

“Christ’s Why & Who of Woe To You!”

Matthew 11:20-24

May 10, 2026

INTRO: Why did Jesus come into humanity?

31 Biblical Reasons Why Jesus Came

1. **To Do the Will of the Father** (John 6:38)
2. **To Save Sinners** (1 Timothy 1:15)
3. **To Bring Light to a Dark World** (John 12:46)
4. **To Be Made Like His People** (Hebrews 2:17)
5. **To Bear Witness to the Truth** (John 18:37)
6. **To Destroy the Devil and His Works** (1 John 3:8)
7. **To Give Eternal Life** (John 6:51)
8. **To Receive Worship** (Matthew 2:11)
9. **To Bring Great Joy** (Luke 2:10)
10. **To Demonstrate True Humility** (Philippians 2:5-8)
11. **To Preach the Gospel** (Luke 4:43)
12. **To Bring Judgment** (John 9:39)
13. **To Give His Life as a Ransom for Many** (Mark 10:45)
14. **To Fulfill the Law and Prophets** (Matthew 5:17)
15. **To Reveal God’s Love for Sinners** (John 3:16)
16. **To Call Sinners to Repentance** (Mark 2:17)
17. **To Die** (John 12:27)
18. **To Seek and Save the Lost** (Luke 19:10)
19. **To Serve** (Mark 10:45)
20. **To Bring Peace** (Ephesians 2:14-18)
21. **To Bring a Sword**—referring to the division the truth causes (Mt. 10:34)
22. **To Bind Up Broken Hearts** (Isaiah 61:1)
23. **To Give Us the Spirit of Adoption** (Galatians 4:4-6)
24. **To Make Us Partakers of the Divine Nature** (2 Peter 1:4)
25. **To Reign as King** (Isaiah 9:6-7)
26. **To Restore Human Nature to Holiness** (Luke 1:35)
27. **To Be a Merciful and Faithful High Priest** (Hebrews 2:17)
28. **To Be the Second and Greater Adam** (Romans 5:14-15)
29. **To Satisfy Our Deepest Thirst** (John 4:13-14)
30. **To Be Loved by God’s Children** (John 8:42)
31. **To Reveal God’s Glory** (John 1:14)

Now... BUT... WHY DID JESUS DO MIRACLES?

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Gospel of Matthew & The Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Review ch.1-4... 5-7... 8-9... ch.10's sermon...
- Jesus has gone back out & sent His followers out.
- Ch.11 is teaching us & we want to BE like Christ...
- *"Woe to you!"* & *"Come to Me"* = 2 quotes & sermons

BIG IDEA:

Go, tell, & reprimand this generation, (personally, collectively, & missionally), for rejecting the biblical requirements of counter-cultural **repentance**.

PREVIEW:

1. God's **Wow!**
2. God's **Woe!**
3. God's **Who!**
4. God's **Why!**
5. God's **Wow!**

TEXT:

Matthew 11:20-24

20 Then He began to reprimand/denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. **21** “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that occurred in you had occurred in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **22** Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on *the* day of judgment than for you. **23** And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! For if the miracles that occurred in you had occurred in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. **24** Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on *the* day of judgment, than for you.”

I. God's WOW!

“Then...”

When is this then?

- Contextual **time-stamp**
 - Contextual **connector**
 - Contextual **framework**
- Jesus is about to build on everything prior...
- Wow! to John the Baptist... **but Woe! to you.**

Christ's "**Woe!**"
is built on His foundation of WOW!

To biblically fear God is to realize
His "**Woe!**" is itself an eternal WOW!

A. Past WOW!

- a. Genesis 1 & 3 + John 1 & 3 + Matthew 1-4
- b. Christ's Messianic & Missional discourses
- c. Jesus Christ on John The Baptist...

B. Present WOW!

- a. Jesus has just completed His ch.10 teaching.
- b. His sent-ones are now out discipling...
 - i. **GO-ING... DO-ING... & BE-ING**
 - 1. **TELLING** what they have **HEARD**
 - 2. **TELLING** what they have **SEEN**
 - ii. **BE-ING (WITNESSES)**
 - 1. Miraculously God-glorifying,
 - 2. Christ-like,
 - 3. Works-in-progress!
- c. Christ is literally:
 - i. *GO-ing*
 - ii. **TEACHING**
 - iii. **PREACHING**
 - iv. **REPRIMANDING**
 - v. **DISCIPLING**

C. Future WOW! (*immediate, unfolding, & eternal*)

II. God's **WOE!** (DEFINE, DESCRIBE, & DEPLOY)

20Then ***He began to reprimand/denounce...***

- a. What is God's "**reprimand/denouncing**"?
 - i. Divine **rebuke** (strong/stern correction)
 - ii. **BEGINS WITH A HOLY STANDARD**
 - iii. **Truth IN Love** Here, it's a divine "**Woe!**"
 - iv. Confrontational & Authoritative
 - v. **CALLS FOR/CREATES CONVICTION**
 - vi. Righteousness is reprimand's bullseye
 - vii. Restoration is God's reprimand goal.
 - viii. **Extreme & eternal EXHORTATION**
 - ix. **Woe is a word of wrathful WARNING!**
 - x. God's glory is its biblical mission!

- b. What God's "**Woe!**" IS:
 - i. A definitive declaration of God's divine displeasure... potentially leading to eternal destruction!

