

WHY DID THE LORD COME ON EARTH?



Bird's Eye View of Lesson

From ancient times people knew that the Lord would come on earth. The wise men were watching for Him when His star appeared. He came to earth as a tiny baby named Jesus. His mother, Mary, was a virgin. His Father was God Himself. His mission was to fight the hells, which had grown so large and strong that people were no longer able to see God or go to heaven. Jesus learned the truths from the Word and—through temptations—used these to conquer the evil spirits. His work was finished when He rose three years later on Easter morning, becoming the Divine Human. The Lord God Jesus Christ is with all people and can come into our lives just as He came into the world—if we but ask Him to.

READINGS FROM THE WORD

Why did Jesus come to earth? How was He different from other people? What exactly did He do? Look for answers to these questions in today's lesson.

God's Promises to Come to Earth

From ancient times, prophecies in the Word taught people that God Himself would come to earth. The earliest of these prophecies is given when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Jehovah tells the serpent:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15).

The Seed of the woman is God Himself, who would come on earth to fight evil, which is pictured by the serpent. Other prophecies told people how this would happen and how good people would respond.

The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

[I]t will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation (Isaiah 25:9).



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The Lord's Coming

The Lord came into the world at a time of great spiritual darkness. He wants everyone to be free to choose between good and evil. But before His coming the hells had grown so powerful that this freedom was being threatened. The falsity of the hells was so great that even good people were having difficulty seeing what was good and true. So God Himself came on earth to fight the hells and restore human freedom. The Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born on earth through Mary, a virgin.

After...Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:18-21).

His Mission of Salvation

Jesus Christ was different from every human being who has ever been born—His Father was God Himself and His mother was a human being. Having a human mother allowed the hells to approach Jesus and also gave Him the opportunity to fight the hells and overcome them. The hells tempted His "human" (from Mary) and Jesus fought against them from His Divine love using His Divine truth to conquer. As He was growing up, He read the Word and understood all the many levels of truth within. As Jesus used these truths to resist and fight the hells, He made His human Divine, becoming the Divine Human. This work was finished when He rose from the tomb.

The Lord came into the world to remove hell from angels and people, and to glorify His Human. He brought hell under control and opened heaven so that from then on He could be present with people on earth, and save those who live according to His commandments. Consequently, the Lord could regenerate and save them, for those who are regenerated are saved. Without the Lord's coming no one could have been regenerated.

The other purpose for which the Lord came into the world—to glorify His Human—was because by this He became the Redeemer, Regenerator and Savior forever. It should not be believed that by the redemption carried out in the world all people from then were redeemed, but that the Lord is perpetually redeeming those who believe in Him and who obey His words (see *True Christian Religion* 579:1-3).

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God's Presence with Us

In one of the prophecies, it was said that the Savior would be called “Immanuel” which means “God with us”. While God has always been present with the human race, His coming into the world made it possible for the Lord to be with people in a different way. It also helped people have a clearer idea of who He is.

The one God who is invisible came into the world and assumed a Human, not only that He might redeem people, but also that He might become visible, that thereby conjunction with people might become possible (*True Christian Religion* 486:2).

Even though the Lord is with everyone, people do not always pay attention to Him as they go about their daily lives. When a person receives the Lord, He can come in a way that is similar to His coming on earth.

His first coming, which is called the dawn, is when the person receives Him, which he does when he acknowledges Him as his God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. From this time the person's understanding begins to be enlightened in spiritual things, and to advance into a more and more interior wisdom (*True Christian Religion* 766).

OPTIONAL READING

Jehovah God came down into the world as Divine truth, in order that He might work redemption. And redemption consisted in subjugating the hells, restoring the heavens to order, and after this establishing a church (*True Christian Religion* 86).

In people's temptations the Lord works a particular redemption, just as He wrought a total redemption when in the world. By conflicts and temptations in the world the Lord glorified His Human. When a person is in temptations, the Lord fights for him, conquers the evil spirits who are infesting him, and after temptation glorifies him (makes him spiritual). After His universal redemption the Lord reduced to order all things in heaven and in hell. With a person after temptation He does in like manner—He reduces to order all the things of heaven and the world that are in him. After redemption the Lord established a new church. In like manner He also establishes what pertains to the church in a person. After redemption the Lord bestowed peace on those who believed on Him (see John 14:27). In the same way after temptation He gives a person a sense of peace. From all this it is clear that the Lord is the Redeemer forever (see *True Christian Religion* 599).



FOCUS POINTS

Read the following statements and circle whether you think they are *True* or *False*.

- T F 1. God came to earth because Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- T F 2. Jesus came to earth as a tiny baby because it was the only way the hells could approach and attack Him.
- T F 3. Jesus was different from every other person who has been born.
- T F 4. Jesus started the Jewish faith when He came on earth.
- T F 5. If Jesus had not come on earth, the human race would have been destroyed.
- T F 6. God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are the same person.
- T F 7. If Jesus is Divine, then Mary is also Divine.
- T F 8. Jesus learned everything that is true from the Word.
- T F 9. Jesus experienced temptations when He was attacked by evil spirits.
- T F 10. The Christian church is named after Christ.
- T F 11. All people are saved because God came to earth.
- T F 12. The Lord is constantly saving people who believe in Him and obey Him.
- T F 13. God comes to me in my life when I receive Him, and acknowledge Him as my Savior.
- T F 14. I am saved if I believe in Jesus Christ.

