

TEXT: John 1:1-5, 14-18

TITLE: What the Incarnation of God the Son Demands 3

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Introduction

We are being challenged from the reality of the great central truth of the Word of God, the great central truth of the Gospel, the incarnation of God the Son, that the Word became flesh. **First**, since Christ is God and man, let this be the foundation and strengthening of our faith. There is every warrant, every reason for us to truth in Jesus Christ. **Second**, since Christ is God and man, then we have great reason to admire and be amazed at His supreme expression of love. Because the Good News of Christ coming into the world for our redemption is something that we have heard let us not ever let ourselves get to the point that we are unmoved by Christ's colossal love! **Third**, since Christ is God and man, then let this encourage sinners to come to Christ and cling to Him. **Fourth**, since Christ is God and man, then we must honor Him above all. **Fifth**, since Christ is God and man, then this explains who Christ's sufferings satisfied for our sins and redeemed us to God.

These last two which we looked into this morning should be a lasting conviction, lasting impact upon us that we give ourselves as disciples of Christ, as living sacrifices to God which is our reasonable service. Our nation, our culture does not honor Christ. We honor ourselves. Our leisure, our pleasures, ourselves - all come first. Just try to begin to keep the Lord's Day as indeed the Lord's Day -- The world, the culture, even those professing faith in Christ will think you more than a little bit weird! Start insisting that you attend upon the public worship of God, prepare for it, giving yourself to it, and then seek to live it out in the market place of home and your calling, and quickly you will find resistance to such honoring of Christ, to such glorifying of Christ and rendering Him the obedience which He is due. The next particular point in this series brings us face to face with part of the real problem why we are more content to say we simply know the point of truth that Christ is God and man, that God was incarnate to redeem, than to really know it because the truth is unto godliness.

I. Since Christ is God and man, then in Christ we have clearly revealed to us the greatest pattern of self-denial and humility.

We studied Phil. 2:6f, which speaks of Christ "who being in the form of God" you remember that this is NOT saying that Christ existed sort of like God, but rather the Apostle is speaking of Christ existing as God with all the glory and prerogatives of God, yet He "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God" - He did not think that He must cling to that glory and those prerogatives "but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the

point of death, event the death of the cross.” He humbled Himself. He abased and lowered Himself. As John characteristically says these simple yet amazing things: Jn. 1:14, “The Word became flesh.” Where did He come from? Jn. 1:18, “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father...” He was embraced in the closest union, fellowship, love, in delights which it is beyond the power of human language to describe! That He should then have left this, put off all that glory which He had with the Father, as He says in Jn. 17:5, since “before the world was.” That He should go so far in humbling and abasing Himself as to become man by taking to Himself our low and frail nature in order that He should do such a lowly suffering, dying, sacrificing of Himself to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). This is the greatest self-denial, humility, self-abasement that ever has or will be.

Dear Christian it is this pattern of self-denial, humility, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” - this pattern is to be stamped upon our lives. Must it not be a matter of admiration that Christ put on our rags that we might put on His royal robes! Rev. 19:7,8, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Must it not be a matter of admiration that Christ, as II Cor. 8:9, says, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” That Christ Jesus, as Gal. 3:13, “has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us...” This is unsearchable love! This is amazing grace!

But now, will Christ make this terrific step down, this huge condescension and yet we remain proud and demanding? Was Christ willing to humble Himself to be viewed as Mt. 11:19, “a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” Was He viewed as working by satan or a devil Himself (Mt. 9:34; 11:18)! But you know the reality is, that if Christ, His Name is blasphemed, His Word disobeyed, His Gospel twisted, His honor degraded and run into the mud we are not nearly so upset, not nearly so ready to demand *That something has to be done!!* As when our own name, word, reputation and honor is offended! Yet we simply shrug it off, remain silent, do nothing when Christ is offended. We look upon Peter with some disdain that when he was challenged about being a disciple of Jesus Christ, he denied Christ with oaths! Yet how many times is our mouth simply stopped or our actions never brought into fruition before we are identified as Christians, as disciples of Christ simply because we do not want to bear criticism and disapproval for the sake of Christ! What is upon the mouth of everyone constantly in our culture? *I’ll Sue! See you in court!* and over the most trivial of things. Why? Because of pride, because of our own perceived self-importance; Our rights! What we deserve! But is it the case that Christ stopped to wash His disciples’ feet (Jn. 13:14), but we cannot serve Christ or serve His Church or serve His people?

