

THE INCARNATE CHRIST

by

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Before His Incarnation

A little girl was seen leaving a church building in the midst of the day, at a time when no one else was there. Thinking she was seeking help for trouble, the observer stopped. "Are you looking for the Pastor?" he inquired. When she replied "No," he asked further, "What were you doing in the church building?" She replied, "I was praying to Jesus." Smiling at her beautiful child-like simplicity of faith and devotion, the questioner persisted, "And what did you ask Jesus to give you?" "Nothing," she replied. "I was just loving Him a little."

Oh that such a spirit of loving devotion for God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ might possess the minds and emotions of believers everywhere. He is worthy our "loving Him (much more than) a little" every day.

Jesus Christ is the heart, the life, the foundation of the Christian religion. He is "*the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:16), the "*only begotten of the Father*" (John 1:14; 3:16, 18). The truth that Jesus of Nazareth is "*the Christ, the only begotten Son of God*" (Matt. 16:16) is the most basic of all Christian doctrines.

He whom we know as Jesus Christ is the unique and only God-man. He is at the same time very God and ideal Man. No one can honor Him aright until he understands and accepts the

truth of Jesus' two-fold nature, human and divine natures being united in His person. The Bible speaks of that in special words. Those words, in the Greek language in which our New Testament was first written, are *en came*. They mean "*in flesh*." The New Testament teaches that God came in human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Savior of men. None other in all of human history has been nor will be. the same kind of person as was Jesus of Nazareth. We know Him to be the Christ of God (Luke 4:41).

I have chosen to share with you a study concerning the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. I want to show you the basic Bible teaching concerning the person and work of Christ before His incarnation, at the time of His incarnation, during His incarnate ministry on earth, following His incarnate ministry here, and His continuing incarnation in Christian believers. Such a study, if it is understood accurately, will magnify the Lord Jesus as the Christ of God and will lead us to worship and serve Him the better.

Philippians 2:5-11 is the finest summary of the doctrine of the incarnation to be found in the Bible. It reads in these words: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

What a glorious passage! Verse 6 speaks of Christ before the incarnation. Verse 7 speaks of Christ at the moment of incarnation. Verse 8 speaks of Christ during the earthly ministry of His incarnation. Verse 9 speaks of Christ in heaven following His incarnation. Thank God for such a beautiful and enlightening passage of Scripture.

Look carefully at verse 6, "*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*" That describes the nature and attitude of Christ before He came in human flesh.

What was the nature of the pre-incarnate Christ? He was "in the form of God." That statement must be considered carefully to be understood and appreciated. "Form" does not mean outline, pattern, external appearance, or image. It speaks of nature, not of appearance. "Form" means the nature or essence of a person. "The form of God" means the pre-incarnate Christ was the very essence of deity very God of very God in the strictest sense of the word. One careful scholar of the New Testament Scriptures has this to say about its meaning: "For the interpretation of 'the form of God' it is sufficient to say that (1) it includes the whole nature and essence of Deity, and is inseparable from them, since they could have no actual existence without it; and (2) that it does not include in itself anything 'accidental' nor separable, such as particular modes of manifestation, or conditions of glory and majesty, which may at one time be attached to the 'form,' at another separated from it." (W.E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, II, 123) That is the theologians way of saying that before His birth to Mary, and before His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist and the anointing by the Holy Spirit, the Christ was eternal God.

John 1:1, 14, reads, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*"

Before the beginning began, the Christ already was. The Christ was, and is, and shall ever be

the very essence of deity very God of very God. It was He who was born as a helpless human infant to a virgin mother named Mary.

Consider the attitude of the Christ in view of His coming into the world as a man. He *“thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”* That expression may not have great meaning to you upon first hearing. What does it mean? It means the Christ did not consider His equality with God to be a thing to be grasped and retained at all costs. Do you catch the significance of that statement? It means Christ came willingly into the world in human flesh, though it meant His giving up much of the manifestations and prerogatives of deity to do so.

He was not like a person who might be unwilling to give up an advantage or suffer a hardship for the sake of another. He was not like the spirit of a child who thinks he should be permitted to keep his little friend’s toy because he likes it. The Christ was the very opposite of that spirit.