 - ii. **A prophetic announcement & asserting of Christ's Almighty authority.**

 - iii. A compound declaration representing:
 1. **Coming** circumstantial certainty...
 2. **Consequences** for sinful corruption
 3. **Compassion** for said sinners...

c. What God's "**Woe!**" is NOT:

- i. An over-reaction
- ii. An empty threat
- iii. **UNAVOIDABLE!**

d. Who God's "**Woe**" is **FOR**:

1. 100% of ALL non-biblical Christians!
2. The reprimanded yet unrepentant...
3. The unredeemed religious & ritualistic.
4. The privileged but unpersuaded...
5. Those graced but not willing to glorify.
6. All who think they can haggle with God.
7. Sin-filled hearers who are not heeders.
8. Empty talkers who are not real walkers
9. Deceitful wolves in sheep's clothing...
10. *Sincere goats who think they are sheep!*

e. Who God's "**Woe**" is NOT for:

1. 100%... ALL truly, biblical Christians.
2. Passionate but imperfect Christians.
3. Stumblers who have ups & downs...
4. Doubters who comeback from denial.
5. *Miraculous, Christ-like, works in progress!*

B. DEPLOY:

- a. **Christ + true Christ-likeness missionally deploy!**
 - i. ***Come... let us fulfill all righteousness...***
 - ii. ***Follow Me & I will make you fishers of men***
 - iii. ***I am sending you out as sheep into wolves***

- b. **GO & TELL WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD & SEEN**
 - i. *He's the Lamb of God who takes away sin...*
 - ii. *He is Emmanuel, God-with-us.*
 - iii. *He is LORD!*

c. *Any & ALL other opinions are oppressive lies!*

III. God's WHO!

20Then He began to reprimand...

*the cities in which most of His miracles were done...
(those most blessed & privileged by God's miraculous grace...
To be perfectly clear here, in our context, it's the churchy-folks)*

21 *“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if
the miracles that occurred in you had occurred in
Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in
sackcloth and ashes. 22Nevertheless I say to you, it will
be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of
judgment than for you. 23And you, Capernaum, will
not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be
brought down to Hades! For if the miracles that
occurred in you had occurred in Sodom, it would have
remained to this day. 24Nevertheless I say to you that
it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on
the day of judgment, than for you.”*

“the cities in which most of His miracles were done”

- ***“the cities”*** = specific geography & “peoples”
- ***“in which most”*** = literal “majority” (vs. totality)
- ***“His miracles”***
 - ***His*** = Christ’s specific & biblically affirmed...
 - ***Miracles*** = God’s supernatural endeavors...
- ***“were done”*** = past tense accomplishments

CAUTION: Do not lose the forest in the trees...

- The **big picture** here is teaching/preaching focus!
- Don’t chase the details into an exegetical ditch...
- What do the comparisons all have in common?
- See the 3 cities & corresponding consequences...
 - **Chorazin** / Good **Tyre** / Bad
 - **Bethsaida** / Better **Sidon** / Worse
 - **Capernaum** / Best **Sodom** / Worst

- A. **3 received Christ’s amazing, miraculous graces.**
- B. 1st 3 received **MOST** of Christ’s miraculous graces.
- C. Their parallel cities are all damned by implication.
- D. 1st 3 should have changed & the 2nd 3 would have!
- E. **Jesus knows WHO are His & WHO are NOT His!**

IV. God’s **WHY!**

...because they did not repent.

“because”

- PURPOSE marker & introduction
- The following gives purpose to the precedent...
- God’s “so that,” “for,” or “because” = grace gold!
 - God points out His purpose(s)
 - God explains, in part, His plan(s)
 - God answers many potential “Why?” Q’s

“they did not repent”

- ***“they”*** = residents of the identified cities
- ***“did not”*** = disobeying *“not,”* the sin of omission
- ***“repent”***
 - DEFINE:
 - Head = true & biblically defined
 - Heart = confession & turning required
 - Hands = real fruit reveals the true root
 - DESCRIBE:
 - Holistically turning from sin to God
 - Repentance is the middle of 3 links...
 - Confession
 - Repentance
 - Restoration
 - DEPLOY:
 - Repentance is an ACTION > “feeling”
 - Repentance cannot precede confession
 - Repentance should seek for restoration
 - Repentance without deployment is a lie
 - DISOBEY:
 - NOT repenting IS sinning against God.
 - NOT repenting IS disobeying God.
 - NO obeying = NO loving = NO restoring.

- DENY & DEFY:
 - No Gospel repentance = Denying Christ.
 - No Gospel repentance = Defying Christ.
 - No Christ as LORD = eternal damnation!

