



EIGHT REASONS WHY GOD BECAME MAN

JIMMY PARDEDE

Translation and editorial by:

Lukas Sutandi

Budiana Soendjojo

Chalvin Rura

Hanna Sutandi

Juliani Widjaja

Entay Yap



REASON 1

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



God Desires to Live with His Creation

John 1:1-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was with God in the beginning.

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone is coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'")

¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."

The Creation of the World

There are many reasons expounded in the Bible as to why God became man. One of the most prominent reasons is that He came to pay the penalty of sin. However, the Bible offers another view which we have not given enough attention to. A perspective that would have gone unnoticed had we not read the Gospel of John carefully. The prologue of John's gospel proclaims that the coming of Christ into the world is the perfect fulfillment of what God had planned on account of creation.

Theology typically distinguishes between a Creator God and a Redeemer God. God is the creator of all things, and when God completed all that He had created, God then redeemed man who had fallen into sin. This classical notion is affirmed by many theologians, including those in Reformed circles. However, through an immense amount of critical study, some Reformed theologians have made a notable discovery:

God's words indicate His activity
in creating merely the beginning of a process,
and not the end of the story.

This is consistent with God's plan before creation. Some theologians now believe that God's creative activity is an ongoing process that takes time to complete, and that what God begins is unfinished. God is still creating to reach perfection, as revealed in the book of Revelation. This process continues to this day. As stated in Romans 8:

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:22).

Why does Paul say that the whole creation groans like a woman in labor? Because of the fall, every aspect of God's creation is cursed. The

whole creation reflects the curse of sin and is in a state of pain and disorder.

Like a woman in labor who endures the agony of birth pangs, the groaning pains of childbirth will not last forever without the hope of new life. Once the baby is born, she no longer remembers the agony, but instead feels the joy of bringing new life into the world. Similarly, the suffering of this creation, like the pain of childbirth, leads to a glorious new world. The intense pain leads to a joyful outcome.

All of creation groans in waiting
for the perfection of the world.

We have seen myriads examples of conflict between man and nature. One will inevitably destroy the other. For example, volcanoes spew lava to make the soil fertile, but often at the cost of human lives. Similarly, the interaction of tectonic plates causes earthquakes and creates major landforms, but also destroys human lives. The Bible is clear that since the first day of man's sin, God has had a plan to restore His creation.

Creation is an ongoing process creativity, and God is present in the emergence of new life. John Calvin stated that “we are the new creation and not yet finished being created.” As the image bearer of God, man has not yet been ushered into perfection, and therefore, the earth has not been completely created.

As Paul said, “There was the first Adam, but it is the last Adam who will usher all creation into perfection.” We all experience the brokenness of the world in different ways. But we can find relief and hope in our Savior who came to save us. In Romans 8, Paul discusses the redemption of the body as part of the redemption of the creation.

“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies” (Rome 8:23).

The inheritance of God's children is intended to be glorious. When they are in their glory, the whole creation will also inherit their glory.

The Hope of Creation

The Gospel of John is a remarkable book in the New Testament. It is different in language and ideas from the other books of the New Testament, especially the Synoptic Gospels. John has a profound understanding. Unlike Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul, John pays particular attention to the heavenly realm.

The apostle John was greatly influenced by John the Baptist. He was a pivotal figure in salvation history, known as the voice crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way for the coming Messiah (Isaiah 40:3). The central theme of John the Baptist's ministry was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

There are striking similarities between the teachings and the lifestyle of John the Baptist and those of the Qumranites, a separatist Jewish sect from the Second Temple period. Some Qumranites formed an ascetic monastic community that lived in caves around the Dead Sea. They lived in groups, shared their material possessions, and were not involved in worldly affairs. Instead, they engaged in disciplined study and worship, longing for God's kingdom to be established on Earth.

John the Baptist was also an ascetic who lived in the desert between the city of Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. He wore clothes of camel's hair and ate locusts and wild honey. By living apart from society, he prepared himself for ministry. He preached boldly like the Old Testament prophets and taught like the Qumranites.

If we compare the teaching of John the Baptist in the Gospel of John with that of the Synoptic Gospels, we find interesting differences. The apostle John portrays John the Baptist as a gentle character who emphasizes quiet meditation, patience and a life of earnest prayer. The apostle's portrayal of John the Baptist's character illustrates the spiritual

substance of the apostle, who is able to look beyond the outward appearances of ordinary life.

John's fascinating theme
is that earthly realities reflect heavenly ones.

John uses rich imagery, and his theology narrates both symbolism and reality. In addition, John emphasizes and records more of the metaphors Jesus used to reveal his identity than any other gospel, providing some of the most famous word pictures of Christ, such as "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35), or when Jesus declared himself the light of the world: "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

In addressing the Kingdom of God, John's view is not political. Instead, he focuses on a disgraced woman who draws water from the well in broad daylight and is welcomed to join into the community of God's Kingdom. When Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman about the living water, their mundane conversation becomes a powerful lesson. The Gospel of John, among other gospels, is considered to have the most spiritual substance behind its texts. John uses mundane conversation to hint at Jesus' identity.

John's sublime approach to theology,
revealing that the hope of heaven
surpasses the hope of this world.

In the prologue, John emphasizes the importance of the unity between the Creator and His creation. He reveals that the book of Genesis conceals the great mystery of God that has remained hidden for thousands of years.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through him (the Word) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1).

The phrase "In the beginning" unmistakably echoes Genesis 1:1, taking us back to the creation of all life, including the animals of the land, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. This culminates in the creation of man in God's image. John proclaims that Jesus is the God who created everything and was fully present at the creation of the world.

The opening chapter of Genesis lays the foundation, but it may seem that something is missing. Many themes are introduced without being made clear. It is important to note that God created everything good.

God alone is eternal and uncreated.
He transcends all that is created.

Pantheism, Deism, and Atheism

There are two distinct realities that cannot be mixed or confused. However, it is important to note that God is the source of everything in creation, but creation is not identical with God. The idea is like a painting, have you ever seen a painting where the artist is inside his painting? Absolutely not. What you see is a self-portrait of the artist in the painting.

It is important to distinguish
the unity of Creator and creation from pantheistic beliefs
that equate God with nature and call human beings
into religious communion with the natural world.

Unlike pantheism, deism believes in a God who created the world and then let it run its course. This belief system is shared by the vast majority of modern Christians. The teachings of Deism were first postulated in the 2nd century BC by the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus. He believed that the gods were unconcerned with mortal affairs and lived without suffering, which he considered to be the perfect life. Undoubtedly, our lives would be meaningless if the Creator and His creation had nothing to do with each other, and this will consequently lead us to another belief called atheism.

Does life have meaning without God? According to the Bible, God created all things, giving them their own origin and purpose. Therefore, true meaning and purpose can only be found in God and we can fully appreciate His creation by recognizing its significance from the Creator.

God Dwells with His People

Something seems to be missing in Genesis. God wants His people to dwell with Him in a place He has created. But He has not yet dwelt with them on earth, so creation has not yet reached its final point. The central theme of John's gospel is God's dwelling with His people. In John 1:38, when the first disciples followed Jesus, He asked them, "What do you seek?" They replied, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" They have been living with Jesus ever since. This brings us back to John's prologue, where he tries to convey that this creation is imperfect because God has not lived with us.

Life is meaningless without God's presence,
even if we achieve great wealth and fame like King Solomon.

Although King Solomon was wiser than any other king on earth, he could not bring true hope to God's creation. Consequently, meaning cannot be found in ourselves or in the universe around us because they

lack ultimate purpose and value. It can only come from a transcendent personal Creator. For this reason, we must recognize that something crucial is missing in this world.

Do we know what is missing in us? What is missing in the church and in the world God has created? It is important to identify what is missing in our lives in order to begin to seek answers. Needless to say, when it comes to our relationship with our Creator, which is the most essential part of human's life, we often neglect it. We may think that we have everything we need and that all will be well. But if we think that life is just about finding pleasure here and there, we won't be able to see what's missing.

Wise people recognize that
there are some flaws in the world and strive to resolve them.

The Creator Dwells in His Creation

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, God became man. We can safely conclude that this is the most glorious theme ever written in human history and this is the reason why Christianity is profusely different from other religions.

The essence of Christianity is that
God dwells with humanity in the New Heaven and Earth.

God sent His Only Son into the world as the beginning of His indwelling. This is what Christmas is all about-the beginning of the restoration of God's creation.

The incarnation of Christ is the beginning of the restoration of heaven and earth. As we reflect on Christmas, let us remember that the new

creation has begun and God is working to bring it to completion. In God's full presence, there will be no evil, no sorrow, and no death. There will be no more conflict between man and nature, Satan and sin. The incarnation of Jesus Christ marks this monumental work of perfect creation.

Creation will be perfect,
just as God intended from the beginning of time.





REASON 2

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



The Throne for Christ

*"For Him all things were created:
things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;
all things have been created through Him and for Him."
(Colossians 1:16)*

The Throne of God

In his book *Cur Deus Homo - Why was God a Man*, Anselm of Canterbury rejected the popular view held during his time that God became man because man's sin has made him indebted to the Devil, thus God had to rescue mankind. However, Anselm believed that man is not in debt to the Devil but rather to God—a debt of honor.

Christ's death is a price paid to God
to appease God's wrath
so that mankind can be reconciled to God.

In light of this view, the ransom mentioned by Jesus in the Gospels would be a debt paid only to God the Father. Anselm's theology is consistent with that explained by Paul. According to Paul's letter to the Colossians, the second reason God became man is to establish that both Heaven and Earth are His throne. Christ is the reason and purpose for the existence of Heaven and Earth. In Christ, both Heaven and Earth were created by Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16). In addition, Paul also emphasized the ideas of thrones, powers, and authorities, both visible and invisible.

Although Paul addressed political issues on many occasions, in this particular context Paul was not referring to the kingdoms of the Earth,

but rather the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. In the book of Ephesians, Paul explains his understanding of the evil powers in the air, in Heaven, and in the world. Satan was an angel of God who rebelled against God, but he still had access to Heaven. As we see in the book of Job, when the angels went before God in Heaven, Satan was with them.

What Was It That Satan Sought?

The Scriptures do not give many details about how Satan promoted the war in Heaven. However, it does reveal significant information about his motives and character, which have been very helpful in understanding his tactics.

Satan wanted the glory and power of God
for himself.

His prideful desire was to take over the throne of God. Apparently, instead of exalting himself, he was thrown out of Heaven and cast down to Earth. Did Satan not know that God is sovereign over Heaven and Earth, and that God is more powerful than anyone? We can safely assume that Satan knows that he cannot defeat God, but he fights God anyway, because sin, as Cornelius Van Til puts it, is irrational.

Satan has two tactics: first, Satan covers his weakness by pretending, and second, he destroys all of God's plans by putting power-hungry people in place. Thus, the world will always have a never-ending cycle of political corruption.

The war between God and Satan
will always affect the politics of this world
because this war is about power.

Satan and his demons are wreaking havoc in the world. They are behind all cosmic warfare in every war between good and evil. Whenever there is an opportunity for someone to gain power, others try to grab it, because with power comes security, wealth, and a life of luxury. Satan seeks to destroy the world by encouraging people to become power-hungry, lustful, and domineering.

One of the mysteries of the Christian life is the question: "Why did God not destroy Satan then and there?" Satan had become, as it were, the god of this age, having come to rule this world. He was cast out of Heaven and took a third of the angels with him so that he could have his kingdom. As it is written in Revelation 12, he was cast down to the Earth and is still trying to take over God. Satan wants to be sovereign over man. He caused the fall of Adam and Eve and exalted himself to be sovereign over fallen mankind.

God's Perfect Plan

Immediately after the Fall, God pronounces His curse on Satan. Satan is under God's judgment. When God promised that the head of the serpent would be crushed by the seed of the woman, He was announcing a cosmic war in which the final defeat of Satan and the renewal of the entire universe would take place. He foreshadowed what was to come and then revealed the fullness of His message in the New Testament. God did not simply destroy Satan, even though He has the right and power to do so. *The Son of God had to become man because it was the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.* God has allowed Satan to rampage through humanity for centuries.

