hardly know how to express my thanksgiving for having understood it. It was not until later in my life that the Incarnation became more to me than just what we call the virgin birth. It was a doctrine that caused me to worship Christ as no other doctrine ever has. I have wept time and time again as I realized how much God the Son actually gave up to become my Savior. In terms that we have so often used, He became the God-Man forever. There is no way for me to appreciate what I just said. Today, He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father, but He is not the same as He was before the virgin birth. What He gave up is indescribable and has no equal.

My struggle has always been that I cry out in my heart as Paul did in [Galatians 6:14](#) when he said,

**Gal 6:14 (NKJV) But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

So, the problem has always been how to fit the amazing sacrifice of the Jesus in a stable with the Jesus on a cross. If I ever boast, I want it to be in cross of Christ, in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, in the gospel of Christ, and God forbid that I should ever, in any way, diminish the glory of those things. However, I want you to appreciate again, and especially here at Christmas, that in the Incarnation that Christ made a sacrifice that is so great that none of us will ever be able to comprehend its dimensions and magnitude. It eclipses anything that my frail mind can understand. His sacrifice in the Incarnation was so great, so vast, and so eternal, that any words to describe it are completely inadequate.

For me personally, the doctrine of the Incarnation is equal in its greatness to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of the Atonement, but of the three, it is the one that has the most mystery to it. I.e., how could God the Son become the God-Man forever, and what was the extent of that sacrifice that He made simply on our behalf. I say this with all of the grace that I know how, but His sacrifice was much, much more than just dying on a cross, even though that was why He came. Most people believe that He came in the likeness of a man and then went back to heaven the way that He was before He came, but that is a great and severe misunderstanding.

At the right hand of God right now is the God-Man. If I can put it this way – He is God the Son and Jesus Christ at the same time, but He is not there as He was prior to His incarnation. He is in a different form. He is a Lamb that was slain, a high priest interceding. He is still fully God, and has all of the attributes of His Godhead, but there is something else – and it is a great mystery. In [1 Timothy 3:16](#) Paul actually calls it a “**mystery**”.

**1Ti 3:16 (NKJV) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.**

After His resurrection He appeared to the two men on the road to Emmaus, He appeared to His disciples for forty days and ate with them, and He asked Thomas to look at His hands and His feet that had been pierced. He was in what we call **a resurrection body**. [Mark 16:19](#) says,

**Mk 16:19 (NKJV) So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.**

How was He received up in glory? Did something happen to Him physically as He ascended to God's throne? He was received up in His resurrection body. In [John 21](#), He had just been on the beach cooking breakfast for His disciples, and then He was received up into glory. It was the resurrected God-Man that ascended into heaven. [Acts 1:9-11](#) gives us the account.

**Ac 1:9 (NKJV) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, <sup>11</sup> who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? *This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.*"**

Before the Incarnation He was with God the Father and God the Spirit as God the Son, but today, He is there as a Lamb that was slain, as our Great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us.

What Jesus Christ willingly chose to do in the Incarnation was **to restrict and to limit** the use of certain of His attributes – **forever**. I must keep saying the word **forever** over and over and over. That is the magnitude of the sacrifice. I do not know how to exactly say it, but just for our purposes here this morning, what actually happened is that **God the Son gave up being God as He previously was – forever**. We know that He is still fully God in every sense of the word, we know that. He will always be God – fully divine, fully omnipotent, fully omniscience, but He has voluntarily chosen not to exercise those attributes unless directed by the Father. Let me put it another way. He has chosen to **function** in His humanness in utter dependence on His Father rather than in His "God-ness". It is in His humanness that He has identified with us. This is hard, this is difficult – but it is vitally important to our faith.

This morning, however, I want to ask a question. When I am finished this morning, this may not seem like a Christmas message to you, but I believe that it is. Mine is a question that came from me reading the Christmas story again, and the verse that arrested my attention was a very simple verse in [Luke 2:11](#) as the angel spoke to the shepherds in the field,

**Lk 2:11 (NKJV) For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

Here is my question to you. **What if for some reason Jesus had never been born?** What if Mary had had a miscarriage, or something went wrong in the stable when Jesus was being birthed and He died? What if Herod's ruthless command to kill all the young children had actually taken place when Jesus was still just a little boy in Bethlehem. What if Jesus had been killed in some freak accident and never made it to the cross? Where would that have left you and me in any of those scenarios? What would life without a crucified Jesus actually be like for you personally? What kind of future would you have without Jesus? Well, I am not sure that I can adequately answer that question for you, but whatever the answer is, it would be very bleak to say the least because it would put you in a position where you had absolutely no hope whatsoever. The problem that we have is that we are so use to all of the benefits of God's grace that Jesus actually brings into our lives that we seldom ever consider the incredible and horrific mess that we would be in without Him.

