

# INCARNATIONAL RESTORATION

## Teaching The Gospel Through Incarnational Behavior

Roger E. Dickson

We are very acquainted with a small assembly of disciples in a farming community that assembles on a weekly basis in a small village of just over one thousand people. As the center of a farming community, these farmers have been assembling in the small village for about 150 years. The assembly of this particular church is an average of about forty souls, including children. But surprisingly, registered in their weekly bulletin that is sent out worldwide, there is a list of eight different mission and benevolent ministries to which this small group of disciples support regularly, plus supporting someone to minister in the farming community on a full-time basis.

What makes people do things like this? When the Holy Spirit commended the committed disciple Gaius for continually supporting world evangelists who came through his village, what made Gaius deserving of such a historical commendation that would glow from the pages of the Bible for over two thousand years? (See 3 Jn). Why do disciples do things as this? And, we might add, why do some fall far short of these modern-day examples? The answer to these questions is what we propose

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Cover picture: Over 30,000 farm houses and 40 rural towns were destroyed by English forces during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902. Farm cattle, horses & sheep were killed, and women and children sent to concentration camps where 18,000 – 28,000 died, 80% of which were children. Not everything has been restored after the conclusion of hostilities.

to answer and restore.

When we speak of “gospel,” there is little misunderstanding that the word “gospel” is “good news.” This is the definition that is inherent in the Greek word that is used in the original Greek text that explains the gospel. However, a problem sometimes arises in understanding what the good news is, which gospel news was first announced to some shepherds over two thousand years ago and caused great excitement (See Lk 2:10). And since this was a recorded announcement that is in the Bible, then we understand that the proclamation was recorded in the Bible means that the Bible itself is not the gospel. This is true of the entire Bible wherein is recorded the prophecy and fulfillment of all matters that pertain to the gospel. The recorded news of the gospel – the Bible – simply cannot be the news itself. It is like saying that a newspaper cannot be the same as the news that is reported therein.

When we use the concept of “restoration” in reference to gospel events, it is also assumed that the gospel is not an outline of doctrinal matters. The gospel at least refers to events, but not to an outline of legal statutes. Therefore, we seek to restore first our knowledge of the recorded historical events that revealed the gospel. Once we focus on the recorded events that revealed the gospel, then we must conclude that a gospel restoration is not the restoration of a theology of teaching, but a way of life. The truth of the gospel, therefore, is not an outline of proof texts of Scripture. The “truth of the gospel” is in the fact that the gospel is true (See Gl 2:5,14). And this is what inspires people to do awesome things.

- **Looking beyond gospel events:**

It is our task to reaffirm the historical Bible account of the events that surround the revelation of the gospel. We must do this because it was the response of thousands of people in

the first century whose lives were so totally transformed that they changed human history. We seek, therefore, to restore what caused this historical change. We seek to understand what inspired the transformation of the lives of so many people who firmly believed that Jesus was actually the revealed Son of God who brought into this world an opportunity to live an abundant life (See Jn 10:10).

The gospel is the theme of the entire Bible, and thus the core of the foundation upon which the church of Christ was established in the first century and continues today. Therefore, unless one believes the truth of the gospel, he or she does not have a right to claim to be a Christian.

**The Bible is not the gospel, but the Holy Spirit's inspired record of the events and purposes of the good news that was prophesied, and eventually revealed through the incarnation of the Son of God.**

- **The gospel events:**

What is discussed throughout this document is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God. He is the revelation of the gospel. It is absolutely imperative, therefore, that everyone who claims to be a Christian believe in the following historical gospel events that revealed the redemptive message of God to the world: **incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, kingdom reign, and final coming** of the Son of God. These truths must be believed in order that we accomplish great things to the glory of God. But we must first understand that these are not theological conclusions. On the contrary, they are actual historical events that the Holy Spirit recorded in the Bible for our learning, faith, and salvational response.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Restoring The Gospel Message**

When Christians speak of things concerning the cross, noth-

ing has changed in their message to the world since the days when Paul inscribed the following words in reference to our mission: “***But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness***” (1 Co 1:23). The message of the gospel is not the church, for the church is the gospel response of people on earth. The message of the gospel is about the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

The cross was in view when it was said of the young Jesus when He was first presented at the temple by His parents, “*Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel*” (Lk 2:34). The vast majority of the Jews, therefore, stumbled over the message of the cross in the sense that it was too difficult for them to accept Jesus as a crucified Messiah.