➤ So... **Why did Jesus do miracles?**

- **1). Glorify God!** – Father, Son, & Holy Spirit
- **2).** Missionally lead sinners to biblically

repent

- **3). Lead repentant sinners unto salvation**

➤ **7 ESSENTIALS OF BIBLICAL REPENTANCE**

- Chosen
- Called
- Changed
- Confess
- Change
- Come
- Commit

- **CHOSEN** (sovereign GRACE)
 - Ephesians 2:1-10 & 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

- **CALLED** (divine providence) **Mk 1:15**

- **CHANGED** (miraculously) **John 6:44**

- **CONFESS** (Messiah – *“Jesus IS LORD!”*)
 - Contrast John the Baptist vs. Judas
 - Contrast Stephen vs. Rich Young Ruler
 - Contrast key tax-collectors vs. bad pharisees
 - Contrast small “c” & capital “C” “c/Church”
 - Sheep vs. Goats & Wheat vs. Weeds
 - Owners vs. Hirelings
 - True Teachers vs. False Teachers
 - Biblical Christ vs. Cultural/Heretical 1’s
 - Matthew 10 & Romans 10:9

- **CHANGE** (missionally) **Luke 14:27**

- **COME** (1 Way) **Jn 14:6 & Mt 7:13-14**
 - Ceasing the sin is not enough, coming to Christ is required!

- **COMMIT** (only enduring finishers WIN)
 - Repenting
 - Refining
 - Reproducing

V. God’s **WOW!**

5 CRITICAL & BIBLICAL-WORLDVIEW TRUTHS:

1.

Most miracles are meant & sent for us to repent!

2.

Biblical repentance & faithful believing are
“**related**” &/or **rejected** gifts from God.

3.

The eternal Day of Judgment IS coming!

4.

Jesus knows what kind of divine influence will
lead to the repentance that is needed for
salvation... AND... He decides who He will
grace/give it to... and who He will not.

(1st Tim. 2:1-4; 2nd Tim. 2:24-26; Eph. 2:1-10; 2 Cor. 5:17-21 & 5 the Solas)

5.

There will be different degrees of punishment
handed down on Judgment Day
& in hell's eternal torment.

*(NOTE: **the same principle, in a positive way, will be true
in heaven with God's rewards**).*

REVIEW: How do/will you respond to God's reprimand(s)?

What will happen if/when YOUR shallow-Sunday-school Jesus... or your culturally-perverted Jesus, or your delusional marketing-driven, attraction-model-church Jesus... or your Jehovah Witness/Mormon/Muslim... or legalistic, Pharisee Jesus is exposed & revealed to be a counterfeit Jesus?

What will happen if/when you hear & are called to heed the One true, biblical, missional Jesus – The Creator Christ... complete with His crystal-clear call, command, commission... His convictions, confrontations, & corrections... what then?

What will happen if/when His Word, will, & ways come to you accompanied by hatred, slander, persecution... from church-people, government authorities, your own family members... and culture at large?

What will happen if/when each one of those groups literally come by force to hand you over to be arrested, tortured, or even put to death? What then?

Let's take it up (or down) a notch, depending on where your perspective & values lie.

What will you do if/when you realize you are going to a bad church for bad reasons... OR you are going to a bad church for good reasons... OR you are going to a good church for bad reasons... OR you are going to & are BE-ing The good Church for good reasons?

What are you thinking & doing right now???

How have you, are you, & will you respond to a biblically sovereign LORD, Jesus... The Christ... The Almighty Creator?

- *If you are doubting right now, or if you will/would doubt in the future, that's sin. That's NOT ok. But if you, by grace thru faith, will come to your senses and have a heart that is ultimately committed to a no-matter-what, loving obedience to Christ, you're on the Rock & you'll be ok. **You are in a stumble.***

- BUT... **WOE TO YOU... ETERNALLY**, if your doubt becomes denial & you try to redefine your cultural religiosity & Gospel-defying relationship to Christ as some acceptable perversion of **“CHEAP GRACE.”**

- **The more you understand the wrongness in your self-righteousness, the louder God's WOE! should be ringing in your ears... *because Jesus said: to those whom much has been given, much will be expected/demanded.* – Luke 12:48**

- Now, where's the “good news” in all this?
 - **God's Truth in love is ALWAYS good news.**
 - Understanding is a key step in experiencing biblical repentance.
 - Biblical repentance marks the missional start of the Christian's eternal journey to & with Christ!

CLOSE: TIMELESS TAKE-AWAYS...

THE BIBLICAL JESUS IS...

Creator Christ & Sovereign LORD!
(If He's not your LORD... He's not your Savior.)

JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING...

BE ready! Repent. Believe. Obey & Repeat!
(We're all one heartbeat away from eternal judgment.)

DIVINE MIRACLES...

are sent & meant for us to repent!
(Experiencing miracles does not save your soul.)

SOVEREIGN GRACE & HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

The more you know, the more you owe!
(Our responsibility mirrors our grace.)

Grace + Privilege + Responsibility = Ambassador

THE STAKES ARE PERPETUAL & ETERNAL...

Hell will forever be going from bad to worse!
(Repentance rejectors will realize the worst of hell.)

PRAYER

STUDY NOTES:

◀ Matthew 11:20 ▶

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
5119 [e]	Τότε Tote	Then	Adv
756 [e]	ἤρξατο ērxato	He began	V-AIM-3S
3679 [e]	ὀνειδίζειν oneidizein	to denounce	V-PNA
3588 [e]	τὰς tas	the	Art-AFP
4172 [e]	πόλεις poleis	cities	N-AFP
1722 [e]	ἐν en	in	Prep
3739 [e]	αἷς hais	which	RelPro-DFP
1096 [e]	ἐγένοντο egenonto	had taken place	V-AIM-3P
3588 [e]	αἱ hai	the	Art-NFP
4118 [e]	πλεῖσται pleistai	most	Adj-NFP-S

1411 [e]	δυνάμεις dynameis	miracles	N-NFP
846 [e]	αὐτοῦ, autou	of Him,	PPro-GM3S
3754 [e]	ὅτι hoti	because	Conj
3756 [e]	οὐ ou	not	Adv
3340 [e]	μετενόησαν· metenoēsan	they repented.	V-AIA-3P

3679. oneidizó

Lexical Summary

oneidizó: To reproach, revile, insult, or upbraid.