One has said, “Humility is self-annihilation.” Job 22:29, “He will save the humble person.” The language there is *lowered eyes* which reminds us of

our Lord's parable where the tax collector would stand at the back and not lift his eyes to heaven but beat upon his chest saying 'Have mercy on me the sinner.' The Christian is one who is poor in spirit. He is humble and has a lower opinion of himself than others can have of him! Think of the example of Abraham who says in prayer in Gen. 18:27, "I who am but dust and ashes." Or Jacob, Gen. 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant." If King David as a type of Christ and speaking of Him can say, Ps. 22:6, "I am a worm and no man" or the Apostle Paul in Eph. 3:8, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints..." Or the English martyr John Bradford who said, "I am a most hypocritical wretch, not worthy that the earth should bear me!" Or Luther, "I have no other name than sinner; Sinner is my name, sinner is my surname." John Calvin writes in his 'Prefatory Address to King Francis (p.13) in the *Institutes*: "For what is more consonant with faith than to recognize that we are naked of all virtue, in order to be clothed by God? That we are empty of all good, to be filled by Him? That we are slaves of sin, to be freed by Him? Blind, to be illumined by Him? Lame, to be made straight by Him? Weak, to be sustained by Him? To take away from us all occasion for glorying, that He alone may stand forth gloriously and we glory in Him [cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17]?" Let us strive to this glorifying of Christ and our own personal self-abasement and Christ-like humility.

II. Since Christ is God and man, then we learn in Christ how to have access to God.

We have access to God by means of Jesus Christ, who took to Himself our human nature to accomplish and provide for our access to God by suffering and dying for our sins to reconcile us to God. Ro. 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Eph. 2:18, "For through Him we both have access [by Christ we are conducted into the presence of the Father] by one Spirit to the Father." 3:12, "...in Christ Jesus our Lord...we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." You know you cannot simply drive to Washington DC and walk up to the White House and walk through the gates and open the front door and have a sit down with the President! No doubt you would be arrested long before you reached the front door! But think of it: The High King of heaven views it as His glory and grace to give His children free access to Him at all times, in all places, on all occasions, by Jesus Christ: I Tim. 2:5, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Christ took our human nature in order that He would reconcile us to God and give us that free access to God, which He could never have done had He not been both God and man. Without Christ in our nature we could never have had access to God and would have remained forever estranged from God. What are we by nature? Enemies and dead in trespasses and sins: Ro. 5:10, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." It is only by the

mediatorial work of Christ incarnate that we come to be reconciled with God: Eph. 2:1,12f, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins....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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." It is by Christ that we have access and acceptance with God. How could we have any communion with God who is a consuming fire were it not for Christ, but in Christ (I Jn. 1:1-3) we have fellowship, we have communion with God. Now all kinds of people dream of fellowship with God, communion with God. There are thousands today that imagine themselves *spiritual*. But they have no communion, no fellowship with the God of absolute holiness, absolute majesty, absolute glory (IE. Isaiah 6) because without Christ such is God's glory and holiness that He only is a terror to sinful men. It is only by Christ that we can come boldly into God's presence and pour out our hearts to Him (Heb. 4:15,16). Our boldness and our courage to come before God, to cry out to Him, is not born of imagined self-deserving, our own worthiness, or even the creation of an idolatrous substitute for the true and living God, but rather it is basic upon the fact that by Christ we come to the throne of grace based entirely and completely upon the merit of our High Priest Jesus Christ who is the God - man.

III. Since Christ is God and man, then we have confidence in His sympathizing with us in our afflictions.

In Ezekiel 35, the prophet brings a word of judgment against Edom. The Edomites have looked upon this time as an opportunity to destroy Israel, but in making war upon the Church, upon the people of God, they have set themselves against God. Verse 10f, "Because you have said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess them,' although the Lord was there, therefore, as I live," says the Lord God, "I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. then you shall know that I am the Lord. I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are desolate; they are given to us to consume.' Thus with your mouth you have boasted against Me and multiplied your words against Me; I have heard them.": You have the same striking evidence of the Lord's identification with His people in Isaiah 37, where the Assyrians under Sennacherib set themselves against God's people. You remember how good King Hezekiah spreads their letter blaspheming God before the Lord, then in v. 23, "Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. By your servants you have reproached the Lord, and said, 'By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice trees; I will enter its farthest height...." The foundation of support in troubles and the comfort for us as Christians in afflictions is that Christ has so identified