He who shared the very nature of God with every attribute and privilege of deity was willing to release all personal privilege in order to come and effect salvation for sinners. That is grace, amazing grace!

So in the counsel halls of eternity, before there was the creation of the earth or of man to live upon the earth, God planned the way of redemption for the man whom He would create. Because there was never any question about His willingness and ability to effect salvation, Jesus Christ stood as a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8), for God considered the works finished from the foundation of the world (Heb. 4:8). That is why I can say with absolute assurance that salvation is available to you and every other person who will turn by repentance from sin and trust Jesus Christ alone. God has guaranteed the blessing to you.

“Father, we marvel at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. How could He love us so much as to give up all the glories of heaven and the privileges of deity in order to be a Man among men and the Sacrifice for sin? We do not understand it, but we believe it and rejoice in Him. Thank you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

At His Incarnation

The Christmas story, as recorded in chapters one and two of the Gospel according to Luke and chapters one and two of the Gospel according to Matthew is one of the most beautiful compositions in all of human literature. Besides its literary beauty in describing the ministry of angels, the birth of a precious infant, and the visit of wise men from afar, it is of greatest significance in the field of theology. That Christmas story has captured the hearts and imaginations of poets, philosophers, theologians, musicians, artists, and unnumbered multitudes of common people like you and me.

One man was speaking with a friend at his wonder before the cross of Jesus. The friend replied, “I cannot get beyond wondering at the manger to wonder at the cross.”

What really happened when Jesus was born to His virgin mother? Philippians 2:7 describes it in these words: *“(He) made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”* In that one sentence there is a world of grace manifest. Think about it!

He *“made himself of no reputation.”* What does that mean? Various translators use various terms to translate that expression from the Greek language. *“He emptied himself”* is the most common translation. (I like to say, “He made as if He had no reputation.”) J.B. Phillips reads, “He made himself nothing.” Charles B. Williams expresses it, “He laid it aside.” Each translator

suggests the idea of Christ surrendering some great privilege, dignity, or power when He came in human flesh.

What was it that He laid aside and emptied himself of when He came as Man among men? It was the absolute, eternal, and infinite privilege and power He possessed as one who was and is the very essence of deity. He laid his “God-ship” aside when He came in human flesh.

Now please note: He did not lay aside His divine nature, His deity when He came in human flesh to be known as Jesus of Nazareth. Absolutely not. The totality of deity resided in Him even while here in a human body (Col. 2:9). He laid aside and emptied himself of all the insignia (the appearances) of deity, along with the authority to act in His power as second person of holy trinity. He was self-limited while here in human flesh, though He remained absolute God.

The Amplified New Testament states that He “stripped himself (of all privileges and rightful dignity)” when God came to be a man. Take two of the divine attributes as an illustration. (1) Wisdom. Omniscience (knowing all things past, present, and future) is one of the attributes of God. Yet, Luke 2:52 reports that the boy Jesus “*increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*” How could He increase in wisdom if he was God and God knows all things? He emptied himself of universal knowledge when He came in human flesh. (2) Glory. God is glorious that no man can look on His face and live (Exodus 33:20). Yet, if you had seen Jesus walking down the streets of Capernaum, or Jerusalem, or Nazareth, He would not have been a glowing radiance but would have looked like any other man. Only on the Mount of Transfiguration did His glory shine through (Matt. 17:1-8).

Such limitation did not make Him any less deity, for it was a self-limitation. Is a man any less a man because, in wrestling with his little son he restrains his strength? Of course not. Neither was Jesus Christ any less God because He imposed upon himself the limitations which enabled Him to be a Man among men.

Marvel at the second statement in Philippians 2:7, “*He took upon him the form of a servant.*” That term “form” is the same term used when He was said to be in the “form” of God (verse 6). It does not mean external appearance, you remember, but rather means essence of nature. He who was the very essence of deity (and so was master over all) took upon himself the very essence of a servant when He came in human flesh. Amazing grace!

Consider that term “servant.” It is the Greek word **doulos** and actually means bond slave.” Imagine that! The Creator and Governor of the universe, God himself, took the spirit and work of a bondsman to effect the salvation of poor lost sinners.