Activity 1

JESUS' LIFE AND MY LIFE



Use the chart to note similarities and differences between Jesus' life and your life.

Variation for Groups: After filling in the chart, discuss similarities and differences.

Jesus	Similar or Different?	Me
Origins Jesus' parents were:		Origins My parents are:
Mission Jesus came on earth to:		Mission I am on earth to:
Learning Jesus learned the truth by:		Learning I learn the truth by:
Overcoming To fight evil, Jesus:		Overcoming To fight evil, I:
Fruits By overcoming evil, Jesus:		Fruits By overcoming evil, I:



OUR REDEEMER AND SAVIOR

Activity 2

Jehovah Himself came into the world, was born a Man,
and became the Redeemer and Savior of all (*Apocalypse Revealed* 281).

Christian friends may ask “Are you saved?” or “Do you accept Jesus as your Savior?” What do they mean? And what does the New Church teach about salvation?

A dictionary definition of salvation is “saving or rescuing someone.” Many Christians think of salvation as Jesus Christ delivering people from sin through His death on the cross. The New Church has a different way of looking at it. The Heavenly Doctrine differentiates between redemption and salvation.

Redemption

The Lord came on earth because the human race had become so evil that even good people were held prisoner by hell and could not get to heaven. It was as if they were slaves being held captive in a pit with no way out. By coming into the world, Jesus fought hell and conquered it so that its power was contained. By conquering hell, Jesus re-opened the way to heaven. This was like providing the people in the pit with a ladder, so they could climb out of the pit free if they chose to leave. The Lord calls this act redemption.

Salvation

We are saved when we choose to climb up the ladder that the Lord provided through His redemption. If we choose to follow Him by rejecting evil and obeying His commandments, we will be ascending toward heaven and our salvation.

The New Church teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ restored freedom through His battles with the hells—including the passion of the cross—but that we are only saved if we do the work of repentance and try to live by the Word of the Lord. The Lord fights for us and removes our sins as we work on our spiritual development.

Discussion Ideas

1. Explain the difference between redemption and salvation
2. Did Jesus redeem us, save us, or redeem and save us through His life in the world?
3. How might you answer someone who asks “Are you are saved?”
4. How might you answer the question: “Do you accept Jesus as your personal Savior?”

The Lord saved people and angels through redemption and the glorification of His Human. The work of redemption was a combat against the hells, a subjugation of the hells, and a restoration of order in the heavens. But glorification is the uniting of the Lord’s Human with the Divine of His Father (see *True Christian Religion* 126).

Activity 3

GOD WITH US



*“Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
and shall call His name Immanuel.”
(Isaiah 7:14).*

In the gospel of Matthew, we are told that the Lord’s birth is the fulfillment of this prophecy and that the name “Immanuel” means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). From the beginning, God has been with the human race, providing for us in innumerable ways. But with His coming into the world, God made it possible for us to have a more direct connection with Him. Let’s reflect on ways that we can sense the Lord’s presence in our lives.

One key way that we can feel the Lord’s presence is by reading the Word, because it is God Himself who is speaking to us there. Everything in the written Word can tell us something about the Lord, helping us see Him in our mind’s eye and feel His presence.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Why was the name “Immanuel” to be given to the virgin Mary’s baby?
2. How do we know that the Lord is with us—with every one of us?
3. Think about times when you sense the Lord’s presence with you. Then brainstorm a list of situations which may be conducive to feeling the Lord’s presence in your life.
4. How can the Word help us see the Lord Jesus Christ and feel His presence in our lives?
5. What are some actions you could take to become more aware of His presence?

To go to the Lord and approach Him as God of heaven and earth
brings His presence, and to live according to His precepts
brings about conjunction (*Conjugal Love* 341).

TAKING IT HOME



Here are a variety of activities that can help you bring this lesson into your life.

Ideas for Journal Entries

Use one of these journal ideas to help you think about the Lord God Jesus Christ.

- ◆ Many people met Jesus while He lived on earth. Some asked Him questions about who He was, others asked for healing, and some treated Him badly. If you could go back in time and meet Jesus, what would you ask Him?
- ◆ Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption and His glorification while He was in the world. How does this change His relationship to us?

For Reflection

- ◆ How do you visualize the Lord? Do you see Him as Jesus Christ (as He was here on earth) or as the Lord God Jesus Christ in heaven? Has today's lesson changed how you visualize Him?
- ◆ How does understanding His mission on earth help you live the life of a Christian?

Quote Card

Cut out this quote card and put it where you will see it each day.