By the time in history when the initial revelations of the gospel through Jesus were proclaimed, the Jews had established for themselves their own system of self-righteous religiosity (See Gl 1:13,14). By their strict obedience to certain rituals, most of the Jews believed that they could sanctify themselves of sin before God through good works. They were as Paul described them: “*For I testify of them [the self-righteous Jews] that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge [of the word of God]*” (Rm 10:2). The Jews believed that they could save themselves through strict adherence to the Sinai law, and meritorious self-sanctifying good deeds if they sinned.

However, the Jews’ zeal to maintain their own self-righteous religiosity before God was useless in view of one important fact: **It is not possible for one to justify himself before God through perfect obedience of the works of law** (Gl 2:16). Nevertheless, the Jewish leadership persisted in their lack of understanding of this fact. So in the context of Romans 3, Paul continued to explain their problem in view of the righteousness

of God that was revealed through the gospel of the cross.

*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and **seeking to establish their own righteousness**, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (Rm 10:3).*

**It is impossible for any person to justify himself or herself by perfect keeping of law simply because there is no person on earth who has lived a perfect life in reference to obeying God's laws.**

### **A. Finding righteousness in the gospel:**

When Jesus went to the cross, He was *"the end of law for righteousness to everyone who believes"* (Rm 10:4). For this reason, therefore, the Jewish leadership stumbled over the cross because they were so self-absorbed in their supposed self-justifying religion. Paul said of them, *"But Israel, who followed after the law of [their own] righteousness, **has not attained to the law**"* (Rm 9:31). We would ask why this was true? Paul would answer, *"Because they [the Jews] did not seek it by faith, but as if it were by works [of law]. **For they stumbled over the stumbling stone** [of Jesus and the cross]"* (Rm 9:32).

This response to the gospel is exactly what had been prophesied by Isaiah: *"Behold, I lay in Zion **a stumbling stone and a rock of offense**, and whoever believes in Him will not be ashamed"* (Rm 9:33; see Is 8:14; 28:16). And so Paul, and thousands of other gospel-believing people in the first century, were not ashamed of the gospel that was revealed through the incarnate Son of God (Rm 1:16). They did not stumble over Jesus.

**That over which the Jewish leadership stumbled was the person of Jesus. They stumbled by rejecting Him as the One who would take care of their sin problem.**

### **B. Understanding who Jesus is:**

Because the Jewish leadership was so self-absorbed in their

own self-righteous religiosity, they could not understand the humiliation of their supposed leader being crucified on a cross by Roman soldiers. When Jesus uttered from the cross, “*Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,*” He was revealing the problem of the Jews at that time. It is a problem that still prevails among most people of the world today (Lk 23:34).

If the Jews who crucified Jesus had truly known what was transpiring behind the curtain of the incarnate flesh and blood of the Son of God on the cross, then they would later have rejoiced over the cross. Instead, because they could not see beyond the humiliation of the crucifixion, the cross became the stumbling block over which most religious Jews stumbled in the first century. At the time, they were simply determined to carry on with their own self-righteousness law-keeping and self-sanctifying good works.

Many today are likewise guilty of doing the same as the unbelieving Jews of the first century. For example, in the midst of our own efforts to conduct the Lord’s Supper, we attempt to offer to God some ceremony of legal righteousness that we have performed as a statue of law. Unfortunately, in all our ceremonial law-keeping, we often forget one critical statement that Jesus made at the time He instituted the Supper: “*This do in remembrance of Me*” (1 Co 11:24). **The Supper is about the person of the incarnate Son of God**, not our legal performance of the Supper in order to justify ourselves before God by obedience to some legal act. Jesus said that the Supper was to be eaten in order to remember who He was. And He was the incarnation of God (See Ph 2:5-8).

**The Lord’s Supper is not about the day on which it is observed, nor the ceremonial manner by which it is served, but WHO is to be remembered when it is served.**

### **C. The cross is the center of reference to the incarnational journey of the Son of God:**

The cross was the special event in history that reveals the mission of the Son of God into and out of this world. All the gospel events before and after the cross find their purpose at the cross because of who was on the cross. Because the early disciples did not realize this at the time of the cross, they only grieved that they had lost a good friend to a Roman execution.

