

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 23 – INCARNATION, ATONEMENT, RECONCILIATION]

But no one could have predicted just how far God was willing to go in order to rescue his wayward children.

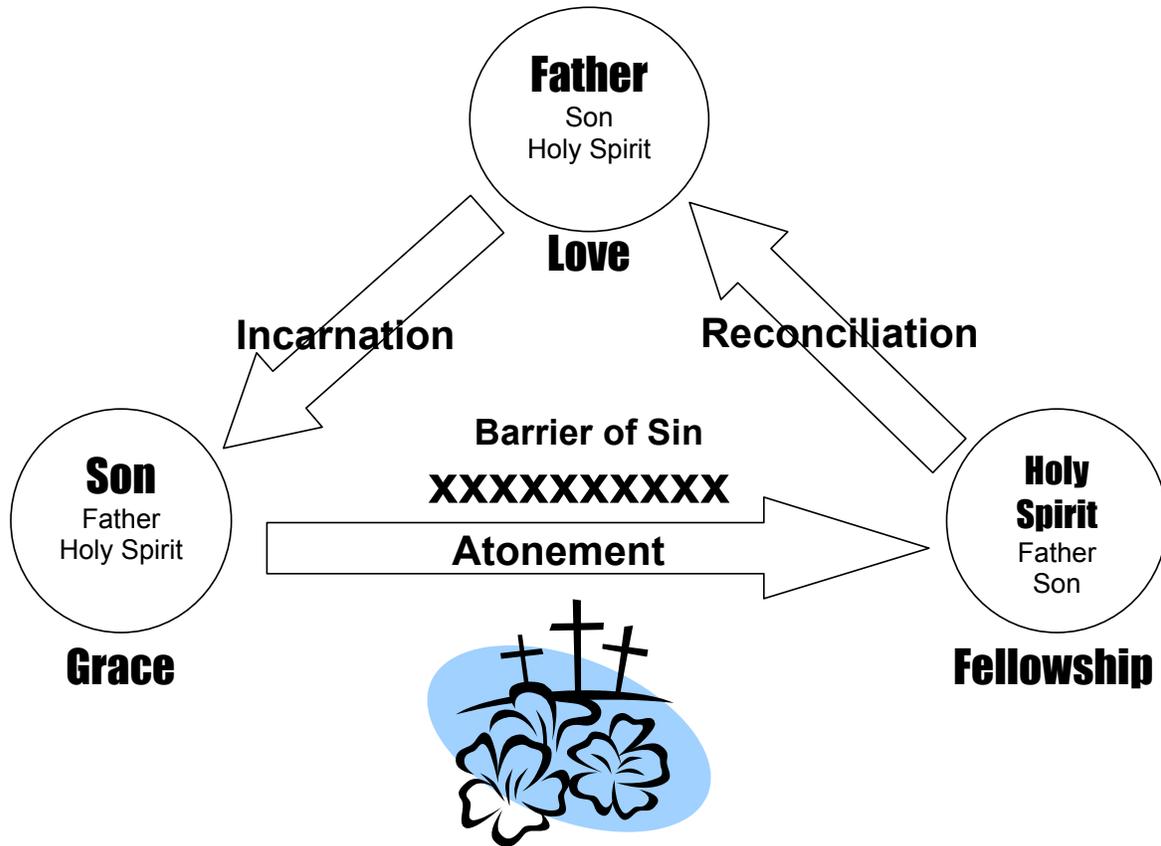
- ◆ We finished up last time lamenting the sad news that from man's perspective there is no cure for this hideous disease called "sin."
- ◆ Fortunately, what is impossible for man, is not impossible for God.
- ◆ The heavenly host must have watched in awe as the divinely inspired plan devised before the foundation of the world is put into effect in order to heal and restore mankind's broken relationship with his Creator (Revelation 13:8).
- ◆ If the first creation was about creating "man in God's image," the plan to restore mankind's relationship to God relies incredibly on "God condescending to take on the image of man."
- ◆ What mankind could not do for himself, God has devised an astounding plan to insert Himself into humanity so He could act on man's behalf.
- ◆ What we are about to witness is the Trinity's counterattack on the forces of evil that want to disrupt God's plan to make man in His image.
- ◆ This is the Trinity's angry "No, I'm not going to allow this to happen even if it means we have to go down and rescue them from the evil they have brought on themselves"!

God faces two challenges in restoring the relationship broken by man's rebellion.