Original Word: ὀνειδίζω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: oneidizó

Pronunciation: o-ni-did'-zo

Phonetic Spelling: (on-i-did'-zo)

KJV: cast in teeth, (suffer) reproach, revile, upbraid

NASB: insult, insulting, reproached, denounce, reproach, reviled

Word Origin: [from [G3681 \(ὄνειδος - disgrace\)](#)]

1. to defame, i.e. rail at, chide, taunt, deride

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

defame, reproach, revile

From [oneidos](#); to defame, i.e. Rail at, chide, taunt -- cast in teeth, (suffer) reproach, revile, upbraid.

see GREEK [oneidos](#)

HELPS Word-studies

3679 *oneidízō* (from a primitive root meaning "to upbraid, revile, like in showing one's teeth," K. Wuest) – properly, to *disgrace* (*insult*), reproach; mock (curse); insult, *cast blame* (create shame) – viewing someone (something) as *culpably guilty* and therefore *deserving* punishment. This can be based on *fact* (Mt 11:20), or *incorrect assumptions* (Mt 5:11).

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [oneidos](#)

Definition

to reproach

NASB Translation

denounce (1), insult (2), insulting (2), reproach (1), reproached (2), reviled (1).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 3679: ὀνειδίζω

ὀνειδίζω; imperfect ὀνειδίζον; 1 aorist ὀνειδίσα; present passive ὀνειδίζομαι; (ὀνειδος, which see); from Homer down; the Sept. especially for עָרַב; **to reproach, upbraid, revile**; (on its construction cf. Winer's Grammar, § 32, 1 b. β.; Buttmann, § 133, 9): of deserved reproach, **τινα**, followed by ὅτι, [Matthew 11:20](#); τί (the fault) **τίνος**, followed by ὅτι, [Mark 16:14](#). of unjust reproach, **to revile**: **τινα**, [Matthew 5:11](#); [Mark 15:32](#); Luke vt. 22; [Romans 15:3](#) from [Psalm 68:10](#) (); passive [1 Peter 4:14](#); followed by ὅτι, [1 Timothy 4:10](#) R G Tr marginal reading WH marginal reading; **τό αὐτό ὀνειδίζον αὐτόν** (Rec. αὐτῶ), [Matthew 27:44](#) (see αὐτός, III. 1). **to upbraid, cast** (favours received) **in one's teeth**: absolutely [James 1:5](#); **μετά τό δοῦναι μή ὀνειδίξει**, Sir. 41:22, cf. 20:14; **τίνι σωτηρίαν**, deliverance obtained by us for one, Polybius 9, 31, 4.

Topical Lexicon

Overview

Strong's Greek 3679 describes **the verbal act of casting reproach, reviling, or upbraiding**. Across its **nine New Testament occurrences** the term frames a moral confrontation: fallen humanity hurls scorn at God and His people, while the Lord may sternly expose unbelief yet never with the petty spirit that marks human derision.

Each setting draws attention to faith, repentance, and the cost of discipleship.

Old Testament Background

Reproach is a recurring motif in the Psalms (“The insults of those who insult You have fallen on me,” [Psalm 69:9](#)) and the Prophets ([Isaiah 51:7](#), [Jeremiah 15:15](#)). The New Testament writers treat these earlier cries as prophetic foreshadowings of Messiah’s experience ([Romans 15:3](#)), demonstrating a unified biblical storyline in which the righteous suffer contempt yet are ultimately vindicated.

Reproach Directed at Christ

1. By criminals and bystanders at the cross

- [Matthew 27:44](#); [Mark 15:32](#) – Even the condemned criminals “heaped insults on Him,” revealing the depth of human hostility toward divine grace. Their mockery fulfills [Psalm 22:7-8](#) and underscores the substitutionary nature of the crucifixion: the Holy One absorbs the shame of sinners.

2. By unrepentant cities and unbelieving disciples

- [Matthew 11:20](#) – Jesus “began to denounce the cities” that had witnessed miracles yet refused to repent, showing that His rebuke aims at awakening rather than humiliating.
- [Mark 16:14](#) – He “rebuked them for their unbelief” after the resurrection. The risen Lord’s reproach is restorative, preparing the apostles for mission.

REPROACH TOWARD DISCIPLES AND PROPHETS

1. PROMISE IN THE BEATITUDES

- **MATTHEW 5:11 “BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU... BECAUSE OF ME.”**
- **LUKE 6:22 “BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE HATE YOU... EXCLUDE YOU AND INSULT YOU... ON ACCOUNT OF THE SON OF MAN.”**

JESUS NORMALIZES REPROACH AS A BADGE OF FIDELITY, COUPLING IT WITH ESCHATOLOGICAL REWARD.

2. APOSTOLIC TEACHING

- **1 PETER 4:14 “IF YOU ARE INSULTED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST, YOU ARE BLESSED, FOR THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS ON YOU.”**

PETER PRESENTS REPROACH AS EVIDENCE OF THE BELIEVER’S UNION WITH CHRIST AND THE INDWELLING SPIRIT, TRANSFORMING SHAME INTO HONOR.