The world will never be perfect
until the true King ascends to His throne.

Nothing can thwart God's plans and timing for Satan's destruction. In Genesis 3:15, God announced the future coming of a seed that would crush the head of the serpent. God did not say when or how it would happen. God's plan of salvation was disclosed in small bits and pieces over a long period of time through several Old Testament passages that unraveled the mystery.

Before the beginning of time, the eternal Son of God was on His throne, receiving honor, praise, worship, and glory from all the heavenly beings forever. He was chosen to be the one who could fulfill the promise.

God's plan of salvation for sinful mankind
was determined and decreed
before the creation of man.

Trusting in God's Perfect Plan

God created Adam and called him "the image of God." This means that mankind bears the image and likeness of God. *God appointed mankind to represent Him and His kingdom.* However, in ancient Babylon, "image of God" was a title given only to kings. The king bore the image of the most dominant deity, which gave the king the authority to rule over the people and make them serve him. In contrast to the myths of ancient Babylon, the book of Genesis is set squarely against the dominant rival culture. Israel's concept of humanity is a drastic reversal of what may have been the dominant worldview in the ancient world for centuries.

God the Creator crowned both male and female as kings and established them as His visible image - an authority to exercise dominion over His creation. Our authority derives from the title given to us as God's image bearers.

A direct result of man bearing God's image
is that man is to rule the earth
in accordance with God's standards and purposes.

All human beings are called to represent God's kingship through the entire scope of their lives on Earth. Since the throne represents the rule of a kingdom, man should take God's goodness and loving kindness to share in our community on His behalf.

A community of God's people
living out the will of God
is the prototype of the Kingdom of God.

This means that Christians should care about good governments so that we might live together in an orderly manner and in a cooperative fashion. For this reason, God establishes the authority to use coercive force (Rome 13:4). This is the purpose of the creation of man. Thus, human equality is not merely the result of modernism.

Meanwhile, as we celebrate God's kingdom as both a "now" and a "not yet," Jesus warns us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. A realistic approach to life is also encouraged as we seek to promote human flourishing and the common good. A prominent theologian, Miroslav Volf, advocates that Christians who engage in electoral politics and seek to mend the world through legislative processes should act prudently, with concrete, ethical commitments and in prayerful reliance on God, who generously gives wisdom to those who ask.

It is important to notice that the Kingdom of God revealed in the Bible does not begin with the coronation of a mighty king, but with the birth of a crying baby. Jesus was born at a time when it had already been established that Caesar Augustus was called the 'son of god' – the

great savior of the whole world. He was the first Roman emperor to use that title. Caesar Augustus thought he was “the son of god” on Earth, when in fact the baby who was born in a manger during his reign is the Son of God. It is magnificent to see how God has orchestrated His coming at a particular time in history.

The Kingdom of God drew near to us
when God Himself came to Earth as a man.

The Crushing of Satan at the Cross

Although the Son of God fully shares in the nature of God Almighty, He did not count equality with God as something to be grasped. He made Himself nothing, relinquishing all His privileges. And being found in the form of a man, He willingly emptied Himself, not only assuming a human nature, but also submitting to a most shameful death in the eyes of God and man - death on a cross.

Through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross,
evil principalities and their powers
have been defeated and shamed.

The heel of the seed of the woman was bruised, but the head of the seed of the serpent was crushed. Jesus disarmed Satan and triumphed over all the powers of evil in His sacrificial death on the Cross. The cross crushed Satan's head forever.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and invited people to enter into it. Through His works, Jesus demonstrated the power of the kingdom and His authority over the kingdom of darkness. Then He departed from the Earth and the Spirit was poured out on

all His disciples. God has planned everything from the beginning of time to its end. Satan's rebellion failed both in Heaven and on Earth.

Jesus Christ is King of Heaven and Earth

The throne of glory was reserved for the throne of God. Christ selflessly chose to humble Himself, and as a result, His Father gladly exalted Him. He was exalted to the highest position of honor and authority in Heaven and on Earth because He descended to the lowest depths. There is nothing more important than knowing who Jesus is and what He has done. Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, through whom all things were created and are now sustained. He is one Person with two natures: fully God and fully man, co-equal and co-eternal with His heavenly Father.

Jesus is the Most High God Himself
who has accomplished all that God the Father sent Him to do,
which is to save His people
and establish God's kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven.

As the God-man, Christ is now seated at the right hand of God. He reigns over all authority, power and dominion. He is actively working for the final defeat of sin and our complete deliverance. And when all is said and done, Jesus will soon return and take His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords over the kingdom of the Earth.

God's throne on Earth today
is in the repentant human heart,
led by the Holy Spirit
into all the truths of Scripture.

He has made His followers kings for His work in administering the government of the Kingdom of God on Earth. As an eschatological community, the church is called to be the light that illuminates God's love for the world, demonstrating God's unconditional love and the sacrificial care that each member should offer to others.





REASON 3

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



The Light and the Life of God

John 1:17-18

"¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father has made him known."

What is Life?

Except for God, no one knows what the meaning of life is. Life is usually understood as simply breathing and being able to do what we want to do. While life is more than just a functional physical existence, it also has an important spiritual element. Unfortunately, most people are so content and satisfied with their own beliefs and perceptions of life that they don't look any further. Too many people muddle through life and live aimlessly from birth to death. Let's look at how God defines life in the Bible.

Life in union with the life of God
is true life.

What Does the Bible Say?

In Genesis 2:16-17, God said to Adam, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Notice also that the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2, "We are all rebels and because we live as rebels, we have died in our rebellion." If the Bible says that everyone is dead in sin, then why do we feel very much alive?

Being dead in sin means being separated from God. People are separated from God and are unable to understand the things of God, nor can they interact with Him as they should. *The natural state of all people is spiritual death.* Just as physically dead people are unable to accomplish anything, those who are dead in sin are unable to accomplish anything spiritually.

What the Bible says about who we are is completely foreign to what the world tells us. The world tells us that we are inherently good and can do anything we want. Therefore, we see no need for deliverance unless we examine and discover our sins.

We are dead in sin and deserve to be judged by God,
just as He has justly condemned us for our sins.

God is Light

John 1:4 says, "In Him is life"- in Jesus there is life, and that life is the light of man. John explained the connection between life and light: life on the one hand and light on the other. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. Created in the image of God, man can live a full human life only when he lives in union with God.

Light is essential to our daily lives for many reasons. First, it allows us to see and perceive the world around us, which is essential to living a good life. Second, light is also used in many forms of technology, from photography to communication systems and even certain medical treatments. Everything depends on light in some way. It is through our own experiences that we understand what light means.

The Bible teaches that the light of God is brighter than the brightest sun. It is brighter than any blinding light therein. It is a light that shines and leads us to His heavenly realm. When we look at the sun, we are dazzled by its rays of light-we cannot look at it directly. In the same way,

the glory of God is so overwhelming. He is too great, too bright, and too glorious for our naked eyes. The Bible says that this kind of light is not a light that we can have access to because we cannot withstand His glory.

The Light of God in the Old Testament

On Mount Sinai, God made a covenant with the Israelites by giving them the Torah. As God descended to the top of Mount Sinai, a thick cloud settled over the mountain, making it impossible for man to see, and a very loud trumpet was heard, causing all the people in the camp to tremble. When God is present, His glory is represented as the sun shining in all its splendor.

As God spoke to the Israelites, they saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet. They saw the mountain covered with smoke, and they trembled with fear as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder; it was as if they were about to die. As recorded in the Old Testament, this is precisely why the people had asked for a preacher. The experience at Mt. Sinai was terrifying to the Israelites. They asked that God not speak directly to them. Rather, they would obey whatever God told Moses to do. This is in contrast to today's Christians who demand that God speaks directly to them.

From Mount Sinai we understand that the Torah is the expression of the abiding values of God's holy nature, given as a consequence of His great redemption. Therefore, God's commandment is to be taken seriously, but not slavishly. Reading the Torah sets forth God's perfect standard of conduct for His people, thus making us aware of our inherent sinfulness and our need for redemption.

Life in Darkness vs Life in the Light

Throughout history, not many people are aware that humanity has faced a great dilemma. We cannot live in darkness, but we cannot enter the light. *All human beings are caught between darkness and light.* Darkness is the absence of light, and God is light, so there can be no shadow

of darkness in Him. This metaphor of light and darkness is found throughout the Scriptures.

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rome 1:21).

The people of the world have darkened their minds. The world is dark because people do not know or acknowledge God. They pretend to be wise when they are really fools. Living in darkness means living in ignorance, deception, wickedness, corruption, and all kinds of evil works. Some of the acts of darkness are sexual immorality, lewdness, foolish talk, covetousness, selfish ambition, revelry, disrespect for the elderly, arrogance, and many others. The result of such a life is death.

Living in the light is the opposite of living in darkness. There was a time when man was sinless - when Adam and Eve enjoyed an intimate relationship with God and each other. This was life as God intended. Everything about God's creation would have been perfect. The fellowship that Adam and Eve enjoyed with God was unhindered by anything. Fellowship with God means seeing things as He sees them and having the same desires He has.

Similarly, to live in the light is to live in communion with God, for without communion with God there can be no real life. We can still breathe and do everything we set out to do, but if we are not in saving communion with the God who created us, we do not experience life. God is the light, and in Him we find freedom, hope, and joy.

Life is living in union with the life of God.

The False Light

We all have an empty place in our souls that only God can fill. The problem with most people is that instead of turning to God and letting Him fill our souls, we turn to the enemy who disguises himself as an angel of light and entices us to fill our emptiness with all kinds of pleasures that are evil in the sight of God. These instant gratifications are more inviting and satisfying than God. If you follow such a path, it is only a matter of time before you are destroyed by the enemy.

All the anguish of man's soul
is evidence that the darkness
has not been overcome by the light.

The True Light

Do we not long for a world of pristine beauty and grandeur? A paradise where man and nature live in perfect harmony? Where does this longing for Eden come from? This longing is rooted in the account of creation in the book of Genesis. Man had a paradise, but it was lost in a great tragedy. But have we lost Eden forever? Can paradise be restored? The Bible teaches that we must all look forward to the day when creation will be restored.

Restoration begins when God chooses the people and nation of Israel. In His truth and loving-kindness, God shed light on the people of Israel by giving them the Torah. He made them a holy nation so that man could have access to glimpses of the light-not all of it.

"Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2b)

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

The Israelites were brought out of the darkness of Egypt and into the light of liberation. The Torah was given as a set of laws and narratives designed to create in people a light that would shine in the midst of darkness. It was given as a model of responsible freedom and a glimpse of holy living.

The Torah was given at Mt. Sinai after the Israelites were delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. John 1:17 says, *"For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* The Torah was given to Moses by God who is steadfast in faithfulness. The Hebrew word for steadfast faithfulness is "hesed ve-emet," which literally means "grace and truth." The two words convey a single thought.

In the New Testament, the Gospel of John emphasizes the supremacy of Christ over Moses. In his gospel, John considered Jesus equal to the Father because Jesus is the light of the world. He comes from the Father, full of grace and truth. He is the true and full representation of God in the flesh.

Jesus said "Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life."

John's statement "God is light" is a regular theme in his writings.

When Light Became a Man

The teaching that God is light begins in the Old Testament and continues through the New Testament. Many prophecies were written about Jesus hundreds of years before His birth. John describes Jesus, the Word made flesh, coming as the light of the world, breaking the power of the darkness of sin through His death on the cross. As the Word, Jesus is not only the creator of physical life, but also the source of eternal life.

Jesus is the Word, the Life, and the Light.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

God the Son came into the world to be the light of men and the true light for everyone. But people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil (John 3:19). The world is dark, and darkness is full of threats, despair, and misery. Through Jesus, God's light is breaking into the world. The darkness trembles for the first time since the fall, and the world is no longer helpless in the face of it.

The light is breaking in and will continue to break in,
and it cannot be stopped until God makes all things new
and all things are transformed by the light.