with us that He has taken our nature to Himself and in so doing He has experienced our weaknesses, our afflictions, our troubles and He is able and willing to help and support us. Heb. 2:17, "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." 4:15, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." We all have insight into this very point by experience. If we have faced a certain circumstance - be it sickness and disease, surgery, loosing our job, or any number of other situations - we are able to sympathize much better with those who are in the midst of such trials. So we can see that Christ in our nature, suffered and we can take from that, that He will demonstrate Himself to be a merciful High Priest to us in our sufferings; that He will be One who is ready to help and support us in our afflictions, in our trials, in our miseries which we face in this life because He faced the same. Heb. 2:18, "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." So you know this and remember this and take this to heart as a support and a comfort to you in sorrow, in trial, in pain and suffering. What is that astounding word of identification by Isaiah in 63:9? "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." As David pleads in Ps. 17:8, for the Lord to keep him as the apple of Your eye, so Zech. 2:8, says that whoever touches His people touches the apple of His eye. There is the most sensitive union and identification between Christ and His people. Christ took to His own heart the afflictions of His Church and He was grieved for them and with them. Christ was *in all things made like His brethren* - not only in taking to Himself their nature, but living here in this fallen world lying under the curse of God for sin so that He took upon Himself infirmities and sufferings and was subjected to temptation - He felt the weight of troubles - All of this in order that *He might be a merciful and faithful; High Priest* so that He knows experientially and is able to *sympathize* and what is more *He is able to aid those who are tempted*.

We look upon the world and often the Church doubts and thinks itself alone and without resource. Like the spies sent into the land we say, *The land is full of giants and fortified cities and who are we? What is our resource?* This is the source of the Church turning to other instruments, other resources. This is the reason why Christians despair and turn to some kind of nominal Christianity or turn back altogether. Yet we should remember that *apple of My eye* language of sensitive, feeling, compassionate identification between the Lord and His people: You remember, right, Saul's persecution of the fledgling NT Church? Where was Christ? He was ascended to glory and beyond the cruel persecution of this world. Was Christ mindful? Was He paying attention? Where was this close identification with His people? Here it is: Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" What will Christ say in the Last Day when in public judgment He vindicates His own? Mt. 25:35, "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink....Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see

You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?....And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

The point is that Christ who took our nature closely identifies with His people, with His Church, His sheep. When He walked here below and you remember the death of Lazarus, whom He loved. Jesus came to the house of Mary and Martha and there He (Jn. 11:33) "saw her weeping" and we are told "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." Verse 35, "Jesus wept." At another time He looks upon Jerusalem or the crowds and is moved with compassion. Over and over He acts in ways of mercy and support and compassion seeing the effects of sin in this world. When our Lord ascended to heaven, He ascended, bodily, in our nature. He continues to have this sympathy, this fellow-feeling with us, this commiseration with our weaknesses though He is strong and glorified. This is the picture of our High Priest, our Savior, the One who is our Surety, the God-man, as I Jn. 1:2, our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He intercedes and carries our troubles, our afflictions, our temptations, our needs for support and comfort, the needs of His suffering people, before the Father, as One who is intimately affected with your and my state and He pleads with feelings for us. It moves Him to see us in our state; the Church beset by enemies all around. And in the language of Zech. 1:12, this moves Him: "The Angel of the Lord answered and said, "O Lord of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem....!" Illust. I read this about Constantine - I know that there are those who speak of Constantine as a terrible thing to arise upon the Church because as the Emperor became Christian then all kinds of people courting the favor of the Emperor came into the Church with all the problems which that brought. But when the Edict of Milan was passed, which did not officially recognize Christianity as the religion of the empire, but which gave freedom of religion and lifted the heavy hand of persecution off of the Christian Church; I think if I was living then I would have been celebrating that I was not going to be arrested and face some horrible death! But having said that, I read about Constantine that there was this Egyptian Christian who was an overseer in the Church who had his eye torn out for the sake of Christ under previous persecution and that Constantine the Great showed such a fellow-feeling for that man's sufferings that he honored Paphnutius by kissing the place where the eye had been torn out! What a scene that must have been! Constantine the Great, the Emperor of the Roman Empire, descends from his throne and kisses that scarred empty socket! Ah, but what is that when compared to the Lord of Glory, the King of kings and ruler over the kings of the earth, that He who is the God/man, should have a fellow-feeling with our miseries and sympathize with us in all our troubles and take that upon Him as He intercedes for us!

Shall we not then own Christ as our Savior and Lord in all of life?
Shall we be ashamed to speak of Him who constantly speaks of us before the throne of the Father?