After the crucifixion, the disciples subsequently went on their way to fish in Galilee in order to recover from their loss (Jn 21:3). The two witnesses from Emmaus, and other hopefuls, likewise made their way back home, having lost all hope that Jesus would lead them out of Roman oppression (Lk 24:13-29). At the time of the cross, no one had any understanding of the incarnation and atoning sin-sacrifice at the cross because they really did not understand who Jesus was. Nevertheless, every event of the gospel would eventually be reveal fifty days later on the Pentecost of Acts 2 after Jesus was proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection (Rm 1:4).

The cross represented something far beyond the cross itself. From God's point of view, eternity was taking place in the few hours His incarnate Son was suffering on the cross. Even our full understanding of this eternity will not be realized until a final trumpet is heard from heaven. It will be at that time that we will fully comprehend the incarnation of the Son of God into and out of this world. It will be then that we will fully understand the totality of the gospel, of which the cross was the main event.

**The event of the cross was the climax of the gospel, but it was not the totality of the gospel. The extent of the gospel will not be fully understood until we are safe in the arms of Jesus in heaven.**

## Chapter 2

### Restoring The Incarnational Gospel

If we can in some way comprehend the magnitude of the subject of the next chapters, our lives will completely transformed. However, because we are of this world, and of the flesh, it may be difficult, especially if we have created for ourselves some self-righteous religion as did the Jews. But if we can possibly work our minds around the reality of the incarnation of God into the flesh of man, and truly believe what we discover, then we will never be the same again. This is the true restoration of the impact of the gospel.

#### **A. From spirit to flesh:**

“Incarnation” is a word that can be literally applied **to God only**. God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and only God can incarnate into the flesh of man. And in this, the gospel revelation began in the manger of a barn in a small village of Bethlehem a little over two thousand years ago. However, before Bethlehem, the apostle John wanted us to understand that the Bethlehem birth did not constitute just another citizen being registered in the Roman census. On the contrary, John carried our imagination far back into the inner enclaves of heaven before the creation of the world: *“In the beginning was the Word,”* revealed John, *“and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God”* (Jn 1:1,2). Before the Word came into the world, there was existence of the Word in the realm of heaven. Before creation, He was one with God as an eternal existence as God.

And then incarnation exploded into the history of humanity. *“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”* (Jn 1:14). What is impossible for us to fully comprehend was that Joseph raised in his arms from a manger of hay in a barn in Bethlehem the incarnation of God who was the actual Creator

of the universe (See Cl 3:16). Only God, not Mary or Joseph, could have ever understood what had just transpired in the moment when Mary cried out in birth pains, and the Son of God was incarnate into this world.

**The incarnation of God into the flesh of man is beyond the comprehension of mankind.**

### **B. Origin of the spirit:**

“Son” means that there was an origin, and thus, the Son of God in the flesh originated with a cry from the flesh of woman. This incarnate Son in the flesh would eventually come to an end on earth with a cry from the cross when He would leave this world (Lk 23:46). But between the two cries, something wonderful happened. The good news of the gospel began in a manger. The last chapter is yet to be revealed with the sound of the last trumpet from heaven when the King of kings comes in the clouds of heaven.

After an initial thirty years in the flesh, the Son of God began His teaching journey to the suffering of the cross. At the very beginning of His ministry, sincere people of faith began to realize that something was different about this One Mary and Joseph had named Jesus. On one occasion, about thirty years after His birth, the priest Nicodemus came to Him in the night and said, *“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”* (Jn 3:2).

Though Nicodemus did not understand the full implications of what he stated in the words, “from God,” he would eventually, but only after the “Rabbi” was glorified. As all the disciples, Nicodemus would eventually understand that Jesus was not just a good Rabbi from Nazareth. He was God in the flesh. He was the only begotten One who had ventured out of the corridors of heaven and into the flesh of man (Ph 2:5,6).

**People of faith during the earthly ministry of Jesus, though they could not be sure at the time, realized that there was something different about the One they first considered only to be a teacher and Rabbi.**

### **C. More than a teacher:**

This Jesus of Nazareth was first known as Rabbi, but the revelation of who He actually was would go far beyond His manhood and knowledge in teaching the Sinai law. He was first the man Jesus, and then Rabbi/Teacher (Jn 1:38). He would then be proclaimed as the Christ (Messiah) of Israel (Jn 1:41). The disciples had this faith in Him until the last few days before the trials, and then the cross (At 1:6). At the cross, their hopes in Him as the Messiah (Christ) of Israel were dashed when Jesus' last drop of blood dripped from His lifeless body.