This profound truth should encourage us to be vigilant as we carry His light of truth into this dark world. God is able to do far more than all that we ask. Just as natural light prevails over the darkness around us and enables us to see clearly, so the light of Christ shines within us.

It is God's desire that His Light come into the world, not the other way around. We don't escape the earth and make our way to heaven to access and enjoy His light. Jesus, the Light of the World, came and touched every dark corner of the earth.

Called to Light

We may be tempted to think that sin is overtaking us and that the darkness is too much. But the Bible says that this darkness no longer has

power over us and will not be able to overcome us. The moment we are saved by the redemption in Christ and born again by His Holy Spirit, we inherit an irreversible identity as children of God. Even if we don't fully understand, see, or feel it.

We who once lived in darkness
are now light in the Lord.
We are called to live as children of light.

This is our true identity as followers of Christ. The world cannot steal our light, but it can certainly dim it if we are not careful to remain in Jesus and to know right from wrong.

Not only do we now share in His light, but in Christ we are the light of the world. Christ, who has already begun the new creation, is restoring all things in Himself.

No matter how dark the world around us
may seem at times,
we are children of light.
Christ is in us to give us His light.

At Christmas, we celebrate this light of God that breaks through the darkness in the person of Jesus. Jesus' incarnation inaugurated a new creation in which the light of the world shatters the darkness of sin and gives new life to those who believe in Him.

As children of light, we are commissioned to bring that light into the world by living in obedience to Him. We are light, and Jesus tells us to let our light shine. It is our calling and challenge to be light for others. We all have it. Let us stand up and let our light shine into the dark corners of the world.

God is light and God became man
so that we might be the light of the world
and overcome the darkness.

How Do We Enjoy Light?

There are many ways to enjoy true light without being deceived by false light. These four distinctions of light explained by John can be used as our guide:

1. In relation to the True Knowledge of God.

Light is always related to the understanding of who God is. He made Himself be known through the Word, and Jesus is the Word who became Man.

2. Regarding the Purity of Heart.

The condition for seeing the light is to have a pure heart. It is described as singleness of heart or spiritual single-mindedness. In the Bible, double-mindedness is called impurity. Impurity and hypocrisy come from divided hearts (James 6:45). One who is two-hearted is a self-deceiver in every sense of the word.

3. In relation to Love and Oneness.

To have been born of God and made His child is to have been brought by the Spirit into this life-giving union with Christ. Our union with Christ transcends all natural, earthly relationships. The Bible is clear that Jesus often mentions union with God, as in John 17:21. Jesus prays "...that they may be one, Father, as you are in me and I am in you," and in verse 22, "...that they may be one, as we are one." The unity of the Church is

based on union with God. Our triune God is the basis for unity in the Church. Unity in the Church is important because it reflects God.

4. In relation to the Power of Christ's resurrection.

The light of Jesus' resurrection shines from the depths of darkness, for darkness can never overcome light. Christ's resurrection broke the chains of hell, the eternal curse of death. Christ is risen and has conquered death.

Death, the great enemy of mankind, has been conquered by Jesus. Jesus is the true light and has come into the world. Death has been swallowed up in victory.





REASON 4

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



**The Fullness of God
Revealed in a Man**

*"For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him,
and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things,
whether things on earth or things in heaven,
by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."
(Colossians 1:19-20)*

The Temple in the Old Testament

The book of Colossians establishes an essential principle: living in the fullness of God. Paul emphasizes that true mystery, wisdom, and knowledge are found only in Christ. The verse clearly states, "God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him," which can be interpreted as, "God is satisfied to have all His fullness dwelling in Christ." It is in accordance with the will of God that His glory dwells perfectly in Christ. He is the fulfillment of what the Bible teaches about the temple. The temple was understood to be the place where God's presence dwelt; thus this is the center where the Israelites place their hope for joy of worship.

Only in the Temple could God's people
enjoy the fountain of life.

The temple is intrinsically connected to the story of Israel's history. It paints a vivid picture of the time God's people lived in temporary shelters in the wilderness after God brought them out of Egypt. Every element is meant to draw the Israelites back to the Eden narrative. Garden of Eden served as the first true temple. It was where God met and communed with the first humans, Adam and Eve, until they were banished from God's presence. However, temples do not have a very positive connotation in the 21st Century.

Throughout history, the yearning for returning to Eden has manifested itself in many ways. In his classic sermon, Tim Keller elucidates on this point, that the world of literature is full of essays and stories with the theme of returning to Eden. We too have a desire to return to our original state of being, and this desire manifests itself in our life choices. It is the reason why we feel the need to have a better quality of life. No one has a perfect life, and we all want a better life. This desire was derived from our unconscious model of the lost Paradise.

In the Pursuit of Happiness

The Western societies were most influenced by ancient Greek Philosophers. Socrates and Plato are the most influential Greek Philosophers who believed that there are two worlds in this life: a material world and a logical world. The material world is the lower one, as it is constantly changing, whereas the logical world is ideal and eternal based on ideas. Aristotle's approach was also very persuasive, as it is frequently credited as the basis for study of logic and ethics. He believed that all men have the potential for virtue and character excellence. The closer we get to perfection the better, hence imperfection is often seen as failure. For the ancient Greeks, happiness was a virtue. A happy life must be a virtuous life. Therefore, happiness was something you had to work hard at.

At the bottom of our heart lies the concept of values
and an image of what an ideal life should be,
but nobody knows what it's like.

Surely, the desire for fullness of life and longevity is built into all of us. Everywhere we look, we are bombarded by advice on how to achieve perfection. Endless self-help books and blogs claim that they have the secret for helping us achieve a happy marriage or land a perfect job. We are forcibly reminded that we should attain happiness at all costs.

What Does the Bible Say?

The Bible implies that happiness is possible! This is staggering news. God promises us happiness as a gift, not a reward. Happiness is not something we can achieve by striving for it alone, nor by focusing on it as a goal. Notice that God did not say to the Israelites, “When you enter the land of Canaan, you must fight to get it.” Instead, God said to them, “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession...” Obviously, God was determined for the Israelites to occupy the Promised Land, thus they were commanded to clear the land of wickedness. Do you see the pattern here? This pattern should permeate our lives and our thinking today.

Christians do not struggle
to obtain happiness.

Salvation and happiness are a gift of God; they are not a reward for our labors. Happiness is given by God because we belong entirely to God. Whoever belongs to God hears and obeys His voice (John 8:47). All we have to do is accept His gift because it is God’s will to give it to us. This is the way of thinking that all Christians should grasp. Unfortunately, too many Christians assume that success and happiness are intrinsically linked - that one must be achieved before the other. “Life is hard, you must work hard to succeed!” This popular line is nothing more than a platitude. How many of us think that the only way we get happiness is to spend all our energy and all our time to change our circumstances and situation? All too often, we set standards to apply to ourselves and ask God to follow through with them.

Simply put, happiness doesn’t depend on the whims of circumstances or the proper function of the world. The kind of happiness God is promising is counter-intuitive to our modern minds. In Psalms 103, the psalmist helpfully reminds us of how gracious God is. Above any-

thing else, let us summon our souls to bless the Lord, forget not all His benefits, and hold fast to a specific truth about the Lord. It is no doubt that as a Christian, our source of happiness is to remember the goodness of God.

Can We Find Happiness in Our World?

Ever since the fall of man, life has been difficult, and this often makes it hard to be happy. One might insist that perfect happiness is only possible in the afterlife. The Bible teaches that happiness is a gift of God. However, who could be happy living in such a world as ours? Do we get the foretaste of the complete happiness of Heaven as long as we live in a broken world marred by sin? The answer is yes and no. We should not wait until we die to discover a taste of that. God wants us to experience immense joy and freedom as we navigate in a sinful and fallen world. All happiness is the enjoyment of God in one way or another. The supreme happiness of the Christians in Heaven will be that at last we will enjoy God fully.

What makes Heaven a wonderful place is
that is where God is.
If we can't enjoy God here,
we will not enjoy God later.

Unfortunately, as Christians, we often look for happiness in all the wrong places. Happiness seems to be all about feelings, sense of contentment, or an overall well-being. It is impossible, however, for any created good to constitute man's happiness. Happiness can only be found in God, the true fount of happiness. God is the truly happy One, and His foremost will for us is to embrace His perfect loving-kindness as we await His work in bringing this world into perfection. Our happiness in Christ is something that we can enjoy here and now.

Complete in Christ

For centuries, God allowed His presence to remain in the temple during the Old Covenant period. He filled the tent that the Israelites used for worship while in the wilderness, yet He was by no means imprisoned there. The Biblical theme of God's presence finally finds its fulfillment in Jesus. God no longer dwells in the temple made with hands. In the book of Colossians, Paul wrote a profound understanding that the Lord is not limited to one place - he explained that God filled the earth with His fullness by becoming man. The coming of Christ in the flesh was, in essence, God coming to dwell with human beings.

Jesus is the living presence of God,
and He, bodily, is the fullness of everything we seek.

It is considered heresy, though, to believe that Jesus is a mere human who was filled with God and therefore He became God. Jesus is the most-high God himself, and there was never a time when He became God, for God is eternal. This eternal God became man through incarnation. That is the great event we celebrate at Christmas. It is helpful to be aware of the false views concerning Christ. In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

Because of our faith, we have come into completion in Christ. As believers, therefore, we have been made full. We are now identified with Him and one with Him. We are joined to the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. Therefore, we lack nothing, and we should no longer remain in our feelings, nor in our assessment of ourselves, but we should exercise our spirit to partake of all that Christ is and has.

In Christ, we are made perfect and complete,
and in Him we do not lack anything.

Christ came to be the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, and in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell. The fullness of God is not some kind of abstract concept we attain in the afterlife. It is the life of Christ on Earth. As believers in Christ, we are called to live out the fullness we already have in Him as we follow His chosen path for our lives. Fullness has been given to us. We have been given all we need to be what God created us to be and to do what God calls us to do. It is in Jesus Christ that we receive the fullness of God's gift of happiness, in whom all the blessings of God flow into our life for eternity.

The Theology of the Body

It is important to understand the apostle Paul's perspective on Christ as the "Perfect Man," who brought forth life in His flesh. The Father's delight was upon Him. Christ is the image of the invisible God who is Himself the Perfect Man. Or to put it more clearly, the body and only the body makes the invisible visible. The Son of God has taken an actual body, and His body has been nailed to the cross.

**In becoming fully human, Jesus redeemed humanity.
Jesus lived a human life and died a human death.**

The self-sacrificing power of God enacts and reflects His divine righteousness. God Himself is revealed as the offering. Paul explains how God's giving up his Son to death in self-sacrifice is God's righteous way to disable sin and death. Our ideas of God can never fully contain God, and therefore there will always be more to God than we can understand. God is not only sufficient, good, trustworthy, loving, and holy, but He is also self-sacrificing. For by one sacrifice, He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrew 10:14).

Paul's Epistle to the Romans identifies God's self-sacrifice through Christ and the reciprocal response expected of humans. Paul, therefore,

appeals to the church in Romans: “Present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”

The body is given to us
to make the glory of God more visible,
it shows the world the image of God.

What is significant in the work of redemption is the consecration of our bodies to the living God. Notice, how different Christianity is from the tendency of the Greeks - it depreciates the body and emphasizes only the soul.

In view of all that God has done for us,
it is only reasonable and logical to use our bodies
to do His will and to accomplish His purposes.

God gave us His Word and sent His Spirit to guide us into all truth so we could know how to live and present our body as a living sacrifice.

When we look at our culture today, people use the words “God’s presence” a lot. In some ways, our culture has grabbed a hold of this notion of God’s presence, thinking that the signs of having the fullness of God and His presence are when we are able to do miraculous works or heal diseases. Sadly, only a few people enjoy the fullness of God in life as God intends.

Present Your Bodies as a Living Sacrifice to God

What does it actually mean to present our body as a living sacrifice? In the most literal sense, it is in a marriage. Paul makes an incredible claim about marriage. There are often pictures in Scripture that depict spiritual truth. Marriage is a perfect picture and a testimony of Christ, who

gave Himself for the Church. Marriage is a picture of the Gospel. Paul teaches that, "The wife's body does not belong to her alone, but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:4).

