

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 90 – GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST AND FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We have reached that point in the narrative where God has achieved His goal of creating “man in His image” and as a consequence, God and man can dwell face to face in the New Jerusalem.

- ◆ God through His work has created for Himself a bride, a holy people within whom he can now come and dwell (Revelation 21:3).
- ◆ We have been looking at what insights we can discern from scripture on what life will be like in heaven.
- ◆ Last time we started looking at the major benefit of life in heaven and that is, we will come to know the God who is the Trinity in not only His majestic glory, but also in a very personal way.

It is a testimony to God's great love for humanity that we have arrived at this point where God and humanity now dwell face to face.

- ◆ Each person of the godhead has contributed His own unique part to the process of redemption.
- ◆ The Father initiated the process of salvation, the Son has effected it, and the Holy Spirit applies it to humanity.
- ◆ So as we finish this series, we are summarizing each of these roles according to the way they are described in the 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.***

- ◆ Last time we looked at the role of the Father from whom the love of God flows as He initiates the process.

Now we'll look at the primary role of Jesus Christ – how he has effected salvation for all through “grace.”

- ◆ When man rebelled, God had to overcome two problems if reconciliation was to come about.
- ◆ Man through his sin had separated the two parties and created a barrier between himself and a holy God.
- ◆ So the question became, how could a holy God approach sinful mankind? And how could God draw sinful mankind back to Himself?
- ◆ The solution could not possibly come from sinful humanity, so what was God to do?
- ◆ God's solution to these two problems is breathtaking in its audacity and is testimony to the great love God has for us.
- ◆ But in order to make this dream possible a terrible price had to be paid, but it was a price they willingly paid.
- ◆ As it was impossible for reconciliation to happen from the side of humanity, God's solution was, “I will come and do it for you. I will send you my beloved Son, and He will act vicariously on your behalf.”
- ◆ As we learned, this great event in salvation history is what the Christian world calls the miracle of the incarnation, where God the Son would empty Himself of His glory and join humanity as God in the flesh (John 1:14).
- ◆ ***Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?***
- ◆ Not only does God the Father devise this incredible plan, but now provides the means which will accomplish it through the life of His Son.
- ◆ Here is the sacrifice God the Father was willing to make so He could draw near to us and in the process draw us near to Him.
- ◆ But it was a sacrifice Jesus, too, willingly accepted with joy in order to make this dream a reality as we read over in Hebrews 12.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***
- ◆ In order for Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice, He had to be both God and man as only God can forgive sins and die for the sins of all humanity and He had to be fully man in order to be a true representative of humanity on the cross.
- ◆ It was through this event called the incarnation that God chose to draw near to mankind.

But the incarnation was only part of the solution. Jesus also had to suffer the ordeal of the atonement if reconciliation was to be completed.

- ◆ Jesus knew the ordeal He was about to face. He inspired Isaiah 52-53. He chose to invade humanity when the cross was the method of execution. He walked the streets of Jerusalem and saw on a distant hill the crucified silhouetted against the sky.
- ◆ Yet such was His love. He voluntarily accepted the cross, which was His to bear.