Unfortunately, even to the last moment of Jesus on the cross, the disciples did not realize that what they witnessed on the cross was the death of an incarnate body. When the true humanity of the Son of God was reaffirmed by His death on the cross, they would later recall the dipping "incarnate blood." The cross signaled the last of the humanity of the Jesus that the disciples knew. Nevertheless, the cross was not the end of Jesus' incarnational journey, nor did the cross reveal His true identity. The cross was only one accomplished redemptive work of the Son of God on His incarnational journey from heaven to earth, and then back to heaven again.

Death could absolutely have no power over the One who had the power to create flesh that could live and die (Cl 1:16; Hb 9:27). And thus by the power of His resurrection, the man Jesus, the Rabbi/Teacher, the Messiah of Israel, the Creator of the universe, was then proved to be the Son of God (Rm 1:4). It was at the cross, burial, resurrection and coronation that the Son of God would be proven to be King and Lord over

all things (Ep 1:19-23). The story of the gospel, nevertheless, will be completed only when He returns from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Th 1:6-9).

**The cross was not the end of the incarnational journey of the Son of God. It was a point of transition to another dimension of the incarnational journey.**

#### **D. The resurrected body:**

When the apostle John compiled in the Gospel of John seven miracles that Jesus worked among men, he called on his readers to come to the same decisive conclusion that he and the other apostles had come when they first saw and handled the resurrected Son of God (1 Jn 1:1-3). John concluded, “*These [seven signs] are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” (Jn 20:31).

And we believe, but our belief will always be handicapped by our inability to comprehend fully the incarnational action of God coming into the flesh of man. Incarnation is simply something that lies outside our human experience, and thus our ability to comprehend. Nevertheless, we seek to understand as much as possible through the example of Jesus, and the example of those first disciples whose lives were totally transformed because they came to believe that He was indeed the incarnation of God into the flesh of man.

#### **E. Entrance of the incarnate God:**

Our journey to understand the incarnation begins with a question: How would we suppose that God the Son would allow Himself to be incarnationally introduced into the world? First, and six hundred years before, it was prophesied that “a voice” would come crying in the wilderness and announcing His coming (Is 40:3).

But in our own misguided social environment of prestige and

pomp in a religious world that has gone astray from the incarnate Bethlehem babe, we would possibly consider that He should be introduced as one of the top “lectureship speakers” of Jerusalem. Or possibly, He should be introduced by some renowned professor or preacher of one of the major religious group in Rome. Or, we might even seek out some well-known religious leader among the Jews who was instigating a rebellion against the Roman Empire. All these presumptions would be assumptions by misguided religionists, and thus, wrong.

**Our worldly, and certainly religious presumptions, as to how we would think that the incarnate Son of God should be introduced into this world, would certainly be contrary to the very meaning and action of the incarnation itself.**

If the Son of God would have someone to introduce the incarnation of Himself into the world, then we would correctly assume that He would introduce Himself by **one who himself would seek to live incarnationally**. And that one was John, the baptizer in the wilderness. The life-style of John the Baptist was the best of all possible illustrations of the incarnation of the Son of God into this world. As opposed to the pomp and prestige of the religious leaders of Jerusalem, the act of the incarnation of the Son of God was opposite to their behavior and thinking.

**F. An incarnationally living prophet would be the only one qualified to introduce into the world the incarnate God:**

Before John began his introductions of the incarnate Word, we do not know how much was revealed to John concerning the One he would cry out in the wilderness to be the coming One. But we can assume from John’s life-style that **he was obligated in some way to live the life of the Word who was incarnate from spirit into the flesh of man**. How else can we explain John’s behavior and the location where he chose as his “church sanctuary” to preach the gospel of the incarnation?

In some way to be “worthy” to introduce Divine incarnation, John extracted himself from the glamorous religious life in Jerusalem. *“He came preaching in the wilderness of Judea”* (Mt 3:1). He refused to be dressed in the glamorous tailored suits of the touring preachers. On the contrary, *“John had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist”* (Mt 3:4). He deprived himself of the fine cuisine in the restaurants on Main Street in Jerusalem. *“His food was locusts and wild honey”* (Mt 3:4).