Marriage requires great sacrifice and dedication,
even when those acts of dedication
might be temporarily painful.

Contrary to the Gospel narrative of Christian marriage, our contemporary culture believes that setting clear boundaries is the best solution for happy relationship, namely marriage. The world we live in is caught up with a sense of entitlement. More often, we think of what benefits we can gain from our relationships, not what we can sacrifice for them. We are obsessed with our rights and are so selfish, thinking only how others can serve our interests. We don't want to serve each other; we only want to be served.

A selfish, self-conceited person
breeds unhappiness.

The Lord Jesus set up a model for our God-man living. Christ came not to be served, but to serve. He presented His body to God as an acceptable sacrifice. We are called to follow Him, and now the time has come for us to present our bodies as living sacrifice. In regards to God's holiness, faithfulness, love, and truth, we are to treat one another as if they're more important than we are, bringing good and joy to others. This is why the way we relate to one another is radically different than the way the world relates to one another.

God the Father, Son, and Spirit live
to honor, to glorify, and to exalt one another.
We should do the same within the body of Christ.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, it is important that we believe in Jesus as the fullness of God is wonderfully revealed. God has shown us love through Jesus Christ. While sacrificial love may often be difficult, God will guide us in how we can best love others and help us to love as Jesus loved: sacrificially. A true understanding of Christmas is the source of our eternal happiness.





REASON 5

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



Calling the Nations

John 8:48-58

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

⁴⁹ "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.

⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.

⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."

⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death.

⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word.

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷ "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Genesis 22:8-18

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time

16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

The Promise to Abraham

In John 8:56, Jesus boldly tells His detractors, the Pharisees, that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and that Abraham saw it and was glad. Abraham is a significant figure in Jewish history, as he is the ancestor of all Jews and is highly respected in the faith. He is often referred to as the father of faith.

When studying Scripture, it is important to consider the cultural context, history, and language in which the story unfolds. Understanding the underlying writings is crucial to fully understanding what Jesus said, as many of his statements were controversial.

As the father of the faithful, Abraham was seen as a beacon of hope for the world to come. The Jews believed that the reward for the righteous dead was to participate in a banquet hosted by Abraham, and the highest form of this reward was to be in "Abraham's bosom," a place of honor and favor (Luke 16:19-31).

The religion of Israel is designed to be a religion of hope. It begins with God calling Abraham and promising to make him the father of a great nation (Genesis 12). This promise means that Abraham will have

children, and through his descendants (Genesis 22) the promise of blessing for all the nations of the earth will be fulfilled.

The birth of the nation of Israel fulfills God's promise, but God also has the Gentiles in mind. He promises that every nation will be blessed through the blessing of Abraham.

This promise encompasses
the life and work of Abraham's most esteemed descendant:
Jesus Christ.

Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced in his day, indicating that Abraham had faith in God before the coming of Christ. This faith was future-oriented and resulted in Abraham being counted righteous.

The Tower of Babel and the Call of Abraham

Abraham was called by God long after the people had gathered and decided to stay in one place and build a tower of Babel to honor themselves. The tower of Babel was probably a ziggurat. This structure represents false religion and violates God's command to repopulate the earth. As a result, God intervened and caused confusion in their language, resulting in their dispersion.

The people who once spoke one language were divided into several large groups, each with its own language. Mistrust arose between these groups, causing them to scatter to different parts of the world. Since then, there has been conflict and mistrust between the various groups, tribes and nations of the world. There is a constant state of turmoil and unrest. It is common to see nations, tribes, and kingdoms pitted against each other. Throughout history, nations have sought power and control over one another.

Wars have been a part of human history since ancient times. However, it is believed that there will come a time when wars and the threat

of wars will cease. The promise made to Abraham was that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his descendants. *This is not a promise of unification into one nation, but rather a promise that each nation will receive God's blessing without losing its unique identity.*

God Chose the Nation of Israel

Scripture tells us that God chose Israel as the nation with whom He would make His covenant. God called Israel His chosen people after He rescued them from Egypt. He said, "You shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Exodus 6:7). The focus is primarily on Israel, but it is not exclusive to them. God chose Israel not to exclude other nations, but to be a blessing to all nations.

Israel is not chosen by God
because they are His favorites or special.
He has set them apart to glorify Him
and to bless the whole world through them.

Israel was chosen by God and received His Word, which brought them honor and great benefits. However, it is important to note that the covenant applies only to those who choose to obey Him. Israel is not inherently superior to any other people, nor have they earned their special status with God. In fact, they have been and continue to be disobedient to God and in violation of His Word.

Similarly, God brings us to Himself and sets us apart as Christians to bless the world and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

We are God's people
not because we have been chosen by God,
but because we are ready to do good works.

God's Call to the Gentiles

Beginning in Genesis 12, it is clear that God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and blessed the world through Israel. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the true seed of Abraham, and through Him freely bestowed His blessing on other nations. That blessing extends to us today.

Jesus fulfilled God's promise
to bless the nations through Abraham.

The passage discusses the idea that only the remnants of Israel are saved, not the entire nation. It also highlights that not all of Abraham's children are considered children. The main point is that anyone from any nation who trusts in Christ becomes a child of God. This means they can be a source of blessing to all people on Earth while maintaining their ethnic and cultural identities in light of God's truth.

God Hates Idol Worshipers

The book of Exodus demonstrates God's disapproval of the pagan nations because of their idol worship. Despite claiming to worship God, they worshipped thousands of different gods in their pagan temples and engaged in demonic activities. These religions promoted gross and perverted sexuality. There is nothing worse than religious hypocrisy.

Similarly, Paul says that the Gentiles worshiped idols even though they had received all the gifts of God. They received and enjoyed God's blessings, but devoted their lives to many other things. *"Can one be*

saved who only accumulates good deeds without doing evil, but does not believe in Jesus?" No. Anyone who rejects God will eventually be banished.

God does not accept those who are blessed by Him,
but fail to dedicate themselves to Him.

God's Emotions and What They Mean to Us

The Bible often depicts God's sorrow for those who ignore Him. God's emotions are rooted in His holy nature and compassion. He is not a stone-cold and stoic person, as the Epicureans allege.

God is not an impersonal force of nature
who cannot have emotions.

Many passages in the Bible speak of God in human terms to help us understand Him in a way that is familiar to us. The Old Testament clearly shows that God's wrath was directed against the pagan nations who created their own rituals and religions.

According to Jewish tradition, Terah and his family were idol worshipers. However, God showed mercy on Abraham and put an end to the practice of idolatry.

A Promised Son

Abraham and Sarah were past childbearing age when God promised them a child. They doubted God's promise, and Sarah gave her slave, Hagar, to Abraham to bear a child. Hagar conceived and bore a son named Ishmael.

Abraham wanted Ishmael to be the heir God had promised. In Genesis 17:18, Abraham asked God to bless Ishmael. However, God replied

that His covenant would be with Isaac, whom Sarah would bear to Abraham the following year (Genesis 17:21).

God told Abraham that although he had an older son, Ishmael, he would not inherit the promise. Instead, God promised to continue the covenant with Isaac.

Ishmael was born by natural means,
not by God's promise.

The marriage of Abraham and Sarah was honored by God, and therefore His promise had to be fulfilled through Sarah. *The birth of Isaac serves as an analogy for the spiritual birth of every child of God.*

A Command to Sacrifice

After Isaac became a young man, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his promised son. This command was astounding because Isaac was the son of promise and the use of sacrificial practices was forbidden elsewhere in the Bible. Why would God command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, when He forbids such practices? Not to mention the impeccable timing required for this test.

God's command reveals that the nations would not be blessed through Isaac, but through the descendant of Abraham whom God would later choose. *The command to sacrifice Isaac foreshadowed God's sacrifice of His own Son.* The wood placed on Isaac symbolized the cross that Jesus carried to Calvary. Both Isaac and Jesus, the sons of promise, carried the wood for their own sacrifices.

Isaac obeyed his father and was willing to be sacrificed.
In the same way, Jesus obeyed his Father
and was willing to die.

Abraham offered his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. In the same way, God offered His only Son, Jesus. Both fathers loved their sons and sacrificed them. However, God completed the sacrifice of His Son, while Abraham was prevented from sacrificing Isaac by a substitute. This shows the certainty of God's plan and His ultimate authority.

It was not Abraham
who mourned the loss of his beloved son.
It was God.

Isaac was the descendant of Abraham, through whom Jesus was both foretold and promised. God promised to bless Abraham's descendants and ultimately all nations through this Child.

The Promise to All Nations

After Abraham sacrificed Isaac, the Angel of the LORD spoke to him:

"I swear by myself, because you have done this, and not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Gen 22:16-18)

Why would an Angel of the LORD claim to be God? Throughout the Old Testament, there are numerous appearances of someone described as 'The Angel of the LORD' who is treated as worthy of worship and identified with God Himself. The Angel of the LORD is God Himself, the second person embodiment of the Trinity before His incarnation, known as Christophany.

God promised to bless Abraham and his descendants and confirmed it with an oath. He swore that all the nations of the Earth would

be blessed. This means that God will bless even those nations that rebel against Him. This is a remarkable demonstration of God's compassion, patience, and love.

How is this promise fulfilled? All the peoples of the world have the opportunity to be saved from sin and become part of God's family by believing in Abraham's seed, Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the Messiah and a descendant of Abraham,
who fulfilled the blessing for people of all nations.
Through His sacrificial death,
people of all nations will receive salvation.

A Call to All Nations

God loves all the nations of the earth, so He became man and was sacrificed on the cross to fulfill His promise to Abraham. God has repeatedly demonstrated His patience with those who deserve punishment.

God's love is demonstrated by His patience
in delaying His judgment
until all nations return to Him.

That's why the world has not been destroyed by God as it was in the days of Noah.

God continues to call all nations, even though they continue to rebel against Him. With love and patience, His calls take different forms and means. *If God's love and desire to reach all nations is so great, shouldn't it be our desire as well?*

To belong to Jesus is to embrace the nations
for whom He died and will rule.
Many things are important in life,
but this is the most important of all.

All nations should worship the one true God of Israel, the God of Abraham, who is now known to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was willing to be born in a humble place. From His birth to His death on the cross, His life was a sacrifice to fulfill God's promise to call the nations. He became flesh and shed His blood so that the Gentiles might return to God. Let us be united with God's vision and do His will.





REASON 6

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



How Glorious to be Man

*“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access
by faith into this grace in which we now stand.
And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.
Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings
because we know suffering produces perseverance;
perseverance, character, hope.
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.”
(Romans 5:1-5)*

Man is a Noble Creation

The Bible is an ancient book, and while it does not directly address every modern struggle we face, it does offer timeless truths and principles that we can apply to the issues that arise in our day. Through a careful study of the Bible, we will realize the great value, dignity, and honor that God has given us. Outside of Christianity, no other religion or belief places such a high value on human beings.

No other teaching has such an organized,
thorough, and consistent concept of human
worth as the Bible.

The very first chapter of Genesis teaches us that all human beings should be treated equally and regarded as intrinsically valuable. God said that all people were created in His image and likeness. He created man and woman in His image, and there is no difference between them.

As God's image bearers, we have been given the responsibility to represent God on earth, to act as His representatives, to reflect Him and represent Him as we steward the earth. This is an extraordinary claim that God has made on each of us! It is important to remember that this claim goes against the grain of all ancient beliefs and traditions.

The Fall of Man

The Bible tells us that the first humans disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. This act caused the fall of man; sin has marred the image of God in man and affected the whole of creation. After the fall, creation became subject to futility and decay. Man's condition in sin is not what God intended. Although sin is part of God's overall plan, God did not design man to sin.

Sin exists in God's plan,
but God is not the source of sin.