Divine Generosity Versus Human Reproach

- **James 1:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”**

God’s giving is the antithesis of human reproach. While people often shame those who ask, the Father welcomes petitioners. This verse assures believers that the Lord never mocks sincere seekers, encouraging bold prayer.

Christ’s Endurance and the Church’s Calling

- **Romans 15:3 “For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me.’”**

Paul cites **Psalms 69** to present Christ as the model of self-denial for the sake of others. The church, following her Lord, is summoned to bear reproach in pursuit of unity and love.

Pastoral Application

1. Expect opposition. Faithfulness to the gospel will attract scorn; foreknowledge prevents disillusionment.
2. Respond with blessing ([1 Peter 3:9](#)). Reproach becomes a platform for witness when met with grace.
3. Seek wisdom without fear ([James 1:5](#)). The Lord's open-handed generosity silences any lingering dread of divine reproach.
4. Fix hope on vindication. The beatitudes tie present insult to future reward, anchoring endurance in the coming kingdom.

Eschatological Reversal

Scripture promises that the reproach of God's people will be removed ([Isaiah 25:8](#); [Revelation 21:4](#)). The temporary shame believers endure links them to Christ's sufferings; the glory to follow will forever eclipse the insults of this age.

Related Concepts

- Shame and honor dynamics
- Persecution for righteousness
- Divine rebuke versus human derision
- Participation in Christ's sufferings
- Vindication at the resurrection

John Calvin's Commentary:

[Matthew 11:20-24](#)

[Matthew 11:20-24](#)

[Luke 10:13-16](#)

20. Then he began to upbraid the cities, in which most of his mighty works were done, because they had not repented of crimes: 21. Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented of their crimes long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22. But I say to you, It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon [36] in the day of judgment than for you. 23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted even to heaven shall be cast down even to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24. But I say to you, That it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom [37] in the day of judgment than for thee.

13. Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida! for if the might works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have long ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. [38] 15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted even to heaven, shall be cast down even to hell. 16. **He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.**

[Matthew 11:20](#). Then he began to upbraid. **Luke states the time when, and the reason why, Christ uttered such invectives against those cities. It was while he was sending the disciples away into various parts of Judea, to proclaim, as they passed along, that the kingdom of God was at hand.**

Reflecting on the ingratitude of those among whom he had long discharged the office of a prophet, and performed many wonderful works, without any good result, he broke out into these words, announcing that the time was now come, when he should depart to other cities, having learned, by experience, that the inhabitants of the country adjoining that lake, among whom he had begun to preach the Gospel and perform miracles, were full of obstinacy and of desperate malice. But he says nothing about the doctrine, and reproaches them that **his miracles had not led them to repent.** [39]

THE OBJECT WHICH OUR LORD HAD IN VIEW, IN EXHIBITING THOSE MANIFESTATIONS OF HIS POWER,

**UNDOUBTEDLY WAS TO INVITE MEN TO HIMSELF; BUT
AS ALL ARE BY NATURE AVERSE TO HIM, IT IS
NECESSARY TO BEGIN WITH REPENTANCE.**

Chorazin and Bethsaida are well known to have been cities which were situated on the lake of Gennesareth.

21. If those mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon. As Tyre and Sidon, in consequence of their proximity, were at that time abhorred for their ungodliness, pride, debauchery, and other vices, Christ employs this comparison for the express purpose of making a deeper and more painful impression on his Jewish countrymen.

There was not one of them who did not look upon the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon as abominable despisers of God. It is, therefore, no small heightening of his curse, when Christ says, that there would have been more hope of reformation from those places in which there was no religion, than is to be seen in Judea itself.

Lest any should raise thorny questions [40] about the secret decrees of God, we must remember, that this discourse of our Lord is accommodated to the ordinary capacity of the human mind. [41] Comparing the citizens of Bethsaida, and their neighbors, with the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, he reasons, not of what God foresaw would be done either by the one or by the other, but of what both parties would have done, so far as could be judged from the facts.

**THE EXCEEDINGLY CORRUPT MORALS AND
UNRESTRAINED DEBAUCHERY OF THOSE CITIES**

MIGHT BE ASCRIBED TO IGNORANCE; FOR THERE THE VOICE OF GOD HAD NEVER BEEN HEARD, NOR HAD MIRACLES BEEN PERFORMED, TO WARN THEM TO REPENT.

But in the cities of Galilee, which Christ upbraids, there was a display of very hardened obstinacy in despising miracles, of which they had seen a vast number without reaping any advantage. In short, the words of Christ convey nothing more than that the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida go beyond those of Tyre and Sidon in malice and incurable contempt of God.

And yet we have no right to contend with God, for having passed by others of whom better hopes might have been entertained, and displaying his power before some who were extremely wicked and altogether desperate.

Those on whom he does not bestow his mercy are justly appointed to perdition. If he withhold his word from some, and allow them to perish, while, in order to render others more inexcusable, he entreats and exhorts them, in a variety of ways, to repentance, who shall charge him, on this account, with injustice?