**John realized that he could better teach the people about the incarnate God by living before the people his teaching on the subject.**

For some reason, we must conclude that the Holy Spirit wanted all the facts concerning the behavior of John recorded for posterity. The Spirit may have wanted the behavior of John recorded for all those religious leaders throughout history who would pretend to be following Jesus when in reality they were really seeking to exalt themselves above the people. At least when some self-exalting religious leaders of his day came out to him in the wilderness, he called them snakes. As supposed spiritual leaders they lurked among the people pretending to lead the people in spiritual matters (See Mt 3:7). We would correctly conclude that such snakes continue to exist today in the religious world, posing themselves as representatives of the incarnate God, but actually they are wolves lurking among the people in order to take advantage of good-hearted people.

### **G. Leading as John:**

If the One John was to introduce to the world gave up the glories of heaven in order to be incarnate into the flesh of man, then certainly John in some way felt that he must come as close as possible to doing the same. He reasoned that he too must live the incarnational life. How else could he possibly have introduced to others the One who gave up all that heaven had to offer in order to trudge the dusty roads of

Palestine in the flesh of man (Ph 2:5-8; Cl 1:16)? And yet, though John gave up all that he could possibly give up of this world in order to introduce the Son of God into the world, he still confessed that he was unworthy (See Mt 3:11). And so it always is with all of us.

If we would preach this same incarnate Son of God, should we not in some way try to identify with John through incarnational behavior? People must see in us incarnational behavior in order to be drawn to the God who went to the extreme of being incarnate in flesh of man for us. John introduced the gospel restoration movement to mankind by introducing the incarnate Word who would draw all people unto Himself because He gave up so much for us (Jn 12:32). Though we can never lower ourselves as much as the incarnate Word, we must at least, as John, give it our best effort. Heaven is reserved for incarnationals.

**Those who do not seek in some way to live incarnationally, have a difficult time understanding the incarnation of the Son of God.**

### Chapter 3

## Restoring Our Gospel Journey With Jesus

Sometime during Jesus' earthly ministry, we remember what Peter said to Jesus, "*Behold, we [apostles] have left all and have followed You*" (Mk 10:28). From this one statement we understand that the gospel restoration movement began during the earthly ministry of Jesus. The example of Jesus had already poured over into the life-style of the immediate apostles of Jesus. The church of first believers would follow the example of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles. So when Jesus asked the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor, it was just too much (See Mk 10:17-31).

When the Pharisee Saul eventually transformed into the humble Paul, the one who had persecuted incarnational disciples likewise left all to answer the call of the incarnate Son of God. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul too expected others to live as the One to whom he had submitted in response to the gospel. In order to persuade others to be drawn to the Savior of the world, he too had to follow the behavior of His Savior that was emulated in the lives of the first apostles. Paul realized that teaching the incarnation of the Son of God could not be limited to words only, but lived through example.

Through Paul's hand, the Holy Spirit inscribed this statement: "*Have this [incarnational] mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus*" (Ph 2:5). And with this statement, the one who is confined to the thinking of this world begins to shutter at what is inferred in this statement from the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it is through this paradigm shift into the mentality and behavior of the Son of God that we all must move.

**Taking the incarnational journey with the Son of God means that one must start thinking of things beyond this world, and thus, behaving in some way as his Savior in His incarnation into this world.**

### **A. Leaving the Divine form for the flesh form:**

When the Son of God was initially existing "*in the form of God* [that is, spirit], [He] *did not consider it robbery to be equal with God* [in spirit]" (Ph 2:6). **Form** and **equality** with God were sacrificed for incarnational existence with those whom He had created in the flesh (Cl 1:16). In order for the Son of God to dwell among His brethren, therefore, incarnation was necessary for the salvation of us all.

*Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil* (Hb 2:14).

*In all things He [the Son of God] **had to be made like His brethren**, so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people (Hb 2:17).*

**Since it was necessary for the Son of God to teach through the incarnational behavior in order to produce brethren, then we must conclude that we also must teach through incarnational behavior in order to produce brethren.**

If we would live the incarnational life in gratitude of being delivered from death, then we too must give up living after the “form of the world.” We must cease trying to be “equal in glamor” with those of this world. **The incarnational life calls on us to change our aspirations from the world to heavenly aspirations of those things that are above this world** (Cl 3:1,2). And for this reason, few who are in high places in the world humble themselves to the incarnational life as a disciple of the incarnate Son of God. Those religious leaders who seek to be prestigious are thus as snakes masquerading to supposedly be spiritual leaders (See At 20:29,30).