In His sovereignty, God allows sin to be a part of the overall plan that will reveal God's victory and glory. In all the glorious things that God does, sin exists so that God can overcome it, but it is important to note that God does not need sin. God, in His sovereignty, allowed man to fall into sin. He then incorporated the fall into His plan to reveal His victory and glory. We must humbly admit that this is a difficult concept for us to grasp.

The Mystery of God

As William of Ockham remarks, "The ways of God are not open to reason, for God has freely chosen to create a world and to establish a way of salvation in it, apart from any necessary laws that human logic or rationality can discover." He reminds us that we cannot fathom God's reasons. God acts according to His own nature, and a full account of 'why

evil?' is among the mysteries that belong to God. But these mysteries do not invalidate what we can know. Everything we know about God is not negated by mystery.

God's actions transcend
our understanding of right and wrong.

A classic question that is often asked is, "If God is good, why is there evil in the world He created?" Again, this is a mystery that we may never fully understand. Does the existence of evil in God's creation negate His goodness? Absolutely not. The existence of evil does not negate the fact that God is good and that everything He has created is good.

But unfortunately, God is often portrayed as a dangerous and cruel God. It is as if, because God exists, man is no longer free. It is as if because God is sovereign, man is oppressed and therefore unable to enjoy human freedom. This is a caricature of a false God. It is imperative that we have a correct understanding of God.

God's Estimate of Man

From the very beginning, the Bible emphasizes the importance of man in the eyes of God. Above all else that God created, man was given a high place in His creation. The fact that God sent His Son into the world to become man is proof that God places man in an honorable position.

The incarnation of Christ
is a demonstration of
the importance of humanity to God.

Jesus joined our humanity forever. He did not cease to be human, but He retained the body in which He lived, died, and ascended to

heaven with His transformed and glorified body. Jesus was truly man and truly God, from the beginning of the incarnation to eternity, and He will continue to be man. He is the head of all humankind and leads humankind back to God.

Jesus became a man
because man has an important place in God's plan
and to show the glory of the human race.

God created man with dignity. Our dignity and worth are not determined by our judgments of ourselves or others, but are directly related to our origin as man created in the image of God. We lose our dignity because we have lost our identity with God. But in Christ we regain what was lost in the Fall and are reconciled to God.

Even though our society
has cheapened our humanity,
God does not denigrate the people He created.

The Bible is clear that when man fell into sin, God provided redemption to restore man's dignity. For we were not created to be overcome by sin or to live in corruption and lose our glory forever. God has a plan for us and has graciously offered to share His glory with us. There is no better place for us to be than in God's plan.

Man in God's Plan

The Bible reveals God's plan to create mankind for His glory. Men and women were created in the image and likeness of God, and given dominion over creation. It is this realization of the value of human beings as discussed in the Bible that gave rise to the concept of human rights

and the concept of human equality. Thus, human beings are valued and given their rightful place.

This tells us that our very existence is of great value, regardless of our condition, our job or profession, our wealth, or our social status. Without going back to the Bible, we will be confused by the world's corrupt ideas about our identity and become further separated from God and each other. How we are to treat others is clearly shown in God's words.

The attitude with which God treats humanity
is the attitude with which people
should treat each other.

Until we esteem ourselves as God esteems us, human relationships will continue to fail. We will continue to face unresolved dilemmas about ethics, morality, and respect for human dignity. Our dignity will never be restored until we understand that we were created for the glory of God.

Our humanity is degraded
when we turn away from God
and live in pursuit of self glory.

Identity is found when we place ourselves into God's plan and story, not when we make ourselves the center of the story.

The Relationship Between Glory and Suffering

Why is Paul talking about glory and suffering in Romans 5? Paul is putting together two things that don't seem to go together. When Jesus became man, He not only demonstrated the glory that God has given to

man, but He also gave man instructions on how to live. Suffering is a result of following Jesus. The old life must give way to the new, but because we are bound to the old, this process will cause suffering. If we live for God, and therefore our lives are filled with hardship and suffering, do we become less human? By no means!

Suffering is part of the Christian's journey.
Suffering is not the goal,
but the result of working out the goal.

In various ways, the Bible has proclaimed that the Redeemer of fallen man had to be human. Christ had to be like us in every way except sin, and in being like us, He endured suffering. Jesus suffered with us and for us, and when we suffer, we suffer with Him. It cannot be said that Christ cannot empathize with us in our trials, tribulations, sufferings, and the like because He shares our humanity. A life of suffering does not diminish His humanity.

As we follow Jesus, we too will suffer before we enter into glory. Jesus himself was made perfect by the things He suffered. When we suffer, we share in the suffering of Christ, and that suffering perfects us by producing endurance, character, and hope. Jesus lived out obedience to God and provided a model of true human obedience.

It is through the life of Christ
that humanity has been restored and glorified.

No amount of suffering and tribulation can take us away from the love of God. For the glory that has been given to us cannot be taken away. God has promised and given it to us in Christ.

We Boast in Our Suffering

As counterintuitive as it is, Paul said, we can boast in our suffering, for we boast in the hope of sharing in the glory of God. Throughout history, great thinkers have reflected on what it means to be human. There is no doubt that Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century. His thoughts are powerful in themselves, but even more so in the context of his circumstances.

The atrocities of the Nazi regime, which resulted in unspeakable human suffering, compelled him to participate in a conspiracy to overthrow Hitler while helping Jews escape Germany. Although the attempt failed disastrously and Bonhoeffer was executed, his strong beliefs and thoughts have had a worldwide influence. Bonhoeffer famously said:

"The only hope for humanity is
that God himself is willing to suffer.
He is willing to become like us."

In our current cultural atmosphere, poverty, poor education, and lack of good opportunities in life seem to make us less human. That's why we strive to be rich, because we think that wealth defines our humanity. We strive to be smart because we think our intelligence will define our humanity. But the Bible says that the root of all our problems is that we have all fallen into sin. *It is sin that dehumanizes us.*

Human suffering
does not make people less human.

This is a universal problem that is endemic to humanity. How many of us think that our humanity is okay? Our humanity is destroyed because we live in sin. We tend to think of sin as some kind of harmless mistake, and we excuse each other for our sins. Sin has embedded a

deep and pervasive corruption in the human heart, a corruption that produces death.

The False Hope

We need to wake up and see that the results of human efforts will eventually fail. One way or another, we will inevitably face suffering and death. Our attempt to take the best care of our bodies will end in futility. In the blink of an eye, our bodies will deteriorate and their abilities to do what we want them to do will soon fail us. It is the same with wealth. Too many people today mistakenly put their hope in wealth.

There is nothing more foolish than thinking you can control life when you cannot. No matter how well you plan for yourself, grief, illness, betrayal, and financial disasters happen to everyone. Studying history is the best way to teach us to be humble. No amount of wealth, power, or planning can make us immune to suffering.

Christ's purpose on the cross
was not to secure our health and wealth,
but to reconcile us to God.

We are all familiar with the false preaching of countless televangelists and Christians who claim that God wants us to be rich and healthy. They claim that if you're not healed of something, it's because you don't have enough faith. If you're not rich, it's because you don't have enough faith. If you're in trouble, it means that God has abandoned you. These are misinterpretations of humanity, suffering, and sin.

Our problem is not poverty, but greed. Our problem is not when people do bad things to us, but when we do bad things to others. Our greatest problem is that we do not want God and even manipulate Him for our own benefit.

The problem of humanity is not the problem of evil;
it is when we become evil.
Sin causes us to dehumanize others.

Restoring Our Dignity

No one wants to suffer, but it's inevitable when you live in a fallen world. We all deal with our circumstances in different ways. Some have financial problems, some do not. Some have a good pedigree and grow up in a good environment and some do not. Some live in a peaceful state and some live in a place of conflict. God came into the world to show us how to respond in all these situations in order to reveal the glory of God.

God became man to share His life on Earth
and to show what it means to be human
in all circumstances.

John Amos Comenius, a theologian and educator from the Czech Republic dubbed the father of modern education, illustrates that the image God gives to man is the image of man growing in beauty, in the peace and joy that God promises. Comenius said that while Adam was growing the plants in the Garden of Eden, God was growing him. God nurtured and guided Adam to grow with loving, appreciative feelings.

God appreciates man
and desires his growth.

Man is not meant to live for himself, but for God. Therefore, we do not live to enjoy and try to fulfill our own desires, but to enjoy God and fulfill His plan. Jesus taught all this by becoming man. He showed us how to live in the midst of adversity and how not to live for ourselves. Jesus saw a clear goal of how to fulfill the will of God. He pursued that goal and worked for it as a man. Jesus invited all people who believe in Him to do the same, to glorify God and live a holy life in all circumstances.

Living a Life of Comfort

All comfort sought and found apart from God is vain and dangerous. In so many ways, our culture tells us that if the job gets tough, find a new one; if the relationships aren't satisfying, start over. Life is too short, right? Your desire for comfort will destroy your life! Restlessness will find you one way or another.

Apart from God,
there is nothing in which
we can find true comfort.

Most modern people think that if we are free of problems we will be better people. Don't you know that most rich people feel restless? They rarely have real friends; this can make them feel isolated and trapped in a very small bubble. They often feel bored with life, and this leads them to seek something higher to fill the void. If all your needs have been met for the rest of your life; you may also struggle with a lack of purpose and ambition.

What is the point of living a comfortable life if it doesn't bring glory to God? We are created for the glory of God. This means that we flourish when our lives are in harmony with His plan for us. To be fully human is to rejoice in bearing the image of God. It is to live out other-

centered relationships with God's image bearers. God became man so that we might understand what it means to be human and how to live as true human beings, as modeled by Jesus, so that we might share in the glory of God.





REASON 7

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



Loved by God and Made Holy

John 3:14-16

*"¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness,
so the Son of Man must be lifted up,
¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'
¹⁶ For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life."*

What is Eternal Life?

John 3:16 is one of the most popular and quoted verses in the Bible. The words are so familiar that we don't even think about the depth of meaning behind them. The meaning can easily be distorted and the impact weakened. John 3:16 sums up one of the most fundamental beliefs of Christianity: the depth of God's love is "He gave His only Son." What does John 3:16 mean for our lives? And how does this powerful verse affect our lives?

The sacrifice was intended so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life. What does it mean to have eternal life? Most people don't know what the Bible means when it talks about eternal life. If asked, they would probably say, "Eternal life is living forever." This secularized view of the term "eternal" emphasizes "a life without end," suggesting that when life ends in one realm, it continues in another. This is a far cry from the truth.

The Bible refutes such view and teaches that those who do not believe in Christ will experience "eternal life" by enduring the wrath of God. Thus, the concept of eternal life is not limited to an enduring consciousness alone. It is different from mere existence without an endpoint, and it transcends the notions of "I know that I am" and "I am forever."

Eternal life is not compatible with the idea of "a life of happiness apart from God."

Sadly, too many Christians who indulge in worldly pleasures hope that in eternity they will finally achieve the satisfaction they sought on Earth, a life of eternal bliss untouched by suffering. This secular definition of eternal life focuses on endless happiness without hindrance and certainly without God. This idea is similar to that of those who do not know God, who seek a comfortable life of abundance without suffering.

In essence, what is believed to be eternal life is an ideal life of minimal suffering and maximum happiness. It is time to take a step back and question this belief. A deep understanding of happiness and suffering is often lost on many people, so it is necessary to re-evaluate these concepts from a biblical perspective. The Bible, however, describes eternal life very differently.

The Historical Perspective of Happiness

In ancient times, happiness was associated with virtue and the pursuit of excellence. Philosophers such as Aristotle claimed that true happiness could only be achieved by living a virtuous life. The key to this is the state of our soul. True happiness could not be found in external achievements, but rather in the cultivation of virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, self-control, and so on.

It is useless to have good physical well-being if the soul lacks these virtues. Therefore, the important task is to pursue endeavors that bring happiness to the soul and train the body to achieve holistic well-being. The ultimate goal is to achieve a serene life free from suffering and to maximize happiness. This is "happiness" in the classical sense.

Misconception of Happiness

It's important to understand that the concept of "happiness" in the ancient world and in the Bible was not the same as it is often understood today. Misunderstanding God's promises in the Bible can lead to dangerous misconceptions. Equating happiness solely with wealth may result in a misinterpretation of God's promise, assuming it refers only to material prosperity.