Having emptied himself of all divine insignia and prerogatives, the second person of holy trinity “*was made in the likeness of men.*” That is, He was made like men; He bore the human appearance. The term “likeness” means to bear a certain external appearance. To be in “the likeness of men” means that Christ looked like a man in form and shape.

If you had lived in Palestine in that time period, and had met Jesus walking down the street of the towns, He would have looked like any other Jewish man. The prophet Isaiah had foretold that when men saw the Messiah, He would have no physical beauty which would make them desire Him (Isa. 53:2). He appeared as an ordinary man.

The Bible makes much of the strictly human nature and appearance of Jesus. Paul wrote in Romans 8:3 how “*God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*” That does not mean that Jesus participated in the sins of the flesh, but that He came in the “likeness,” the appearance and design of men who live in flesh which is subject to the practice of sin.

Hebrews 2:14-17 develops the idea in these words: “*The children of a family share the same*

flesh and blood; and so he too shared ours, so that through death he might break the power of him who had death at his command, that is, the devil; and might liberate those who, through fear of death had all their lifetime been in servitude. It is not angels, mark you, that he takes to himself, but the sons of Abraham. And therefore he had to be made like these brothers of his in every way, so that he might be merciful and faithful as their high priest before God, to expiate the sins of the people” (New English Bible).

Well, that is what happened at the incarnation of the second person of holy trinity. He emptied himself of all privileges and manifestations of His divine nature. He came in the spirit and to act the part of a bondsman, though He was in truth the sovereign God of the universe. He took the design and appearance, as well as the nature, of human beings. He was born and grew like other men and was recognized as truly human.

And to what purpose? The Bible answers, “.... *that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”* (Heb. 2:17, King James Version). That is to say, He did it for the salvation of sinners like you and me.

Do you believe the truth of it? Have you entered into the good of it? Are you rejoicing in the experience of it? Are you experiencing the victory of it? “*The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”* (Acts 2:39). Enter in today!

“Father, now that we understand better what happened when Jesus came in human flesh as the only begotten of the Father, we love you the more and praise your love and grace which has brought salvation to us. Oh, help us live like a people who have been rescued from destruction and become children of the King. Bless our witness for Christ to lead others to faith. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

During His Incarnation

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Tim. 3:16).

That mystery, that God should come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and be “*manifest in the flesh,*” is the theme of our present study.

We have seen that before His incarnation, the divine Christ was the very essence of deity for He existed in the “form” of God. Even then, He had such a spirit of self-giving love that He did not insist on maintaining the privileges which were inherently His as deity.

At the time of His incarnation (was His birth in human flesh to a human mother), the divine Christ emptied himself of all insignia and prerogatives of deity. He became the very essence of a bondsman. He appeared as a Man among men, being human in every aspect of His appearance.

Then what happened? What did the divine Christ do during the thirty-three years of His life on earth as a human? Let us seek some Biblical answers to that important question.

Jesus grew and developed as a normal human. He was an infant, then a toddler, then a child, then an adolescent, then a young adult, and then a mature adult. He developed just as any human being would develop. He learned to walk, to talk, to develop skills and explore natural talents. His mother taught Him and His father trained Him. The Bible teaches the full humanity of Jesus, while affirming His deity at the same time. He was God “*manifest in the flesh.*”

Luke the physician was careful to note the development of the boy Jesus. He wrote, “*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”* (Luke

2:52). How amazing! Jesus increased in “*wisdom*” at the same time He was increasing in “*stature*.” He grew more knowledgeable as He grew taller. I marvel at that. One of the attributes of God is that He knows all things past, present, and future. We call that the omniscience of God. Jesus was God in human flesh, yet Jesus did not know all things: He “increased in wisdom.” How is that possible? Very simply, He ‘emptied himself’ of all privileges of deity while retaining the divine nature when He came as a Man among men.

Jesus was as limited as any other man during His growing years. It was not until He was thirty-three years of age that the power of God began to be manifest in Him. What happened to make the change in Him?

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. You can read the account in Matthew 3:13-17. Jesus came to be baptized in the River Jordan by the hands of John the Baptist. When John had immersed Him, and as Jesus was coming up out of the water, the heavens were opened to Him, the Holy Spirit descended in the bodily form of a dove upon Him, and the voice of the Father spoke from heaven, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matt. 3:17).