If I could define for you in the simplest terms possible for me personally if Jesus had never been born, it means that no matter what I did in my life and no matter how good I tried to be and no matter what I wanted life to be like, that that there would never be any hope. I cannot imagine a life without hope, a life without any hope of ever defeating the effects of sin or the eternal consequences of sin, and a life that would end in the most tragic of all circumstances – that of being separated from God for eternity in a place of indescribable torment. I cannot imagine what it would be like to have no hope. My mind and heart cannot comprehend that reality. [Ephesians 2:12](#) describes what we were like and what we would be like if Jesus had never been born when it says,

**Eph 2:12 (NKJV) that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

“**Having no hope...**” There may not be any three more frightening words in all of Scripture. There was a time in my life before coming to Christ that I thought that life would be great without Him, but once I came to Him, everything changed and I realized that if something had happened to me before the day that I was saved, that at that very moment that all hope was extinguished and gone forever. It happens all the time, every day with multitudes of people having no hope and dying without any hope at all.

Living in a world that has no hope because it rejects Jesus is so tragic. Man-made philosophies and ideas - they have no where to lead you in the end. When the end of life surrounds the man who has trusted in his own ideas and made his choices without any regard for God, for His Word and the sacrifices that Christ has made for him, at that moment, he has no hope whatsoever, but just a fearful expectation of something that he cannot imagine. [Hebrews 10:29-31](#) says,

**Heb 10:29 (NKJV) Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

[Hebrews 9:27](#) says,

**Heb 9:27 (NKJV) And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,**

The natural man, the man who does not know Jesus, the man who thinks he is smarter than God and loathes the idea of yielding his life to a sovereign God, he has no idea what awaits him on the other side of eternity. He has no clue what the words “**after this the judgment**” mean for his life. The very moment that he arrives in eternity, he will wish that he had never been born and that his mother had never seen his face. To the one who rejects and scorns the idea that “**unto you a Savior is born**”, there is no hope. There is nothing that he can do but cry out in utter agony and despair knowing that all who enter into that dreadful place never leave. At that moment, eternity becomes so overpowering to them, and there is nothing that they can do to change anything.

It is critical to understand that Jesus completely defeated the power that sin can have over your life. If you have ever lived your life in complete sin and disregard for God, then you have a small glimpse into how utterly debilitating and devastating the results of that kind of life were. You know what it produced

in your life. You know how far ranging the negative effects were on you and on others. You lived how you wanted to live, you did what you wanted to do, you went where you wanted to go and talked how you wanted to talk. You did everything that you thought was the right thing to do, and in the end, it left you completely miserable. You kept finding yourself empty, disillusioned, laughing on the outside, but hurting on the inside. [Proverbs 14:12-13](#) puts it this way,

**Pr 14:12 (NKJV) There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death. <sup>13</sup> Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth *may be* grief.**

The inescapable reality of a life without Jesus, a life without a Savior is that sin always has consequences. The bottom line is that if Jesus had never been born, that your life would be filled with more misery and hurt and pain and disappointment than you could ever dream was possible. Then, to make it even worse, it would mean that you had no hope and no possibility of it ever changing.

Secondly, though, it is critical to understand that Jesus also completely defeated the power that demonic angels and principalities and powers and sin can have over your life. You and I have no idea what is taking place in the unseen realm, and what kind of destructive, manipulative, and deceptive powers that these unseen beings can have on your life. The great news for you today is that God has limited what they can do to you unless it passes through His hands, and it is all because of what Jesus has accomplished on your behalf. He has destroyed their power and broken the power of sin that is always battling to destroy your life. I want to say this in a different way. **Jesus has assumed His rightful position for you.** [Hebrews 9:24](#) speaking of the great work of Christ for you says these words. These are mighty words, glorious words that cannot be replaced.

**Heb 9:24 (NKJV) For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;**

All things have been placed in subjection to Jesus – all things. All of creation is under His Lordship. Everything that is in the unseen spiritual realm is under His authority and lordship. Nothing that has been created, either seen or unseen, can displace or overcome His lordship. [Philippians 2:8-11](#) declares,

**Php 2:8 (NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Please turn to [Ephesians 1](#) and I want to give you just a few of the tremendous benefits of knowing that “**unto you a Savior has been born**”. As a believer, you know all of these things. These are not new, but sometimes in the midst of life and all of the pressures it seems to create in our lives, we just forget what Jesus has actually done for us. These are simple, but life-transforming truths that can help you navigate through life when life may seem so very, very difficult at times. [Ephesians 1:3](#) sets the table for us when it says,

**Eph 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

God has blessed you more than you know and for the next 11 verses, we discover what some of these blessing actually are. All of this is because “**unto you a Savior has been born**”.