### **B. The need for transformation:**

In order to make the paradigm shift from worldly thinking to heavenly living, transformation is necessary. Therefore, Paul would exhort us, “*Be not conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind***” (Rm 12:2). Having the mind of Christ calls for a transformation in our minds. The mind of Christ must become our mind. **We live the incarnational mind of Christ when we begin thinking and behaving as the incarnate Son of God in whom we profess our faith.** This is the aroma of Christ (2 Co 2:14). When all those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God start living the mind of Christ, it is then that we experience a true gospel restoration movement. This is a movement that is led by incarnational thinking and behavior as opposed to living after the mind of this world. This was the life-style nature of he

early disciples, It was not their teaching on “church doctrine” that turned the world upside down. It was their “behavioral teaching” that convinced people that they believed something different than the religious idolatrous priests and Jewish religionists. Theirs was not a restoration of Jewish law, but a transformation in living after the behavior of the incarnate Son of God on earth.

**A true gospel restoration is not initiated by a revival of doctrinal matters, or religious ceremonies, but individuals behaving the mind of Christ.**

### **C. No room for exaltation seekers:**

In the context of Philippians 2:5-8, the Holy Spirit explained the life of incarnational behavior after the example of the Son of God. Direction by the word of God for the transformation of our minds is the Spirit’s business. He seeks to lead us through the Spirit-inspired word of God and our voluntary submission to the revealed aroma of the behavior of the Son of God.

Jesus established the example that we must follow. The Spirit explained that since it was Jesus’ business to transform Himself into the flesh of man, then Jesus calls on us to make the same personal decision in order to live His mind. So the Holy Spirit reminded Paul’s readers and ourselves, “*He [the incarnate God] **made Himself** of no reputation*” (Ph 2:7). Just this one statement in reference to restoring the incarnational journey of the Son of God means that if we would follow Jesus, then we should never lust to establish an exalted reputation over others. Slaves simply seek to be slaves and serve.

“Made Himself” in Paul’s statement is **middle voice**. In other words, **Jesus acted upon Himself**. His incarnation was not passive, suggesting that the Father and Holy Spirit acted upon Him. On the contrary, the incarnational experience of the Son of God was totally personal and self-inflicted. So it must be

the same with us. We must make a voluntary decision to live after the incarnational mind of Christ. This must be our method of teaching the gospel of the incarnation.

**If we would live as a disciple of the incarnate Son of God, then we must make a voluntary decision to live as He lived for us.**

#### **D. Acting on personal decisions:**

Jesus could not blame the Father if the incarnation was not complete or effective. And neither can we blame the Holy Spirit if our lives are not transformed by following the inspired recorded examples of Jesus. As Jesus Himself carried out the incarnation of His own will, so we also must carry out our incarnational transformation in the renewing of our minds and life-styles. At the end of the day, we can never blame the Holy Spirit for any lack of transformation in our own lives to live the mind of Christ. This is what is inferred in the Holy Spirit's statement in 2 Timothy 3:16:

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**Everyone who claims to be a disciple of Jesus must take ownership of his or her own spiritual transformation to live the mind of Jesus.**

### **Chapter 4**

## **The Life Journey Of Incarnational Restoration**

We must be patient with ourselves and others, for transformation into incarnational living is a lifetime struggle. The life of John Mark is a good example. Mark grew up among the privileged in the big city of Jerusalem. His life as a young man was evidently sugar-coated as the son of an economically advantaged family. We assume this from the possibility that Jesus and the apostles, with other disciples, met in the house

of Mark's mother in Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, in his youthful zeal, and possibly by the encouragement of his cousin, Barnabas, young Mark tagged along on Paul's first mission journey (Cl 4:10). However, after passing through his cousin Barnabas' homeland of Cyprus, the glamor of the trip lasted only until Mark was faced with the daunting task of scaling the mountains of Pamphylia in southern Asia. At that time, Mark's attitude changed. He was possibly too far from the comforts of his Jerusalem home, or the going just became too rough for the inexperienced young city boy. It may also have been that the excitement of the journey had now turned into agony. Whatever the reason, it was at the foot of the mountains that the adventure of the journey went south, which was also the direction that Mark turned in order to go back to Jerusalem.

About three years later, it was again time for Paul to launch out on his second mission journey. However, when putting together a team of incarnationals, he concluded that John Mark was still incarnationally immature. He was immature for the type of journey in missions that the transformed Paul could accomplish (At 15:36-37). Nevertheless, Barnabas was patient with his cousin, and subsequently took Mark back to the familiar territory of Cyprus (At 15:39). We must at least give Mark credit for being tenacious in his desire to do what he knew he should do.