Similarly, associating happiness with freedom from sickness could lead to the idea that sickness is a curse and health is a blessing. This mindset could further misinterpret the relationship with God by assuming that sickness indicates distance from God, while closeness to God guarantees freedom from sickness. Modern Christians, including those of the Reformed faith, often question God in the face of illness.

Most church members have accepted
unbiblical traditions without question or investigation.

While Reformed preaching may initially resonate, many experience a crisis of faith when their beliefs are put to the test. It becomes apparent that their Reformed beliefs remain theoretical and haven't manifested themselves in their lives. The continuing influence of traditional concepts of happiness, suffering, joy, and fear becomes apparent. Consequently, a careful re-examination of all the major issues in the Bible is necessary in order to properly understand its teachings.

Eternal Life in John's Gospel

Eternal life transcends perpetual enjoyment of worldly pleasures and freedom from suffering. The Gospel of John provides a profound insight into the nature of eternal life. The context of John 3:16 unfolds in the story of Jesus and a man named Nicodemus.

² *He came to Jesus at night and said,*

*"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.
For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."*

³ *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you,
no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*

⁴ *"How can someone be born when they are old?"*

Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you,
no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.*

⁶ *Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

⁷ *You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'*

⁸ *The wind blows wherever it pleases.*

*You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

⁹ *"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.*

¹⁰ *"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?
(John 3:2-10)*

Born from Above

The Bible speaks of being "born from above" in several passages. The most famous is John 3, which records Jesus' dialogue with the Pharisee, Nicodemus. Jesus implied that Nicodemus, as a teacher in Israel, should have understood the concept of being "born from above," and he should have understood what it meant to be born of the Spirit. Obviously, Jesus was referring to the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the key to our understanding.

The book of Genesis often alludes to the concept of being born from above. This idea is exemplified by the choice of Isaac over Ishmael. Isaac embodies a covenant that descends from God to Abraham, from above to below. The same is true of the "True Israelite" identity, which transcends mere lineage.

To be born from above means
to be formed, called, and become part
of the people from the divine realm.

Jesus helped Nicodemus understand by referring to Israel's history. He used a story similar to the one in Numbers, where God taught them about faith by having them look at a bronze serpent on a wooden pole. Jesus compared His death on the cross to the lifted serpent.

Testing in the Wilderness

In Numbers 21, the Israelites grew impatient and grumbled against God and Moses about their food. They expressed their desire to return to Egypt. In response, God sent venomous snakes to punish them. The snakes bit the people, and many Israelites died. As an antidote, God instructed Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Anyone who was bitten could look at it and live.

The passage in Deuteronomy 8:1-5 clarifies that the wilderness period was not only a punishment but also a test. God led the Israelites into the wilderness to test them. How can we reconcile this passage with James 1:13, which states that God cannot be tempted by evil and does not tempt anyone? How can we bring these two passages together? James addressed believers who had succumbed to sin and falsely accused God. Sin is never God's fault. It is their evil desire that tempts them. These passages do not contradict each other.

People fall into sin
because of their own lusts and desires,
not because of God.

Desires can lead to a fall and indicate distance from God. God provides an environment where we face temptations, but He would never tempt anyone to sin. Trials are brought to strengthen and purify our faith, not to tempt us to sin. It is crucial to understand this concept, especially in light of Deuteronomy.

Why Does God Allow Temptations?

God tempts people to discern the faithful from the unfaithful. Trials reveal the faithful. Deuteronomy 8 explains that this is to teach that human existence is sustained not only by material provisions, but also by the Word of God. This process continues today.

Every temptation tests our faith and love for God. Those who lack steadfastness may forsake God when faced with the lure of worldly pleasures. Fragile commitment to God is shown in this day and age as people choose careers, wealth, and pleasures over alignment with God's will.

God will test us, just as He tested Israel,
to determine who truly belongs to Him
and who does not.

God's test takes place in the wilderness. Individuals are faced with a choice: they can seek only physical nourishment like bread, or they can prioritize seeking the Word of God. The challenge lies in one's commitment and priority. The crucial question for each person is whether they are committed and disciplined enough to declare, 'I seek Your Word above all else.' It takes courage and unwavering commitment to place God's Word above all other pursuits.

Holiness is Essential

Throughout Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, there is a consistent theme of God's desire to impart His holiness to Israel. Leviticus 19 emphasizes this call to holiness: "You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy." When God called the Israelites out of slavery and the decay of pagan Egyptian culture, He called them to be holy like Him. They were set apart and distinguished from all the other nations of the world. God called them to be different from the pagan culture around them. They were to worship and serve Him alone.

Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers teach us to embrace holiness and recognize it as a source of joy. When we come to Christ, He calls us to follow Him. Living a holy life is what it means to follow Christ.

The more we rejoice in Christ
and say "no" to the temptations of this world,
the more we grow in holiness.

Distractions in life are abundant, and there are countless enjoyable things to do. However, it is important to not let these temporary pleasures consume all of our time, preventing us from enjoying God's Word. It is crucial to recognize the value of God's Word in our daily lives and ask ourselves if we truly take pleasure in it. The appeal of God's Word lies in its ability to guide individuals towards holy living.

To enjoy God and holiness,
we must immerse ourselves in the Word
and gain a deep understanding of its complexities.

In the end, it comes down to a choice. As God's people, let us choose to avoid worldly pleasures and things that do not please God, and instead pursue holiness.

Eternal Life and Holiness

In John 3:16, the term 'one and only Son' refers to Jesus Christ. This is further explained in John 1:14, which states that 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.' Deuteronomy 8:2-3 also emphasizes that God led the people in the wilderness for forty years to teach them that human existence is sustained not only by bread, but also by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

The significance of this passage is that the Word of God, represented in the person of Jesus Christ, is essential for the spiritual sustenance and holiness of God's people. John emphasizes the intrinsic connection between eternal life and holy living. In other words, eternal life is not something to wait for after death; it is something you have now if you believe in Jesus.

Those who truly believe
that Jesus Christ came to this earth to die for our sins
will strive to stop living in sin.

Many Christians believe that Jesus died to forgive their sins, but they do not live in holiness. They think that holiness is only for Heaven, and they are satisfied with just singing songs about what a great day it will be when we all get to Heaven. However, John's perspective balances eternal life with holy living.

According to John's gospel, the biblical concept of Heaven involves the perfect enjoyment of the holiness that one has embraced in the present. It is not a promise of worldly prosperity or recognition. This highlights the significance of living in holiness as an essential aspect of salvation. If one lacks a desire for holiness, they may not yet be a part of eternal life and may not be saved.

Those who do not value
living a holy life and cherishing the holiness
of God will not have eternal life.

God's love for the world is evident in His willingness to give us His greatest gift: His holiness. Leviticus 19:1 emphasizes this idea by stating, 'You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.' God maintains the holiness of His people through trials and tribulations, as exemplified in the wilderness. This process is designed to make everyone realize that they need God's Word to live a truly holy life.

Love and Holiness

The connection between God's love and holiness is evident in John's statement, "The Word became flesh." This emphasizes the indispensable need for the Word, for Christ, in order to truly live. Throughout the Bible, numerous passages underscore the intimate relationship between God's love and His call to holiness, demonstrating the interconnectedness of these fundamental aspects of faith.

Leviticus 10 illustrates God's holiness through a sudden and severe judgment. Aaron's two sons were killed on the spot for offering unauthorized fire, which was met with unquenchable fire. The holy place, including the tabernacle, is strictly off-limits, and anyone who enters without proper authorization risks divine punishment. The death of Aaron's sons serves as an example of the sanctity of the tabernacle. It is demonstrated that even priests who enter without proper preparation face the severe consequence of death.

Following the death of Aaron's sons, God reminded Aaron through Moses that 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified.' The reason for their death was not due to any visible evidence of sin, but rather because of the close relationship Aaron had with God. Their fatal mistake of offering an unauthorized fire, while their motivation was still un-

clear, led to their deaths because they violated the sanctity of the sanctuary.

Fallen man, tainted by sin,
cannot see God's glory without facing death.

Sinful men cannot enter God's dwelling place without dire consequences. Only Christ Himself has the right to enter. Man can truly see and enjoy the presence of God in all His glory only through the gift of new bodies.

God's fiery intervention resulted in the fatal judgment of Aaron's sons. This serves as a solemn reminder of the sanctity and exclusivity of God's dwelling place. It also highlights the importance of approaching God with reverence and following His prescribed ordinances.

Intimacy and Holiness

In Leviticus 10:3, God teaches an important lesson by stating that He will reveal His glory to those who are close to Him. The Hebrew word for 'close' is 'qarob,' which can be translated as 'the closest person' or 'companion.' Essentially, God is saying that because Aaron is His friend, He has high expectations for him. This expectation extends to all who are close to God.

God demands holiness
as an expression of His love.

Holiness enriches and fulfills human life, while a life steeped in sin lacks true enjoyment and joy. The call to repentance and holiness is universal, reaching people of all ages and walks of life. The message is clear: a life steeped in sin is like the life of an animal, lacking true joy. We

are invited to repent and return to a life of holiness for true fulfillment and joy.

The fulfillment and enjoyment of life
is found only in holiness.

Moses was instructed by God to inform Aaron that He had revealed His holiness. Those who desire to be friends with God should anticipate strict discipline. In Acts 9, Ananias questioned God's selection of Paul due to his past persecution of Christians. However, God's response revealed a profound truth: Paul's suffering was not a result of God's wrath, but rather because he was a friend of God. This implies that being a friend of God comes with the potential for challenge, suffering, and discipline.

This concept emphasizes that those who seek to be God's friends can live joyfully through holiness. Holiness involves enduring God's refining fire, facing temptation, undergoing trials, accepting discipline, and living out God's teachings. The end result is the ability to live joyfully in a holy life because those who are God's friends are ordained by God to experience and enjoy holiness.

God loves us by giving us the best:
holiness.

Understanding God's love for humanity requires recognizing holiness as a precious gift from Him. God's nature is to give the best to those He loves, and in His wisdom, holiness is the ultimate gift. The commandment to 'Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy' expresses this truth. While health and wealth may not always be provided, the gift of holiness remains paramount. God's perspective transcends the

world's obsession with wealth; to Him, the state of holiness is the most important thing.

We Are to Be Holy

John links eternal life and holiness in his reference to the themes found in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. God explicitly desires holiness for the Israelites in these books. The incident of the serpent biting the Israelites in response to their trials and failures provides the backdrop. Being born again by the Holy Spirit illuminates the way back to God's holiness.

To be born again from above, one must look at the bronze serpent lifted up on the pole. This image is reminiscent of the Old Testament narrative and signifies the restoration of God's holiness to those who have fallen into sin. The call to holiness echoes the biblical injunction, 'Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.'

God loves humanity and desires for us
to be holy.

God invites us to abandon the pursuit of sin and worldly pleasures. True joy is found only in God's holiness. Leaving behind a life of sin is rooted in the understanding that such pursuits lead to misery rather than true fulfillment.

The Sanctification of Man

The Bible presents the concept of holiness in two stages. The first stage refers to a person's status. If a person falls into sin, no matter how pious they were, it is impossible for them to regain their holiness. This is illustrated by the analogy of a person having premarital sex; once tainted by sin, there is no way to restore holiness.

Sin damages our relationship with God.
Only redemption can repair
this broken relationship.

The theme of corruption is a crucial aspect of comprehending the Bible's teachings on sin and holiness. Some religions do not take sin and God's holiness seriously. They may not fully understand the extent to which sin impacts their relationship with God. The belief is that one can be accepted by God by striving to forsake sin. Therefore, striving to live a virtuous life and working diligently to overcome sin is considered the path to achieving holiness and reconciliation with God.

While it may be easy for the human conscience to accept such teachings, they should be criticized because they undermine the value and sanctity of God's holiness. God's desire for humanity to live in holiness required Him to send His only Son to die on the cross, as a sacrifice to restore humanity to its original state of holiness. This act was emphasized as the only way for humanity to be restored to a state of holiness.