The Lord God Jesus Christ

“I am the way, the truth and the life.”
(John 14:6)

**“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me
shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”**
(John 8:12)

**The Lord is present with every person,
urging and pressing to be received....
[A person receives Him] when he acknowledges Him
as his God, Creator, Redeemer and Savior.**
True Christian Religion 766

Further Reading

THE LORD'S MOST IMPORTANT WORK ON EARTH

Further Reading by the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

What do you think was the most important work that the Lord Jesus Christ did while he was in the world? His miracles? Feeding thousands with a little bread, healing incurable diseases, actually bringing men back to life again after they had died? Perhaps you would say that the most important thing He did was teaching truth to His disciples, and others, and thus starting a new church on earth that we call the "Christian Church." Another thing He did was hidden from men's eyes while He did it. That was fighting against the spirits of hell and conquering them so that men were protected from their evil power. If the Lord had not conquered these spirits, they would have destroyed us all.

All of these things were wonderful and important works which the Lord accomplished during the short span of His life on earth, from the time He was born in Bethlehem, to the day that we now call Easter Sunday when He rose from the sepulchre where He had been buried after His crucifixion. But, wonderful as the Lord's miracles were, and His teachings, and His victory over the power of evil, there is something more wonderful and important than all of these things.

The Glorification

The Lord called His most important accomplishment the "Glorification." What is the Glorification? Let us look first at the word itself. The first part of it is the same as the word, "glory." We are familiar with that word. Sometimes we use it to describe what has been made very beautiful, the glory of a sunrise, or sunset: that a "glorious" sight, we say. It is beautiful, or glorious, because the light of the sun has made the sky and the clouds, and the landscape bright and colorful.

We also use the word glory to describe times when our life has been made especially bright and happy, as when our team has won a victory and "gains all the glory." The glory here is the great honor and admiration won by doing some thing important and valuable. We can only accomplish what is important and valuable when we receive the knowledge and strength to do it from the Lord. Just as there would be no glory in the sunrise apart from the light of the sun which gives the glory to the sky, so there would be no glory in a person's life apart from the knowledge and strength that a person receives from the Lord to do important and valuable work.

The word "glorification" means to "make something have glory." It means the getting of glory. Now what does this have to do with the Lord? Why is the Glorification the most important accomplishment of the Lord's life on earth?

To answer this, we must know what the Lord glorified. What did He make more beautiful? What did He do that would bring great honor and admiration? We are taught in the New Church that the Lord glorified His Human.

Have you ever realized that there is a connection between the Lord's birth and His rising from the sepulcher? That the work that the Lord began at His birth into the world, at Christmas time was completed 33 years later when He rose from the tomb at Easter time?

Jesus Rose from the Tomb with His Body

What was the remarkable thing about Easter Sunday? When the women came to the tomb and looked for the Lord's dead body it was not there! He had risen from the tomb with His body. It was not in the grave where they expected to find it, where any other man's body would remain until it would gradually become dust.

At His birth, the Lord came into the world in a body. This body was from Mary, his mother, just like our bodies were from our mothers. The Lord was born so that He could be in this world just as we are in the world. During the years the Lord lived on the earth in the body from Mary, He grew, and grew wise. He learned the truth in the Word. As the Lord learned from the Word He built up something in Himself that was more important than His body. It was His mind. The Writings of the New Church teach us this by saying that while the Lord was in the world He "put on a Human." This may be confusing to us. He was a human being when He was born. We all are. But remember, if we never learn anything, we remain more ignorant than animals. To become a real human being, we must acquire knowledge and the ability to think and recognize the truth. As we do this we can be said to be putting on a "human form." Our minds are becoming human minds, superior to animal minds.

The Human of the Lord, or the Human form that the Lord took on while on earth, was infinitely superior to the human qualities that we can build up. He learned all the truth there is to know, and learned it perfectly. We can learn *only* a little.

If we understand now what the Lord's Human was, when He was on earth, we are ready to understand what is meant by the "Glorification of the Human." The Human of the Lord was not the body He had from Mary, but all the truth He was able to learn by means of His earthly body. This is what the Lord glorified.

During the whole of the Lord's life, He made that truth glorious. He made it to be such that we can admire and honor it, and give it glory.

The glory of the sunrise is from the light of the sun. The glory of the Lord's Human is from the Divine life that is in Him. Deep within the Lord's soul is the Infinite love that is the origin of all life. The Glorification was making the Human of the Lord perfect and Divine in itself by adding or joining the love that He had with the truth of His Human.

This may be hard for you to understand, but it is the most important work that the Lord ever did. He made His Human to be Divine, The Lord, on earth, was joined with and became one with, and now is the God of heaven and earth.

His Work Was Finished

On Easter, when He rose from the tomb, His work was finished. He was perfected, glorified. Nothing remained of the body He had from Mary. It could not be found in the tomb. But the glorified body, the Divine Human, as it is called in the Writings, was risen

from the tomb. So it is that Mary and the disciples saw the Lord alive. So it is that the Lord now had “all power in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:8). He could now do all the miracles He had ever done before, He could teach all the truths He had ever taught before, and He could keep all evil under His control, forever.

In the New Church we worship the Lord in His Glorified Human. We know Him and can love Him even more perfectly than His disciples did. He, and He alone, is God almighty, because He put on a Human in the world and glorified it.

Text: Matthew 28