Let us, therefore, aware of our own weakness, learn to contemplate this height and depth [42] with reverence; for it is intolerable fretfulness and pride that is manifested by those who cannot endure to ascribe praise to the righteousness of God, except so far as

it comes within the reach of their senses, and who disdainfully reject those mysteries, which it was their duty to adore, simply because the reason of them is not fully evident.

IF THE MIGHTY WORKS HAD BEEN DONE. WE HAVE SAID THAT THESE WORDS INFORM US CONCERNING THE RIGHT USE OF MIRACLES, THOUGH THEY LIKewise INCLUDE DOCTRINE; FOR CHRIST DID NOT REMAIN SILENT, [43] WHILE HE WAS HOLDING OUT TO THEIR VIEW THE POWER OF THE FATHER; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, MIRACLES WERE ADDED TO THE GOSPEL, THAT THEY MIGHT ATTEND TO WHAT WAS SPOKEN BY CHRIST.

In sackcloth and ashes Repentance is here described by outward signs, the use of which was at that time common in the Church of God: not that Christ attaches importance to that matter, but because he accommodates himself to the capacity of the common people.

We know that believers are not only required to exercise repentance for a few days, but to cherish it incessantly till death. But there is no necessity, in the present day, for being clothed with sackcloth, and sprinkled with ashes; and, therefore, there is not always occasion for that outward profession of repentance, but only when, after some aggravated revolt, men turn to God. Sackcloth and ashes are, no doubt, indications of guilt, for the purpose of turning away the wrath of the Judge; [44] and therefore relate strictly to the beginning of conversion. But **as men testify by this ceremony their sorrow and grief, it must be preceded**

by hatred of sin, fear of God, and mortification of the flesh, according to the words of [Joel 2:13](#), *Rend your hearts and not your garments.*

We now see the reason why sackcloth and ashes are mentioned by Christ along with repentance, when he speaks of Tyre and Sidon, to the inhabitants of which the Gospel could not have been preached, without condemning their past life, leaving nothing for them, but to betake themselves to the wretched apparel of criminals for the sake of humbly beseeching pardon. Such, too, is [the reference of the word sitting](#), which is employed by Luke, [Sitting in sackcloth and ashes](#); for it denotes "lying prostrate on the ground,"--a posture adapted to express the grief of wretched persons, as is evident from many passages of the Prophets.

23. And thou, Capernaum. He expressly addresses the city of Capernaum, in which he had resided so constantly, that many supposed it to be his native place. **It was indeed an inestimable honor, that the Son of God, when about to commence his reign and priesthood, had chosen Capernaum for the seat of his palace and sanctuary.**

And **yet it was as deeply plunged in its filth, as if there had never been poured upon it a drop of Divine grace.**

On this account, Christ declares, that the punishment awaiting it will be the more dreadful, in proportion to the higher favors which it had received from God.

It deserves our earnest attention in this passage, that the profanation of the gifts of God, as it involves sacrilege, will never pass unpunished; and that the more eminent any

one is, he will be punished with the greater severity, if he shall basely pollute the gifts which God has bestowed upon him; and above all, an awful vengeance awaits us, if, after having received the spiritual gifts of Christ, we treat him and his Gospel with contempt.

If they had been done in Sodom. We have already hinted, that Christ speaks after the manner of men, and does not bring forth, as from the heavenly sanctuary, [45] what God foresaw would happen if he had sent a Prophet to the inhabitants of Sodom. But if quarrelsome persons are not satisfied with this answer, every ground of objection is removed by this single consideration, that although God had a remedy in his power for saving the inhabitants of Sodom, yet in destroying them he was a just avenger. [46]

Luke 10:16. He that heareth you heareth me. It is a mistake to suppose that this passage is a repetition of what we formerly met with in the Gospel of Matthew 10:40 he that receiveth you receiveth me [47] Then, Christ was speaking of persons, but now, of doctrine. The former receiving had a reference to offices of kindness; but now he recommends faith, which receives God in his Word.

The general meaning is, that the godliness of men is ascertained by the obedience of faith; [48] and that those who reject the Gospel, though they may boast of being the most eminent of the worshippers of God,

**give evidence that they wickedly
despise him.**

We must now attend to the design of Christ. As a considerable portion of the world foolishly estimates the Gospel according to the rank of men, and despises it because it is professed by persons of mean and despicable condition, our Lord here contradicts so perverse a judgment.

AGAIN, ALMOST ALL ARE SO PROUD, THAT THEY DO NOT WILLINGLY SUBMIT TO THEIR EQUALS, OR TO THOSE WHOM THEY LOOK DOWN UPON AS INFERIOR TO THEM. GOD HAS DETERMINED, ON THE OTHER HAND, TO GOVERN HIS CHURCH BY THE MINISTRY OF MEN, AND INDEED FREQUENTLY SELECTS THE MINISTERS OF THE WORD FROM AMONG THE LOWEST DREGS OF THE PEOPLE.

It was, therefore, necessary to support the majesty of the Gospel, that it might not appear to be degraded by proceeding from the lips of men.

This is a remarkable commendation [49] of the outward ministry, when Christ declares, that whatever honor and respect is rendered to the preaching of men, provided that the preaching be faithful, God acknowledges as done to Himself.

In two points of view, this recommendation is useful.