Do not believe in teachings
that propose alternative paths to holiness,
such as the ability to prophesy
or attain righteousness through certain actions
like charity.

The coming of Christ was a pivotal moment in salvation in which humanity was granted a new holiness, made possible by Christ's own holiness. Christ's incarnation and sacrificial act on the cross are presented as the means by which humanity receives the precious gift of holiness, which is the perfection of human life.

If we lose our holiness,
we cannot regain it ourselves.
Only God can replace our uncleanness with holiness
through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Sanctification by Faith in Christ

Martin Luther expressed God's work as 'a very happy exchange,' reflecting the profound idea of joy and benefit for both humanity and Christ. This exchange is considered happy for Christ because of His immense love for us. God's willingness to take on our sins and die on the cross is a powerful expression of His great love.

The narrative of Jesus' sacrifice can be explained to a non-Christian by emphasizing that Jesus died for everyone, including them, and that his death offers salvation and the opportunity to live a holy life. By emphasizing the universal nature of Jesus' sacrifice, a clear connection is made between the individual and the transforming power of Christ's sacrifice.

Jesus' death on the cross
is a profound act that allows each person
to share in the holiness given by God,
the summit of human life.
It is not just a historical event.

This exchange is truly blissful because it brings salvation and the possibility of a holy life to those who believe.

The Joy of Holiness

The significance of Jesus' incarnation is emphasized in the context of demonstrating the joy and happiness of living in holiness. By embodying holiness in His life, He set an example for humanity. Although the word "holy" is used only four times in John's gospel, the narrative consistently emphasizes aspects related to holiness: eternal life, abundant life, abiding in God, and knowing God. These concepts, when aligned with the themes in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, reveal a deep connection to holiness.

Those who follow Christ's example
also share in His holiness.

In John's passages, the Father is referred to as holy. For instance, in John 17:11, Jesus addresses the Father as 'Holy Father.' Additionally, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in John 1:33 and 20:22, emphasizing the holiness of the third person of the Holy Trinity. The term 'holy' is used sparingly, but it is consistently reserved for the persons of the Holy Trinity: the Holy Father, Jesus as the Holy One of God (John 6:69), and the Holy Spirit.

Through His death, Jesus gave humanity a share in His divinity, offering everyone the opportunity to live in holiness. John's statement emphasizes the transformative nature of Christ's sacrifice.

We share in God's holiness
through Jesus' death, which brings us
true joy and the fullness of life.

It's important to know that Satan works tirelessly to lure humanity into sin, which ultimately leads to its destruction. Living in sin creates

the illusion of goodness and happiness, but the true reality is that humanity is in decline and destruction. In contrast, living in holiness brings unshakable joy despite the challenges we may face.

Living a Holy Life

In John 12, Jesus used a metaphor to explain that His death was necessary for the kingdom of God and the gift of life. He compared Himself to a seed that must die underground to become the source of life. The text emphasizes this principle:

“One can ultimately find life
by being willing to lose it.”

Christ's death reflects a sacrificial nature, demonstrating that surrendering one's desires and submitting to the transforming power of Christ leads to true life.

Living is not only about breathing,
but also about making
a sacred commitment to God,
which brings perfection to life.

“ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:15-16)

The analogy of the two springs of water in the city of Laodicea illustrates the importance of having a clear identity in serving God. Cold water serves a specific purpose, while hot water serves another. However, when the two streams of water mix, their effectiveness is diminished, resulting in lukewarm water. This image conveys the idea that a life

lived in neutrality, negating the call to serve God, can render one's purpose ineffective.

The Son of God became a sacrifice
so that we could be brought into the holiness of God.
He also became an example for
us to live a holy life.

The Laodiceans were urged to acknowledge their calling and avoid living in a way that contradicts it. Sin can nullify God's calling on our lives. The promise of salvation is given to enable us to live holy lives and reflect God's holiness.

We are invited to live in God's holiness, recognizing that the fulfillment of His promises can only be fully enjoyed through Christ. God desires His people to live in fullness, which is only found in His holiness.

Christ's sacrificial act on the cross
changes our status, making us holy.
This sets the stage for us to live a life of holiness.

God's commandments, delivered through His Word, provide guidance for living a holy life and enjoying His blessings. Renouncing sin, prioritizing love for God and others, and embodying obedience and sacrifice are key to a life closely associated with holiness. This message reminds us of God's great love and grace, emphasizing the abundance of grace He bestows on His people through holiness.





REASON 8

WHY GOD BECAME MAN



Christ Shares His Victory

Romans 16:17-20

*¹⁷ I urge you, brothers and sisters,
to watch out for those who cause divisions
and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.
Keep away from them.*

*¹⁸ For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.
By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*

*¹⁹ Everyone has heard about your obedience,
so I rejoice because of you;
but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

*²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

Liberal Christianity

Liberal Christianity, also known as liberal theology, emphasizes the humanity of Christ and does not see Jesus as God incarnate, but rather as a man with divinity. One self-proclaimed radical liberal Christian, when asked if he denied the divinity of Christ, replied, "I have never denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, just as I have never denied the divinity of any other being." This statement is deceptive because it simply means that Jesus was "not" God incarnate, but rather an ordinary man like any other man. This idea is blasphemous from a Christological point of view.

Liberal Christians generally do not grasp the truth that "Jesus is God who became man." The concept that Jesus is fully God and fully man is not shared by many liberals. They do not accept the idea that God took human form, and they also reject the idea that Jesus came into the world to reveal the kingdom of God, to show God's glory through miracles and the hope of a better world, and to bring salvation to mankind.

A Lowered View of the Bible

On the other hand, Christian evangelicals are not without fault. One challenge of our time is that the Christian community has traditionally fixated on the message of salvation and has largely neglected the broader purpose of why God became man. It is certainly good news that we are saved, but it is not the whole story. Salvation is more than just redemption.

Christ's death and resurrection
were not only to save people from something,
but also to restore people to something.

Sadly, modern Christians are not only shallow in their knowledge of the gospel, but most likely faithless. Many Christians look and act like everyone else in the world, with a little "God talk" peppered in. When asked why Jesus came, some might simply answer "to save us." But why did Christ emphasize the kingdom of God so prominently in coming to this world? This question should lead us to explore the broader and deeper purposes behind God's incarnation. In doing so, we might seek to proclaim and live out the whole story of God's plan for the world.

We've explored seven reasons, and now we'll look at the eighth reason why God became man. Those who grasp the depth of the Bible are those who truly understand the significance of the overarching themes discussed. As Christians, we should strive to better understand these concepts as they are presented to us through the teachings of the Bible.

The True Knowledge of God

In our pursuit of knowing God, we will encounter a God who is willing to reveal Himself. We will gain a deeper understanding of a life that is intricately intertwined with our existence, identity, and purpose in life. Seeking to know more about God not only leads to a richer spiritual life,

but also enhances our understanding of humanity and our relationship with Him. God is not an abstract concept, but a relevant, real, and inter-connected force in our lives - a point often misunderstood by many.

The God of the Bible is a God of purpose. He does not do things by chance or haphazardly. Some people demand proof of God's existence; they set conditions that limit the proof to worldly standards. Others seek proof in ways that are unusual for this world. Both of these approaches miss the essence of God, who exists beyond the boundaries of this world.

Our deeper knowledge of God
will make us better people.

As we approach our need to understand God, it is important that we do so in the context of God's larger purposes and to recognize His active role in the world He has created. We need to seek knowledge of God in a way that facilitates our growth into better people, people who understand our identity and calling. In practical terms, this means committing ourselves in advance to trusting God and doing His will whether we like it or not.

We must resist the tendency
to rely on our own understanding
and learn to integrate into our lives
every aspect of the understanding
that God has graciously given us.

The Incarnation of Christ and the Hope of this World

Why did Jesus perform many miracles during His earthly ministry? What do these supernatural acts mean for our lives today? The Bible indicates

that the miracles served as "signs" pointing to a greater reality. The reason Jesus performed miracles was to show us that the life we are currently living until the end of our life on earth is not the ultimate and perfect life.

Just when we think that this life is all there is, we should remember that God has greater plans than our present existence.

The supernatural works of Jesus emphasize
that God is not only focused on our present life,
but is orchestrating a life
that will fulfill and perfect our life here.

Notice the comparison between these two conditions:

1. The life to come is not identical with our present life, but serves to perfect our present existence.
2. The life to come is not a completely different life from the one we are living now, but retains a connection and continuation of our present life.

The Bible explicitly teaches these principles and emphasizes the importance of God's incarnation. It is a testament to His concern for what is happening in this world and His commitment to bring it to perfection. God's incarnation is a declaration that the events of this world are part of a larger plan that will reach its ultimate fulfillment. Why did God come to Earth if the only purpose of our existence in this world is to go to Heaven?

Works by scholars such as Louis Berkhof and Herman Bavinck have extensively discussed and envisioned the ultimate hope not only in Heaven, but in the "new Heavens and a new Earth." There are so many different views of eschatology. The hope of a "new Heaven and a new Earth" characterizes the eschatological hope of Reformed theology.

The hope of the end of the world is not in Heaven,
but in the new Heavens and the new Earth.

This understanding is rooted in the teachings of figures such as John Calvin, who emphasized the importance of order, peace, and the restoration of the world. It is crucial to grasp this eschatological perspective in order to gain a full understanding of the theological concept of Heaven.

The Restoration of the Earth

This world and everything in it is constantly drifting toward chaos. Calvin once said that when God speaks of "judgment" in the Old Testament, the underlying concept is that of "bringing order out of chaos." Therefore, the understanding of God's judgment is consistent with bringing order out of chaos. This idea reflects God's character as the One who transforms chaos into order.

The notion of Christians living forever in Heaven is so prevalent in our culture and churches that the call to repair the world may seem absurd. While it is true that we will leave this world when we die, the Biblical perspective shows that "we shall return." Throughout the Bible, the ultimate hope for humanity is life, not in Heaven, but on a renewed Earth.

God became man
because our lives on Earth matter.

If life on Earth is not important, why did God become a man? On the other hand, if life on Earth is important to Him, why is Christ now in Heaven? While the first view ignores the importance of the world and places undue emphasis on salvation and the afterlife, the second view

overemphasizes the importance of everything on Earth. These two approaches have yet to converge.

The World Belongs to God

What kind of God do we worship, and what kind of creation has He made? The God of the Bible is a God who hates evil, abhors sin, and Satan is His adversary. God created the Heavens and the Earth to be His cosmic sanctuary, where He sovereignly rules and dwells. It begins in Eden where God dwells among His people. It is His purpose that from Eden, His presence should be extended to the ends of the world. The entire creation is designed to house the glory of God.

God intends to dwell with a holy people in a holy land. God created Adam and Eve as kings to rule in His name and as priests to serve and mediate His glory. It seems clear that a war was going on in the Earth when God said, "Fill the earth and subdue it." This realization, therefore, implies that it was God's will and desire for Satan to enter the Garden of Eden and tempt Adam and Eve. Adam should have crushed the head of the evil serpent on the spot, instead of going along with it. But that did not happen.

From the beginning,
God placed man in the world in a war state.
A war to rule over the world and Satan.

It was God's intent for Adam to defeat Satan and to expand Eden to encompass the whole Earth. But, instead of protecting the garden and casting Satan out of it, Adam and Eve succumb to his temptation. And just like Satan, the original couple wanted to be "like God." The results of their sin were cataclysmic. For centuries Satan had been opposing God and His plans in the world.

In short, we are now at war with Satan. Satan is still active and has not yet been cast into Hell. It is important for Christians to be aware that spiritual warfare is going on around us. After all, how would we know if we were being attacked? God has commissioned us to fill the world with His glory and to defeat Satan. This requires conscious effort and consistent engagement in the spiritual warfare that is taking place.

As Christians, we are called to wage war against the enemy, whether we see ourselves as spiritual warriors or not. This enmity is one of unimaginable cruelty, which we ignore at our peril. A pastor once said, "If we don't realize that we are at war, our priorities will be confused, lacking in fighting spirit, and complacent. Those who assume a state of peace when they are on the brink of war are bound to lose. Such people will not take up arms because they think "all is well."