What is significant to notice in the transformation of Mark is embedded in Paul's eventual request for him during Paul's imprisonment many years later. He wrote to Timothy, "*Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry*" (2 Tm 4:11).

The last mention we have in church history of the formerly

spoiled Jerusalem boy is when he was with the imprisoned apostle Paul in a Roman prison (Cl 4:10). Mark had spiritually transformed into being able to venture far beyond the mountains of Pamphylia. He had spiritually grown to the point of having the strong heart that was needed to be with the imprisoned Paul in a Roman prison. At the time he was with Paul in Rome, Mark's incarnational transformation had reached the level that **he was now profitable for world evangelism.**

In the years that followed the disappointment at the foot of the mountains of Pamphylia, Mark spiritually grew into profitability. It took time for him to grow into the dedicated life that would be profitable for ministry. But he eventually made it there. Therefore, we must be patient with ourselves and others as we too struggle to grow into incarnational living.

What is significant about Mark is that he did not turn back from the challenge to grow into behavior that emulated his Savior. He would not allow himself to have a faith that was void of living a sacrificial life to preach the gospel. In fact, Mark came to the conclusion, that as his mentor, Paul, he could not simply preach the gospel only with words that communicated gospel truths. He had to live that which he preached concerning the incarnational Savior.

**A faith that is not growing us into following incarnationally the Son of God who sacrificed heaven for us, is a dead faith that is not worth having.**

### **A. Into the likeness of a slave:**

In the incarnation, Jesus did not hold up in heaven with "faith only." He did not continue to reside in the form of God in a heavenly environment when there was a mission that had to be accomplished. He thus acted on Himself and launched out of heaven and into the form of man. In comparison to His existence with God in the form of God, incarnation meant that

He had to personally make the decision to sacrifice existence as God in spirit in order to come into a body that could be crucified (Ph 2:6).

Jesus subsequently sacrificed the privileged existence as God in order to be made as a man. He thus took the form of a slave by “*being made in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:7). Though we cannot follow Jesus completely on His gospel journey from spirit to flesh, in some metaphorical manner, however, we must find a way that we can emulate a transformation from arrogance, to humility; from pomp to servanthood; and from glamour to His glory. We must never be guilty of reversing the order.

It was not only in the likeness of humanity that the Son of God came, but He also came to make Himself a slave to the needs of others. The Greek word in the context of John 13:16 is *doulos*, the word for slave. A slave gives up his right to choose for himself when he allows the needs of others to make choices for him. There is no such thing as living an incarnational self-willed life. **Incarnational living is inherently slave oriented.** And so as the Son of God loved us in order to become a slave on our behalf, we, too, love others in order to be their slaves (1 Jn 4:19,21).

### **B. In search of dirty feet:**

Those who would live as incarnational slaves must follow Jesus in washing dirty feet. The incarnational life-style is not for those who thirst after popularity or prosperity. Slaves do not crave to be “Hollywood preachers” who broadcast themselves around the world as someone who thinks himself to be somewhat. Worldly living and selfish ambition are not the spirit of the slave of Jesus who would live incarnationally. On the contrary, the incarnational slave finds a towel and looks for dirty feet to wash (See Jn 13:1-20).

After Jesus washed all the disciples' feet, He said to all of them, "*Truly, Truly, I say to you, a bondservant [slave] is not greater than his lord*" (Jn 13:16). And since we ourselves call Him Lord, then we must find more than the dirty feet of twelve men to wash. We must look for dirty feet throughout our lives. If we think of ourselves too good to wash dirty feet, then we are not disciples of the One who initially created the dirty feet that the Creator washed on that evening in Jerusalem over two thousand years ago

**Inherent in living incarnation is the attitude and work of a slave.**

### **C. From chief seats to footstools:**

In essence or nature as God, the Son made Himself into the flesh of man in order to wash dirty "spiritual" feet (Ph 2:8). Those who would seek to be disciples of Jesus, therefore, must do likewise. Few who are in high places are called to these matters because they find it difficult to follow Jesus as a slave to the needs of others. If someone loves "*the best places at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues,*" then he seeks to live contrary to an incarnational Savior who would place Himself on a cross (See Mt 23:6). If one is a lover of money, he too will find incarnational living difficult (See Lk 16:14). In fact, the incarnate Son of God said, "*Whoever of you who does not forsake all that he has, cannot be My disciple*" (Lk 14:33). **Jesus gave up all of heaven in order to leave an example that we, too, must give up something for Him.**