1. [Ephesians 1:4](#) says that God has “**chosen us**”.

Eph 1:4 (NKJV) **just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,**

I never want to take the credit for something that God has done. I am only His because of His choice. I know that this doctrine is debated over and over again, but we did not influence God’s decision to save us. We are saved because for whatever reason He chose to love us with an everlasting love. I am humbled by the sheer mercy and willingness of God to save me. I deserved nothing. I have no way of repaying Him. I still fail and fall short every day of my life, and yet He chose me and He chose you. Be grateful that He did, and that He will never go back on that choice and say, “*Oops, bad choice!*”

2. [Ephesians 1:5](#) says that He has “**predestined us to adoption as sons**”.

Eph 1:5 (NKJV) **having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,**

The word “**predestined**” means to “mark out beforehand”. He marked us out before we were ever even born, and He did so in order that He might adopt us and bring us into His family as His children – completely forgiven of any and all trespasses and sins that we have ever committed against Him – no matter how bad they may have been.

3. [Ephesians 1:6](#) says that He has “**accepted us**”.

Eph 1:6 (NKJV) **to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.**

My question has always been and always will be – “*Why has God accepted us?*” Why would God the Father and God the Son accept me or any of us for that matter? I can find no good answer except that He wanted our lives to be “**to the praise of the glory of His grace**”. There is nothing deserved about this acceptance, and if you think that there is, then you have completely missed the point of this entire passage. We deserved nothing, we had nothing to give, we were lost and wandering and living in sin, and in His complete, total mercy He saved us and accepted us so that we could live for His glory.

4. [Ephesians 1:7](#) says that He has **redeemed us**.

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

This is why “**unto you a Savior has been born**”. Jesus had to shed innocent and sinless blood to redeem sinners – of which we all were. In the New Testament, the idea of redemption was that of a price that had to be paid to gain the freedom of a slave who had no way possible of paying a debt to gain his freedom. He had no means. He was a slave. We were all slaves of sin, and had no way of paying the debt that sin had created in our lives toward God, so He sent a Savior.

5. [Ephesians 1:8](#) completes v1:7 and says that **God has lavished us with His grace**.

Eph 1:8 (NKJV) **which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,**

The words “**abound toward**” literally mean to “lavish” (Greek Interlinear) us with the “**riches of His grace**”. It means to pour out and to not stop pouring out. It means that we have received far more than we could ever have expected or deserved. We deserved nothing and received everything imaginable. That is what this verse means and it is all because “**unto you a Savior has been born**”.

6. [Ephesians 1:9](#) says that God has made known to us the most glorious truth possible.

**Eph 1:9 (NKJV) having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,**

It was not until after the death of Christ that this mystery of a salvation by grace through faith was fully realized, and on the day that Jesus saved you, the Holy Spirit opened your heart and mind so that you finally comprehended what you never could have seen on your own. He made this glorious truth known to you.

7. [Ephesians 1:11](#) says that God has given you an inheritance.

**Eph 1:11 (NKJV) In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,**

You have no idea what awaits you in eternity. An inheritance is not something that you earn, but it is something that is yours simply because someone else decided to give it to you. Right now, we all have an inheritance that awaits us that cannot be measured or even understood in our feeble minds. Its magnitude is beyond description. [1 Corinthians 2:9](#) says,

**1Co 2:9 (NKJV) But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."**

8. Finally, [Ephesians 1:13](#) says that we have been “**sealed with the Holy Spirit**”.

**Eph 1:13 (NKJV) In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,**

The sealing of our lives by the Holy Spirit is the guarantee that all that God has promised He will give to you. Every promise and every blessing that God has said is yours is yours, and He will give you all of His promises for your life in full.

I am staggered at who Jesus really was, who He is, and who He will be to us when we see Him face to face. No one would ever have seen all of this in the manger. The shepherds had no idea. I certainly do not think that Mary or Joseph understood it all. The pagan magi certainly did not understand. Later on, the apostles and other disciples struggled to see it, but it was all there in that smelly, dirty stable where a King was born. No one in Bethlehem had a clue what had taken place. The night came, morning came, and nobody really knew. The angels knew, but even then I do not believe that even they fully understood what had taken place. A Savior had been born, and He is still a Savior to all and any who will come to Him in simple faith. He is a great and mighty Savior and God. May we pour out our love to Him during this time of year and every day beyond!