To win over Satan,
we must proclaim ourselves as God's and obey God
by living a life according to God's word.

Know Your Enemy

While the Bible doesn't spend much time talking about Satan, it does drop hints here and there about where he comes from. In the third chapter of Genesis, the serpent suddenly appears and becomes a major player in the drama of the garden. Of course, questions emerge: Why did the serpent get in? Why didn't God build a fence with little holes to keep the serpent out? Why not protect the garden with an electric current to shock and kill the serpent? Although the serpent is not specifically identified in the book of Genesis, he is identified as Satan in the last book of Scripture.

In his book, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, leading New Testament scholar Gregory K. Beale argues that God deliberately allowed the

serpent into the garden. Beale explains that Adam was the priest-king, and he was to faithfully obey God and defeat the satanic adversary. Instead of defeating the serpent, he was defeated by the serpent. And of course, we get Genesis 3:15, which looks forward to a time when One would do what Adam should have done to defeat the serpent.

The Battle in the Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden was created by God and it is where He placed Adam, whom He created for companionship. It was a paradise for Adam and Eve. All the beautiful creatures and creations were in one place. In Genesis 2, God said:

*"¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man,
"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;
¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
for when you eat from it you will certainly die."
(Genesis 2:16-17)*

In his deception, Satan caused Eve to question God's Word. She bought into the lie and things were changed forever. The serpent said:

*⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.
⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened,
and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
(Genesis 3:4-5)*

The serpent deceived them into believing that by eating the forbidden fruit they could gain knowledge similar to that of God. This led to disobedience and spiritual separation from God, symbolized by death. Adam and Eve chose to listen to the words of the serpent, whose credibility was uncertain, rather than God's clear and trustworthy instructions. It is important to remember that this pattern continues in human behavior to this day.

In the Garden, Adam should have affirmed God's command by speaking God's words to Satan that eating the forbidden fruit would result in death. By sticking to God's word, Adam would have been able to make Satan flee. This is the method that Jesus used to be victorious when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

The Battle Between Jesus and Satan

The Bible provides clear answers to what Adam did wrong and what Jesus did right. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to face the devil. He had to be tempted in all ways like Adam and Eve. Notice how Jesus fought Satan's words with God's words:

*³ The tempter came to him and said,
"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

*⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written:
'Man shall not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

*⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said,
"throw yourself down. For it is written:
"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

*⁷ Jesus answered him,
"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

*⁹ "All this I will give you," he said,
"if you will bow down and worship me."*

*¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"
(Matthew 4:3-10)*

In every temptation, Jesus overcame Satan just by quoting the Scriptures - no discussion and no argument. Unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus

was obedient to God and won against the devil by strictly following the Word of God. These are powerful words because they are the words of God. Jesus was willing to submit Himself, even to the point of death. Death could not hold Him because He had not sinned.

One of the purposes of God's incarnation
is to destroy Satan.

Since God gave man authority over the earth, only man could take it back from the devil. The incarnation of God is the only means by which Satan is finally defeated and made His footstool. It is one of the reasons Jesus had to come to earth as a human being. He came not only to save us, but also to destroy the power of Satan and to defeat the work of the enemy. The destruction of Satan's stronghold has been guaranteed through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection from the dead.

Christians will live a divided life
if our faith is reduced to a simple belief
that only promises entry into Heaven.

Taking cues from Romans 16:20, Paul says that God will crush Satan under the feet of Christians. The Word of God is clear about the power and authority of those who are born-again of the Spirit. 1 John 4:4 says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Who is in us? Christ Jesus took up residence in our hearts. The battle is already won, and our victory is secure.

Prepare for the Battle

So we are at war. In light of these words of truth, we must choose to be on God's side in this great battle between God and Satan. We are not

powerful in our own right or in our own strength. We can't fight on our own, but because Jesus has already fought for us on the Cross, we are filled with God's Holy Spirit and armed with God's words. Our obedience is what will ultimately bring victory in our spiritual battle.

Consequently, we need to know our enemy, and this can only be found through the study of God's Word. Most Christians do not understand spiritual warfare. Either they are unaware of the invisible battle, or if they recognize its importance, they do not focus on the central issue but are distracted by a secondary concern. The very first step in arming ourselves for the battle against the devils is to gird our loins with the truth. We must fill our minds with so much truth that lies have no place. Salvation in Jesus is not an end in itself, but rather a means for us to represent Him in every aspect of our lives. Reformed theology offers a comprehensive perspective that includes our relationship with God, His kingdom, and life in the present and future.

Jesus gives us salvation,
not just to go to Heaven,
but to represent Him on Earth

Our responsibility to represent God stems from the purpose inherent in our creation. God did not bring humanity into existence without a clear purpose or goal. The purpose of our creation is for us to live on Earth for God. This divine purpose includes being freed from the influence of Satan, breaking free from the power of evil, and escaping the bonds that seek to destroy life on Earth. We uproot the enemy's lies with the truth of God's Word, so the more we know it, the better we will be in the battle.

Satan has exerted his influence and power over this world. As a result, we now live in a world where we face a clash of values over who is in charge of this earth. If the basic strategy for Satan's spiritual assault is

spreading lies, then the most potent weapon we can wield in the battle against him is its opposite: spreading the truth.

The Invisible Battle

Adam and Eve were given the authority to rule the earth. But everything went terribly wrong on the first attempt. God tells Adam what he can and can't do. The consequences of overstepping His authority are also clear. Later, Cain, who has great knowledge and accomplishments, also lost in the battle. Despite his greatness, Cain was under the influence of Satan.

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan's "modus operandi" - that we exchange the truth of God for a lie - has not wavered or changed. And why would he change his strategy when it has served him so well for so long? What began in the garden all those years ago was a deception that has endured through the ages - a deception that still affects us today.

Satan will tell us anything
that negates and twist the Word of God.

Behind the visible world, there are plays and schemes in the invisible world that work to blind the multitudes. And the spiritual consequences of this blindness are devastating. Satan corrupts the order of life and wreaks havoc in the world that God created. God's good creation has been corrupted by his deception.

Today, simple truths are no longer clear to the multitudes. In fact, they are aggressively denied by hordes of otherwise intelligent people. Satan excels at distorting facts and truths that lead to the destruction of the world, humanity, and order. These lies are driven by a hidden power in an invisible place because Satan rules over mankind, and the earth is filled with people who serve Satan.

Aggressively, Satan, his fallen angels, and demons exercise acts of evil in myriad forms, manifesting in the physical and spiritual realms and in the recesses of the human mind. The dark and demonic forces manifest themselves in people, relationships, and even churches. Their seemingly subtle and benign forces are behind the breakdown of relationships between people, false religions, and all wrongdoing. Satan presents it as if everything has been destroyed by him, making it seem as if the only choices in life are to follow him or to die.

The good news is that we have the power and authority of Christ to resist the devil and his evil schemes. God has not given us a spirit of timidity or cowardice, but rather a spirit of power. We will not be easily intimidated by hardship, let alone seek our own ease and comfort.

God wants man to live on this Earth
to endure hardships, not to run away from it.
God wants man to fight against Satan,
and win over him.

The Faithfulness of God

In this situation of general delusion, God continues to teach us through His love, His presence, and the promise of victory that this world still belongs to Him. And how does He do this? By withholding a small portion of the goodness He reveals in abundance. As Michael Welker puts it, one of the most beautiful things that God holds back in this world is His love.

What was God's first promise? To fight and defeat Satan. Also, recall that God declared in the book of Isaiah 48:11, "For My sake, for My sake, I do this. How can I allow myself to be defamed? I will not give My glory to another." Therefore, the birth of Christ shocked the kingdom of Sa-

tan. As a man, Christ defeated Satan and brought him to nothing. God has fulfilled the ancient promise that He made in the Garden of Eden.

God became man
to confront and destroy Satan.

After the strongholds of Satan's earthly kingdom were broken and subdued, Jesus said to His disciples, "I see Satan being thrown to the earth like thunder." What He meant was that Satan's fall is as quick as a flash of lightning. Satan's power has been destroyed because man now has a new ruler.

Christ came as a weak baby. But in His weakness was the greatest power to defeat Satan. The great power that made Him walk obediently to the cross. Here we find the epic grandeur and greatness of Jesus Christ. He did not turn away from His calling. He did not seek another way. Christ came to fight with Satan and He won. Where Christ is, Satan cannot stand.

Our mission now is to fight Satan, to fight sin, and to strive to restore all that has been distorted by Satan. This world is not the place of Satan and his work. Wherever true Christians live, Satan and every demon must flee. The more we live in obedience to God, the more powerless Satan becomes.

God has already won the war through Jesus,
and we will not be overcome by the evil world
when we are in Him.

The Way of Christ

Through His sacrifice on the cross, Christ has triumphed over the world and won His elect. He establishes a new order and sets in motion the

fulfillment of God's original purpose. The renewal will spread to the four corners of the earth and subdue it. The victory is won. We can proclaim it and make it real to the enemy wherever we are and wherever we go!

Revelation 19 and 20 point to God's restoration of His creation. The chapter tells us about the thousand years – the entire period between Christ's first and second coming, which is now. In the power of Christ, Satan cannot stop the progress of the gospel. The gospel is unstoppable.

In the conflict
between God's authority and Satan's power,
the Church stands for God
and gives no ground to Satan.

In places where persecution is rampant, the church is there. There are dozens of examples in Church history where the blood of martyrs waters the seeds of the Church. It's true that the Church has faced oppression. Powerful empires have tried to destroy Christianity.

During the reign of Lenin, when Russia became communist, Christians were persecuted. The church became illegal and Christians were disenfranchised. But Christianity cannot be destroyed. Even in oppressive regimes that try to crush Christianity, the Gospel continues to take root and Christians continue to worship God even under threat.

Christ came to destroy Satan's power. He will liberate our hearts from fear and pull us out of the deceptive quicksand of comfort. We will see more of God's power displayed in our weaknesses for the world to see. We ask God to use our time and talent and enable us to demonstrate in the way we live that all brokenness and chaos is transformed into a reflection of God's character.

Does that mean we are going to fix the world with all the things we do before God comes a second time? No. Then what is the point of

fighting? We fight to proclaim the restoration that God wants us to do now in our context, whether it be our career, our family, or our community and so on—even though we will never fully restore it. Christ is the one who will accomplish that restoration when He returns the second time.

The victorious Christ is the head of the people
who are fighting Satan here on Earth,
and when He returns for His final victory,
He will share the victory with them.

We will close this chapter and come full circle to Paul's opening exhortation:

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.

¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The final outcome of the gospel will be seen in Christ's return. It is important, as believers, that we understand that the time of God's triumphant proclamation of victory is drawing near. This victory will be shared with us and demonstrated in us. *Soli Deo Gloria.*



Consisting of eight chapters, *Eight Reasons Why God Became Man* is a collection of a series of sermons preached by Rev. Jimmy Pardede from the pulpit of IREC Bandung in December 2017.

In this book, many of the illustrations have been edited to make the book a series of reflective notes. You can listen to the recording of the sermon, which is released together with this book.

EIGHT REASONS WHY GOD BECAME MAN

Reason 1 : God Desires to Live with His Creation

Reason 2 : The Throne for Christ

Reason 3 : The Light and the Life of God


Reason 4 : The Fullness of God Revealed in a Man


Reason 5 : Calling the Nations

Reason 6 : How Glorious to be Man

Reason 7 : Loved by God and Made Holy


Reason 8 : Christ Shares His Victory

 pemuda.stemi.id/reforming_heart/index

 pemuda.stemi.id

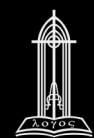
 siswa.stemi.id

 anak.stemi.id

 buletinpillar.org

 reformed21.tv

 bit.ly/PublicTheologyPodcast



GRII BANDUNG



GRII Bandung



@griibdg



www.griibandung.org



www.reforminglife.org