- ◆ First, how can a Holy God draw near to a sinful mankind? And second, how can God draw sinful mankind to Himself?
- ◆ The answer to this question shows the lengths to which God will go in order to save His rebellious children.
- ◆ The only possible way to solve the problem is for God to join humanity in its sinfulness and from within that sinfulness do for humanity what it cannot do for itself.
- ◆ This is the sacrifice God was willing to make so He could draw near to us and in the process draw us near to Him.
- ◆ Before we go into detail to explain the whole process of God's master plan to rescue His children, we are going to start with an overview which will help us get a better handle on the plan as it unfolds.
- ◆ To do this we are going to use an illustration.

Three Steps of Redemption – Incarnation, Atonement, Reconciliation. (See figure below).

The Three Steps of Redemption – Incarnation, Atonement, Reconciliation



2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

God's plan of redemption revolves around three main steps if it is to overcome the barrier of sin represented by the Xs in the illustration.

- ◆ These are, 1) the Incarnation, 2) the Atonement, and 3) Reconciliation, represented by the arrows in the illustration.
- ◆ You will also notice each person of the Trinity, represented by the three circles is intimately involved in the process.
- ◆ They bring their own unique aspects to the process.
- ◆ This is no coincidence as Paul spells out each of these roles in his benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14.
- ◆ **2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**
- ◆ Although these divine qualities are innately part of the nature of all three persons of the Godhead, as we will see, each plays a unique role in this process of redemption.
- ◆ The love of God flows from the Father to His creation, Jesus embodies the grace of God through the Incarnation and the Atonement, and the Holy Spirit draws us into the fellowship of love that is the Trinity.

The process starts with the love of the Father.

- ◆ Has it ever occurred to you why God the Father chose to call Himself by the title "Father"?
- ◆ We know He is Father to the Son, Jesus.

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- ◆ But He chose this title to describe Himself because He doesn't just want to be Father to Jesus Christ, He also wants to be Father to His created children.
 - ◆ ***Ephesians 1:5 (NLT) His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.***
 - ◆ This is the reason you and I and every other human being exist – to be adopted into the Father's family.
 - ◆ The Father is so committed to this plan that He is willing to give humanity His most precious gift, the life of His Son (John 3:16).
 - ◆ Of course Jesus Christ plays the central role in the drama as He is the One who lovingly lays aside his heavenly privileges, takes off his crown, sets aside his sceptre, rolls up his sleeves and trades the splendour of heaven for the poverty of a stable.
 - ◆ This is that great event in salvation history the Christian world calls the "Incarnation."
 - ◆ The Incarnation is the doctrine that the eternal second person of the Trinity became a human being and "assumed flesh" in Jesus of Nazareth (***John 1:14 The Word became flesh.***)
 - ◆ The Son added humanity to His divinity.
 - ◆ This event called the Incarnation is the way God chose to draw near to mankind.
 - ◆ Paul in his letter to the Philippians explains this condescension in what is believed to be a hymn of the early church.
 - ◆ ***Philippians 2:5-8 in your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.***
 - ◆ Not only did Jesus join humanity, He then went on to offer Himself as a substitute for the sins of humanity by suffering the humiliation of the cross.
 - ◆ ***V.8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!***
 - ◆ This is the divine act of the "Atonement."
 - ◆ Jesus voluntarily lived out the Atonement as the Lamb of God sacrificed on our behalf.
 - ◆ Again we see this extraordinary love, this time displayed by the Son of God in the terrible sacrifice He was willing to suffer in order for us to be drawn back to God.
 - ◆ What mankind could not do for himself, God incredibly assumes humanity to act on man's behalf
 - ◆ It was purely and simply an act of pure "grace" on God's part.
 - ◆ It is through these two divine steps that God is able to draw near to us (Incarnation) and through the ordeal of the cross draw us near to Him (Atonement).
 - ◆ The consequence of these two great acts opens the door for possible "reconciliation" between God and humanity.
 - ◆ It is at this point that the Holy Spirit assumes His role by making humanity aware of Christ's saving work on their behalf and drawing them back to a relationship with their Creator and Father.
 - ◆ In John 16 Jesus promised his disciples He would send another comforter, the Holy Spirit.
 - ◆ ***John 16:7 (NKJV) 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:***
 - ◆ He is going to be working on people's minds convicting them of their sin and their need for a Savior.
 - ◆ Notice to whom the Holy Spirit points people.
 - ◆ ***John 16:14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.***
 - ◆ The Holy Spirit draws people to Jesus Christ and into His atoning work.
- Now when you put all this together what you end up with is "Reconciliation."***
- ◆ Through the "Incarnation" (the Son becoming man), God is able to draw near to us.
 - ◆ Through the "Atonement" (the saving work of the Son and the Holy Spirit) mankind can draw near to God.
 - ◆ These two great saving acts, the "Incarnation" and the "Atonement" summarize God's great love for us.
 - ◆ When you put the two together "Reconciliation" is the result – God is reconciled to man and man to God
 - ◆ With that overview, we now turn our attention to the detail.