Jesus was never the same again. Luke chapter 4 reports that from henceforth Jesus was “*full of the Holy Spirit*” and was “*led by the Spirit*” (verse 1). He returned from the wilderness temptation experience “in the power of the Spirit” (verse 14). He went into the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath and being asked to read the scripture passage for the day purposefully read Isaiah 61:1, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me...*” (verse 18). His sermon began with the words, “*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*” (verse 21). When the sermon was ended, the people were amazed at His teaching for His words were with power (verse 32). What made the change in Jesus?

Acts 10:38 explains the change in these simple words: “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. . .*” Jesus Christ did not do His work on earth by virtue of His power as second person of holy trinity. He worked by the power of God communicated to Him by the anointing Spirit of God. Jesus himself said, “*The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do*” (John 5:19). Apart from the power of God upon Him Jesus was as limited as you or I. He had emptied himself of divine power when He came as Man.

Jesus was totally available and totally dependent upon the Father. He spoke of being “*sent*” by the Father (John 8:29). He spoke of doing the works of the Father (John 5:17; 9:4). He spoke of giving forth the words of the Father (John 17:8). He did nothing independent of the will and purpose of the Heavenly Father. He was totally subservient to the will of God the Father.

Please do not interpret this teaching to mean Jesus was not God. He was very God of very God, even during His incarnate ministry here on earth. He has been God eternally and will ever continue to be God. But He was a self-limited God while here. He was teaching mortals like you and me that the power of God can and will rest upon the child of God who is totally available to the will of God. When you understand the significance of that statement, you are on shouting ground!

Jesus died in the place of guilty sinners. Here is the greatest manifestation of grace ever witnessed in all of human history. “*For Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*” (I Peter 3:18). “*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.... Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the*

Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (I Peter 2:22, 24, 25).

Over and again, the Bible speaks of Jesus Christ dying *"for"* sinners, *"for"* the ungodly, *"for"* us. That term "F-O-R" means "in the place of another; in another's stead; on behalf of another." To say that Christ died *"for"* us means that He died the death we should have died. That is what is called "vicarious suffering" or "substitutionary atonement." It means that the death which Jesus Christ died on the cross was purposed to keep us from having to suffer eternal death. It means our salvation is based upon His suffering death and rising up again. Hear this Biblical statement concerning substitutionary suffering. *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. ... the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:5,6).

No one is saved upon the basis of what he can do for himself. Salvation is based on what Jesus did for each one of us. That is why salvation is *"in Him."* Apart from His atoning deed, there can be no salvation.

That is a brief summary of the ministry of the divine Christ on earth during His incarnation. (1) He grew and developed as a normal human. (2) He was anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit and power. (3) He was totally available to God through all His earthly ministry. (4) He paid the price for sinners by suffering as if He were personally guilty of all the sins which men commit. Therefore He is the Savior of all who believe. "Father, grant that where this message goes out across the world men and women might exalt the Lord Jesus Christ by trusting Him as Savior and submitting to Him as Lord. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Following His Incarnation

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. His existence did not begin with His birth in human flesh; it did not end with His death on the cross. He is *"the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever"* (Heb. 13:8). The eternity of the Christ of God is beautifully expressed in Hebrews 1:10-12.

"Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail" (Heb. 1:10-12).

The Bible teaches that God came to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He performed a redemptive ministry on earth during the thirty-three years He was here, particularly in the three-year period in which Jesus worked here. Then, following His crucifixion and resurrection, He ascended back to heaven. But what is He doing there now? What is the ministry of Jesus Christ following His resurrection from the dead?

Jesus ascended back to the presence of God in heaven. That is no surprise. He had come down from heaven to the earth. Listen to His words as recorded by the Apostle John. *"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven"* (John 3:13). *"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me"* (John 6:38). The apostle Paul agreed with that and wrote, *"The first man (Adam) was of the earth, earthy: the second man (Jesus) is the Lord from heaven"* (I Cor. 15:47). It is not surprising that Jesus Christ completed His earthly ministry and returned to where He was before He came in human flesh.

Jesus took the disciples out to the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. He gave them a final

commission, raised his hands to bless them, *“And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven”* (Luke 24:51). *“And... while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight”* (Acts 1:9).