Nothing ought to be a stronger encouragement to us to embrace the doctrine of the Gospel, than to learn that this is the highest worship of God, and a sacrifice of the sweetest odor, to hear him speaking by human lips, and to yield subjection to his word, which is brought to us by men, in the same manner as if he were descending from heaven or making known his will to us by angels. Again, our confidence is established, and all doubt is removed, when we learn, that the testimony of our salvation, when delivered to us by men whom God has sent, is not less worthy of credit, than if His voice resounded from heaven. To deter us, on the other hand, from despising the Gospel, he adds a severe threatening:

He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. Those who disdain to listen to ministers, however mean and contemptible they may be, offer an insult, not to men only, but to Christ himself, and to God the Father.

While a magnificent eulogium is here pronounced on the rank of pastors, who honestly and faithfully discharge their office, it is absurd in the Pope and his clergy to take this as a pretense for cloaking their tyranny.

Assuredly, Christ does not speak in such a manner, as to surrender into the hands of men the power which the Father has given him, but only to protect his Gospel against contempt.

Hence it follows, that he does not transfer to the persons of men the honor which is due to himself, but only maintains that it cannot be separated from his Word.

If the Pope wishes to be received, let him bring forward the doctrine by which he may be recognized as a minister of Christ; but so long as he continues to be what he now is, a mortal enemy of Christ, and destitute of all

*resemblance to the Apostles, let him cease to
deck himself with borrowed feathers.*

Footnotes:

[36] "Que Tyr et Sidon seront plus doucement traittez;" -- "that Tyre and Sidon will be treated more gently."

[37] "Que ceux de Sodome seront traittez plus doucement;" -- "that those of Sodom will be treated more gently."

[38] "Pourtant Tyr et Sidon seront plus doucement traittez au iugement que vous;" -- "therefore Tyre and Sidon will be more gently treated in the Judgment than you."

[39] "Que par les miracles ils n'ont point esmeus pour se convertir a repentance;" -- "that by the miracles they were not moved to be converted to repentance."

[40] "Des questions curieuses et difficiles;" -- "curious and difficult questions."

[41] "A la capacite et apprehension commune de l'entendement humain;" -- "to the ordinary capacity and apprehension of the human understanding."

[42] "Ceste hautesse et profondeur des iugemens de Dieu;" -- "this height and depth of the judgments of God."

[43] "N'a pas eu cependant sa bouche close;" -- "did not in the meantime keep his mouth shut."

[44] "A fin d'adoucir le iuge, et destourner son iuste courroux;" -- "in order to pacify the Judge, and to turn away his just wrath."

[45] "Il ne vent point ici amener le conseil secret de Dieu;" -- "he does not intend here to exhibit the secret purpose of God."

[46] "Que toutesfois, en les destruisant et damnant, il n'a rien fait qui empesche qu'il ne soit tousiours recognue iuste en sa punition et sa vengeance;" -- "that notwithstanding, in destroying and condemning them, He has done nothing to prevent Him from being always acknowledged to be righteous in His punishment and in His vengeance."

[47] Harmony, volume 1[[5]p. 475.

[48] "Que la crainte de Dieu qui est es hommes, se monstre par l'obeissance de la foy;" -- "that the fear of God which is in men is manifested by the obedience of faith."

[49] "C'est donc une louange et recommandation singuliere;" -- "it is then a singular praise and recommendation."

[Matthew 11:21](#)

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

[Matthew 11:22](#)

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

[Matthew 11:23](#)

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

[Matthew 11:24](#)

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

[Matthew 11:25](#)

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

[Benson Commentary](#)

[Matthew 11:20-24](#). *Then began he to upbraid the cities* – Which he had often blessed with his presence, and in which he had preached many awakening sermons, and performed many astonishing miracles.

It is observable, he had never upbraided them before.

Indeed, at first they had received him with all gladness, Capernaum in particular.

Wo unto thee, Chorazin, &c. – That is, *miserable art thou*. For these are not curses or imprecations, as has been commonly supposed; but **A SOLEMN, COMPASSIONATE DECLARATION OF THE MISERY THEY WERE BRINGING ON THEMSELVES.**

Chorazin and Bethsaida were cities of Galilee, standing by the lake of Gennesareth, in which and the neighbouring places Jesus spent a great part of his public life.

See notes on chap. [Matthew 4:13-16](#).

If the mighty works – The great miracles, *which were done in you, had been done* [of old]

in Tyre and Sidon – Though cities inhabited by heathen, and remarkable for their luxury, pride, and contempt of religion,

they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes –

That is, they would have exercised the deepest repentance, for sackcloth and ashes were used by the Jews in token of the bitterest grief.

But I say unto you – Besides this general denunciation of wo to those stubborn unbelievers, I declare particularly that the degree of their misery will be greater than even that of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, yea, of *Sodom*.

And thou, Capernaum, &c. – He mentions Capernaum separately by itself, and last of all, because, being the place of his ordinary

residence, it had been blessed with more of his sermons and miracles than any other town.

NEVERTHELESS, IT ABOUNDED WITH WICKEDNESS OF ALL KINDS, AND THEREFORE HE COMPARED IT TO THAT CITY WHICH, ON ACCOUNT OF THE GREATNESS OF ITS CRIMES, HAD BEEN THE MOST TERRIBLE EXAMPLE OF THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE THAT EVER THE WORLD HAD BEHELD.