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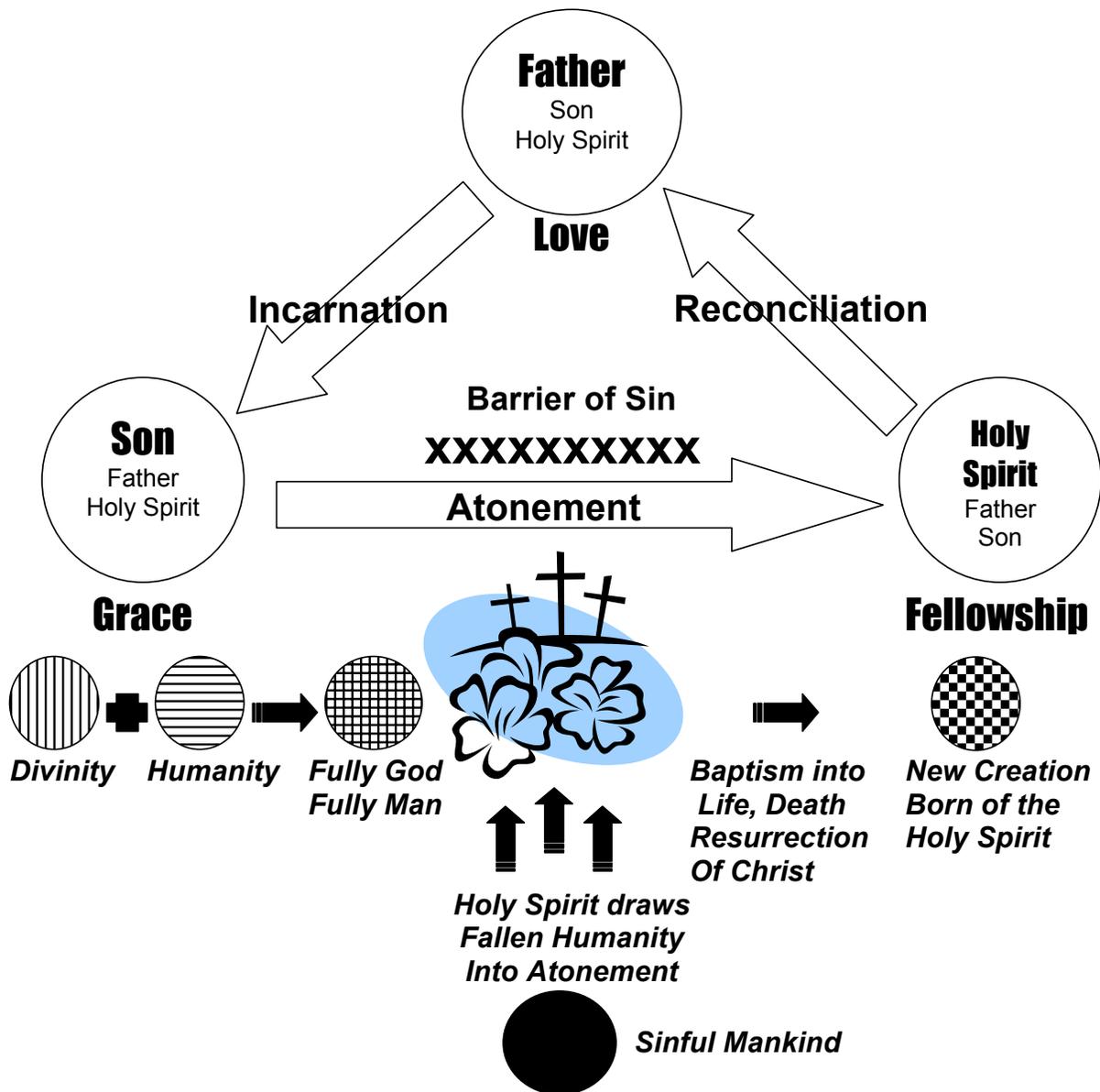
- ◆ **John 10:17-18 (NLT)** *"The Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may have it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily. For I have the right to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it again. For my Father has given me this command."*
- ◆ Again we see this extraordinary love, this time displayed by the Son of God as He substituted Himself on our behalf in the terrible sacrifice He was willing to suffer in order for us to be drawn back to God (Romans 6:1-5).
- ◆ Now we begin to see the second challenge being addressed – through the incarnation God drew near to man. Now through the atonement, God has opened the way for a sinful humanity to be drawn back to Him.
- ◆ But the other aspect of Christ's saving work which gets scant attention today is, He not only died for humanity, but He also came and lived out the faithful son's response to the Father's love on behalf of humanity.
- ◆ In other words, Jesus in His life *"lived the life of the faithful son we failed to live in response to the Father's love."*
- ◆ Unlike Adam and Eve who were unfaithful to their Creator and Father, Jesus lived a perfect life of trust and faithfulness in response to His Father's love.
- ◆ When we express faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ we don't just enter into the death and resurrection of our Lord, we enter into the complete faithful life of Jesus lived on our behalf.
- ◆ Jesus vicariously absorbs our lives into His own perfect life.
- ◆ So through the incarnation and the atonement, Jesus:
 - Lived the faithful life we could not live on our behalf.
 - Died the death we should have died for our sins on the cross.
 - Gave us the eternal life we could not attain by defeating death through His resurrection.
- ◆ As a result, we are now accepted by the Father, not based on the life we live, but rather on the perfect life Jesus lived.
- ◆ Jesus, like the Father, displayed this unbelievable love to make it possible for us to be drawn back to God through "grace."
- ◆ The groundwork has been set for man to be able to be drawn back to God.
- ◆ **Philippians 2:6-8 (NLT)** *Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. 7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form (incarnation) 8 And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross (atonement).*
- ◆ To go back to 2 Corinthians 13:14, we see how Jesus has effected salvation through His primary role of "grace."
- Now we move onto the role the Holy Spirit plays in the salvation process, and that is He draws us into "fellowship" with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**
- ◆ God's goal in forgiveness is not just to forgive us and leave us with our old sinful nature, but to grant us a new life that is no longer under the control or domination of sin.
- ◆ It is the role of the Holy Spirit to draw mankind back to God by making him aware of what God has done for him through the incarnation and the atonement.
- ◆ In John 16 Jesus promised his disciples He would send another helper, comforter or advocate.
- ◆ **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.*
- ◆ In his bodily presence Jesus was limited by His physical constraints.
- ◆ He could only affect a limited number of people at any one time. However, as the Holy Spirit is spiritual, He is not restricted in His ability to draw people from all over the world to God.
- ◆ **V.8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.**
- ◆ The Holy Spirit is going to be working on people's minds convicting them of sin and their need for a Savior.
- ◆ Notice to whom the Holy Spirit points people.
- ◆ **V.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 and into His atoning work.
- ◆ So the first thing the Spirit does is open people's minds and draw them into the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ We mentioned earlier how all three persons of the Trinity are involved in each process although one's role is predominant.
- ◆ We see this process at work in this particular case.
- ◆ **John 12:32 (NKJV)** *32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."*
- ◆ **John 6:44 (NKJV)** *44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*
- ◆ The second thing the Spirit does is birth us spiritually.
- ◆ **John 3:5-7 (NLT)** *Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. 7 So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again.*