**Those who seek to sit on chief seats on earth among the disciples have disqualified themselves from being seated with Jesus in heaven.**

Incarnational living calls for death to our old life of living for ourselves and consuming upon our own lusts. The Son of God "***humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross***" (Ph 2:8). When Jesus said, "*And whoever*

*does not bear his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple,*” the disciples soon realized that incarnational living after their Master meant a cross of death (See Lk 14:27). It is as the incarnational life-style of Paul: *“I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you that I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily”* (1 Co 15:31). And, Paul continued, *“I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”* (Gl 2:30). If one would live the incarnational sacrifice of Jesus, then he puts his signature on his own death certificate to have died with the incarnate Son of God on the cross of Calvary (Rm 6:3).

#### **D. The glorious end:**

There is a glorious end to the incarnate life-style. We will in some way be in this life as Jesus now is. The Spirit explained, *“Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name”* (Ph 2:9). It was upon the foundation of this truth of the risen and reigning incarnate Son of God that Paul inscribed the following words in reference to all those who would live the mind of their King:

*For if by one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness [through the gospel of Jesus] will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ* (Rm 5:17).

What a glorious statement! And just in case we missed the point in this statement to the Roman disciples, Paul reminded the evangelist Timothy with the same thought: *“For if we died with Him [in baptism], we will also live with Him. If we suffer [bearing our cross], we will also reign with Him [in this life]”* (2 Tm 2:11,12). This reigning is not future. It is present as Jesus now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

**Those who live incarnationally with King Jesus, now sit and reign with Him who reigns from heaven.**

## E. The victorious life:

Living the incarnational life is a victorious life in Christ. The faith about which John wrote (Jn 20:30,31), leads to victorious living in this life. “*This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith*” (1 Jn 5:4). The incarnational life is victorious because we take the incarnational journey with the Son of God who was formerly with and as God, but then on His own initiative, made the choice to become as the flesh of man in order to be our slave and wash our dirty “spiritual” feet.

We too must make a voluntary decision to live in gratitude of the gospel of Jesus. Since the Son of God came for us, we must go for others. Since He died for us, we too must bear a cross in order to take the gospel into all the world. This is the nature of living incarnationally for the benefit of others in order that they find their way into eternal life through the gospel of the atoning sacrifice of the cross.

When we speak of discipleship, therefore, we are not talking about some title of being Christian. We are talking about living a sacrificial life in response to the Son of God who gave Himself for us. Discipleship is our behavior of life wherein we express our thanksgiving to the Son of God for all that He has done for us, and will do for us when He comes again (See 2 Co 4:15).

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### Group Review Discussion Questions

[After reading the text of this bookito, answer the following questions in a discussion group with others.]

1. **Introduction:** Why is the Bible itself not the gospel?
2. **Chapter 1:** What was the true reason why the Jews stumbled over Jesus in unbelief?
3. **Chapter 1:** Why is it impossible for one to justify himself or herself before God on the basis of keeping law perfectly?
4. **Chapter 1:** What should be our primary focus when we partake of the Lord’s Supper?
5. **Chapter 1:** What event of the gospel is yet to come, which event is beyond our experience?

6. **Chapter 2:** Why is it difficult for human minds to understand the incarnation?
7. **Chapter 2:** Why is the cross not the totality of the gospel?
8. **Chapter 2:** Why was it not possible for the incarnate Son of God to remain in a state of death?
9. **Chapter 2:** Why is it that the more we live incarnationally the better we can understand the incarnation of the Son of God?
10. **Chapter 2:** How did John's life-style teach the incarnation of the Son of God?
11. **Chapter 3:** What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?
12. **Chapter 3:** What does it mean when it is stated that the Son of God made a proactive decision to be made in the likeness of humanity?
13. **Chapter 3:** Why is the lust to be known contrary to incarnational living?
14. **Chapter 3:** Why did the Holy Spirit leave us an inspired history of the example of John Mark?
15. **Chapter 4:** What made John Mark profitable to Paul?
16. **Chapter 4:** What does it mean when one follows Jesus as a slave?
17. **Chapter 4:** What did Paul mean when he said that he had been crucified with Christ?
18. **Chapter 4:** In what way do Christians reign with Jesus in this life?

## ABBREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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