That is a great assurance to the Christian today. *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself...”* (Heb. 9:24). What assurance! The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote, *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession”* (Heb. 4:14).

Not only has Jesus returned to heaven, He has been crowned there with all glory and honor and power. He prayed to the Father, *“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was”* (John 17:5). God answered that petition. *“He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God”* (Mark 16:19). The right hand is a place of special honor; that is the place Jesus occupies with God today (Heb. 10:12). The Apostle Peter wrote of the coronation of Jesus, *“Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him”* (I Peter 3:22).

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

Stephen saw the ascended Jesus in heaven, standing to receive His martyred saint Acts 7:55, 56). Saul of Tarsus saw Him (or heard His voice from heaven) in a call to conversion and to service (Acts 9). John the apostle saw the glorified Jesus walking among His churches, receiving the worship of heaven, and sharing with God in the government of the universe (Rev. 4, 5).

In a glorious vision, John saw the once-crucified but now risen and ascended Christ walk up to the God who sits on the throne of glory in heaven, and take a seven-sealed scroll out of His hand. Upon such an act of divine authority, all of the saints in heaven fell before Him and sang a new song, saying, *“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth”* (Rev. 5:9,10).

Jesus is active in heaven. We speak of His “earthly ministry,” not to indicate that was all the ministry He had, but rather to distinguish it from His heavenly ministry.

He had a heavenly ministry before He came in human flesh. He was active in creation (John 1:3) and in the government of the affairs of man and nature following the creation. He came to earth for a brief thirty-three year period. Then He returned to heaven to continue His blessed and needed ministry there.

Jesus receives the worship of the hosts of heaven. Even a casual reading of chapters four and five of the book of the Revelation will convince one of that truth. He receives the worship of angels who serve God, and of saints who have been redeemed unto God. He receives worship because He is God and because He is worthy.

Jesus intercedes before God the Father on behalf of people who are still living here on earth. That intercessory ministry is two-fold. (1) He intercedes for sinners who come to God by Him. *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Heb. 7:25). What an encouragement that is to the humble and penitent sinner: The very One who died for him is now before God to

intercede for him. But Jesus not only intercedes for sinners, (2) He intercedes for believers (the saints of God) before the Father. The Bible says, *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Heb. 9:24). The “us” of whom the writer refers are the believers in Jesus Christ. Think of it! The once-crucified but now-risen Jesus Christ is in the presence of God to represent our interests there when we come to God through Him.

Jesus is the only intercessor. Neither saints, nor angels, nor the mother of Jesus, nor any other can represent us before God. *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all”* (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). We need no other mediator than Jesus.

Where is Jesus today? What is He doing? Those questions may be answered very simply. Jesus is today in heaven at the right hand of God (the place of highest honor and authority) where He represents the best interests and welfare of every person who will come to God by Him. That includes you! Whatever your condition, and whatever your need, Jesus Christ waits in the presence of God the Father to represent you there. Come without delay!

“Father, thank you for the loving interest showed by the Lord Jesus. He returned to heaven but He did not forget us on earth. Thank you that He is now active there in behalf of our temporal and eternal welfare. May the realization of that truth inspire multitudes of people to pray in His name and to receive the supply of every need. For Jesus’ sake, Amen.”

His Continuing Incarnation

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Consider the beauty of that statement. *“Christ lives in me!”* It is the occasion of the Christian’s joy, the explanation of the Christian’s hope, and the potential of the Christian’s victory. There are two companion statements which occur over and over in the New Testament. One is, *“I am in Christ.”* The other is, *“Christ is in me.”* No less than 164 times the apostle Paul made a reference to the fact that the believer is *“in Christ.”* Equally important is his insistence that Christ is “in” the believer. For the believer to be in Christ means that he is saved; for Christ to be in the believer means that he is sanctified. Salvation and sanctification are all that is needed to make one’s life blessed and a blessing.

It is a Bible truth, therefore, that since Christ lives in the Christian the life of the Christian is a continuing incarnation of Christ. It is God in human flesh, though in a much lesser sense than He was in Jesus of Nazareth.