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- ◆ And we know this came to pass on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on the crowd at Jerusalem.
- ◆ **Acts 2:38 (NKJV) 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**
- ◆ The way we enter into this new life is to repent and be baptized.
- ◆ **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**
- ◆ First, the Holy Spirit draws us to Christ and second; it births us into the spiritual realm of the new creation.
- ◆ The third thing the Holy Spirit does is to draw us into an intimate relationship with the godhead.
- ◆ Jesus made this amazing statement to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion.
- ◆ **John 17:25-26 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."**
- ◆ This is made possible by the Holy Spirit in His role of drawing people into fellowship.
- ◆ **Romans 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.**
- ◆ You and I are going to share fellowship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Living by the Spirit is a complete reversal of our previous way of life.
- ◆ In our past life we lived a life of self-centeredness where we valued individualism and independence with its dehumanising results. But now we recognise true life exists in openness, in fellowship with God and others.
- ◆ We were created to be in the image of God, a God who is by nature a community of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ◆ What ultimately it means to be a complete human being is to manifest the image of the triune God.
- ◆ God is forever humanizing, never dehumanizing; always personalizing, never depersonalizing.
- ◆ When it is all said and done, the only spirit or medium between individuals that will exist in heaven is the medium of love.
- ◆ No more foul evil thoughts or wicked actions! When the devil and his followers were cast into the lake of fire, all the hate and destruction associated with him, which has had such a devastating impact on humanity, died with him.
- ◆ They were cast there because they resisted becoming God's purpose for them.
- ◆ They chose against God and His love and became anti-God, anti-love and anti-human.
- ◆ In this state it is impossible to relate to others, because there is no shared medium between those who say "no" to God and those who say "yes."
- ◆ In heaven, the love of the Trinity will define all reality. Those that willingly refuse to participate determine their own fate.
- ◆ The only medium that will remain is the unsurpassable love of God (1 Corinthians 13:13).

It is through the unique involvement of each person of the godhead that we have arrived at this point. (See figure below).

The Three-fold Blessing of the Trinity in the Redemption Process



Challenge

- 1) How can a holy God draw near to sinful mankind?
- 2) How could God draw sinful mankind to Himself?

Solution

God drew near to us through His Son (**Incarnation**)
 God drew us near to Him through saving work of the Son and the Holy Spirit (**Atonement**)

Result: Incarnation + Atonement = Reconciliation (God to man and man to God)

In the Atonement, Jesus

- ◆ Lived the life we could not live (birth, baptism, born of the Spirit, death, resurrection, ascension)
- ◆ Died the death we should have died
- ◆ Gave us the gift of eternal life we could not attain

Three-fold Blessing of God

- ◆ *2 Corinthians 13:14 (RSV) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

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- ◆ The Father through His love has initiated the process of salvation, the Son has effected it through grace, and the Holy Spirit applies it to humanity by drawing us into the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ◆ When all this is put together, what we end up with is “reconciliation.”
- ◆ Through their saving work, God is reconciled to man, and man to God.
- ◆ This saving work is all of God and nothing of us.
- ◆ He initiated the plan, He provided the means to make it possible, and He has carried it out to completion.
- ◆ This is the purpose for which we were created. Our physical life in this four-dimensional world is just the start of an incredible journey that continues on into eternity sharing the everlasting life and love of the triune God.

What then should be our response?

- ◆ ***Ephesians 3:20-21 (NLT) Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. 21 May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.***
- ◆ This is the purpose for which we were created – to give glory to God

Our Prayer

Father, we humbly bow before you, acknowledging you as the one true God.

You alone are worthy of all praise, honor and glory.

***Through the love and saving work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
we have been redeemed.***

You have lavished us with one spiritual blessing after another.

You Father, have pursued us with an unfailing love.

***Through Jesus' sacrificial grace we have been forgiven, justified, reconciled,
and made at peace with you.***

***Through the life-giving Spirit we have been born again, adopted as son and daughters
and enjoy fellowship with you.***

And at a future time, we will be glorified and share eternity with you.

We bow down in humble adoration in response to your vast love for us.

Amen