To be saved means to have the Holy Spirit of God living within. Salvation is not something God gives you apart from himself. It is God moving within the human spirit, by His own Holy Spirit, to live the life of God in a human body.

Using the analogy of water, Jesus said to be saved was like having an artesian well of water bubbling up and overflowing within one’s own spirit. It is not like having a drink of water but having rivers of water flowing out from one (John 4:14; 7:37-38). *“This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive”* (John 7:39).

Jesus promised to request the Father who would give a Companion to remain with believers as He had been personally present with His disciples during His earthly ministry. He promised that Companion, whom He identified as *“the Spirit of truth”* would *“abide with you*

forever... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17). The apostle Paul added that the presence of the Holy Spirit is proof of salvation: *“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”* (Rom. 8:9).

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and like titles are applied to the holy third person of the triune God. We commonly call Him *“the Holy Spirit.”* But to say that the Spirit of God lives in you and to say that God or Jesus lives in you is saying the same thing. The persons of trinity cannot be divided. God dwells in you by the Holy Spirit. Christ dwells in you by the Holy Spirit.

If any one asks, “How does Christ live in the believer?”; the answer of the Bible is, *“Christ dwells in the heart by faith”* (Eph. 6:17). That is to say, the indwelling presence of God begins the instance a person trusts Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Every person who is saved has God living within his human spirit because the Spirit of God indwells each believer.

Jesus discussed the significance of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. It is recorded in considerable detail in John, chapter fourteen. The passage reaches its climax with this statement: *“In that day (that is, the day when the believer experiences the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God) ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”* (John 14:20). The indwelling Spirit will make real to each believer these facts: (1) Jesus is in the Father, (2) the believer is in Jesus; and (3) Jesus is in the believer. Think of it! It is God living in the Christian by the indwelling Holy Spirit which makes real the continuing incarnation.

The life of the Christian is the life of Christ. Hear the words of Galatians 2:20, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* The life of the Christian is the life of the Christ who lives within him by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

No separation can be made between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. No separation can be made between the indwelling Holy Spirit, the indwelling Father, or the indwelling Son. Where one is, all are. What one does, all do. There is absolute unity between them so that, though three persons, they are one God.

Think of what it means that your life is no longer your life; it is the life of Jesus Christ being lived in your human body. That is the continuing incarnation of which I speak.

The life of Christ within the Christian is the basis of spiritual victory. Jesus prayed to the Father, *“I in them, and thou in me, that they might be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me”* (John 17:23). What does it mean that one is *“made perfect”*? It does not mean moral perfection in the sense of sinless deeds of the flesh. It means to be complete, fully equipped, made mature. The reference of Jesus that believers are made perfect is based upon two astounding truths: (1) His indwelling presence in them: *“I in them”*, and (2) God’s indwelling presence in Jesus: *“thou in me.”* Think about that for a moment. If God is in Jesus and Jesus is in you, that means God is living His life in you. Amazing!

That is the basis of all spiritual victory. *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God”* (II Cor. 3:5). *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds:)* (II Cor. 10:4). *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”* (II Cor. 9:8). You can live in spiritual victory because the life of God is being

lived in you by the Spirit of God.

Christ in the believer is the basis of his certain assurance. Christianity is not a “hope so” or “maybe so” matter. It is a “know so” relationship. I am saved and know it. I am preserved and know it. Christ lives in me and I know it. What a blessed assurance that gives.

Colossians 1:27 reminds us that “*Christ in you (is) the hope of glory.*” Bless the Lord. Now hear the words of Jesus, “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*” (Rev. 3:20). That promise includes you. Are you willing just now to open the door of your life, by an act of your will, and invite Jesus Christ to come in as Savior and Lord?

The purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world was the salvation of sinners to the glory of God. The plan was made in eternity before time, executed at the cross and resurrection in time, and redeems men to the glory of God beyond time. It includes every human being of all generations who will hear, repent, and receive Jesus Christ through faith. Do not be a spectator; participate in the blessing. Trust Him now and serve Him forever. “*Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee*” (Job. 22:21).

“Father, use these studies on the incarnation of Jesus Christ to honor Him, to magnify Your great name, and to bless the hearts of multitudes. To that worthy end we commit to Thee and send them forth in Jesus’ name, Amen.”