It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, &c. – That is, the condition of the inhabitants even of the land of Sodom, in the day of the final judgment, shall be more tolerable than thy condition.

For thy condemnation shall rise in proportion to thy more aggravated guilt, and to those more valuable mercies and privileges which thou hast abused.

Dr. Hammond understands this passage as referring to the temporal calamities to come on those places by the Romans; who did indeed shortly after overrun the whole country, and made dreadful ravages in some of those cities. But, as Doddridge justly observes, “There is no evidence that the destruction of those cities was more dreadful than that of Tyre and Sidon, and it was certainly less so than that of Sodom and Gomorrah: besides, our Lord plainly speaks of a judgment that was **yet** to come on all these places that he mentions.”

From this passage, therefore, we learn “two important particulars:

1. 1st, That **the punishments to be inflicted upon wicked men in the life to come shall not be all equal, but in exact proportion to the demerit of the sins of each.**
2. 2d, That great and signal punishments, befalling sinners in this life, will not screen them from the wrath of God in the life to come; for Jesus Christ, the judge, here declares that Sodom, though burned by fire and brimstone from heaven, shall suffer such dreadful things, that, in speaking of the pains of the damned, he mentions this city as an example of very great punishment.”
– Macknight.
- 3.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

11:16-24 Christ reflects on the scribes and Pharisees, who had a proud conceit of themselves. He likens their behaviour to children's play, who being out of temper without reason, quarrel with all the attempts of their fellows to please them, or to get them to join in the plays for which they used to assemble. The cavils of worldly men are often very trifling and show great malice. Something they have to urge against every one, however excellent and holy. Christ, who was undefiled, and separate from sinners, is here represented as in league with them, and polluted by them. The most unspotted innocence will not always be a defense against reproach.

Christ knew that the hearts of the Jews were more bitter and hardened against his miracles and doctrines, than those of Tyre and Sidon would have been; therefore their condemnation would be the greater.

The Lord exercises his almighty power, yet he punishes none more than they deserve, and never withholds the knowledge of the truth from those who long after it.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Then began he to upbraid ... - That is, to reprove, to rebuke, to denounce heavy judgment.

Pulpit Commentary

Verses 20-24. - **Woe on those who reject him.** The parallel passage, [Luke 10:12-15](#), comes almost at the close of the commission to the seventy. It is represented in the commission reported by St. Matthew by [Matthew 10:15](#) alone, which is almost verbally identical with ver. 24.

It is possible that St. Matthew or the author of the source used by him did not care to interrupt the subject of ch. 10. by inserting more of these verses there, even though that place more nearly represented their original position. **Observe that here they are connected with the rejection of John and of our Lord; in Luke, with the rejection of his disciples and of himself in them.**

Verse 20. - In Matthew only. It seems to be a kind of introduction, like ver. 7a, perhaps marking vers. 20-24 as a fresh section in the discourses.

It serves more particularly as an explanation why our Lord especially mentioned these cities. **Then began he to upbraid** ([Matthew 5:11](#), note; comp. also [Mark 16:14](#)) **the cities wherein most of his mighty works** ([Matthew 7:22](#), note) **were done, because they repented not.** "Quilibet auditor Nov. Test. est nut multo beetler (ver. 11) ant multo miserior antiquis" (Bengel). Matthew 11:20

Vincent's Word Studies

Mighty works (δυνάμεις)

The supernatural works of Christ and his apostles are denoted by six different words in the New Testament,

exhibiting these works under different aspects and from different points of view.

These will be considered in detail as they occur. Generally, a miracle may be regarded:

1. As a **PORTENT OR PRODIGY** (τέρας); as [Acts 7:36](#), of the wonders shown by Moses in Egypt.
2. As **A SIGN** (σημεῖον), pointing to something beyond itself, a mark of the power or grace of the doer or of his connection with the supernatural world. So [Matthew 12:38](#).
3. As **AN EXHIBITION OF GOD'S GLORY** (ἔνδοξον), [Luke 13:17](#); glorious things.
4. As **A STRANGE THING** (παράδοξον), [Luke 5:26](#).
5. As **A WONDERFUL THING** (θαυμάσιον), [Matthew 21:15](#).
6. As **A POWER** (δύναμις); so here: a mighty work.

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Theology\Jesus Christ\The Person of Christ

The Incarnation: Why Did God Become Man?

William Boekestein

When you set out to know someone, you usually want to know where they came from and what they are like. Such information is far from trivial. Instead, it becomes the blood that pulses through the heart of the relationship. When we ask the typical “getting to know you” questions about Christ, we find the answers are given in the doctrine of the incarnation (a word that simply means “in flesh”). Incarnation describes what happened when the second person of the Trinity left the bliss of heaven for some thirty-three years to enter, as one of us, the mess of the human condition.

The historic Christian doctrine of the incarnation can be expressed in a few simple phrases that the Western church codified in the [Athanasian Creed](#) around the sixth century.

Christ Is True God

Jesus of Nazareth is of the same substance as the Father, equal to Him in deity ([Athanasian Creed](#), 31, 33). Christ is not a lesser God. When the second person of the Godhead became a man, God didn’t compromise Himself and change into something lesser than He was. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” ([Col. 1:15](#)). “In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” ([Col. 2:9](#)). He is the “brightness of [God’s] glory and the express image of his person” ([Heb. 1:3](#)).

God reveals Himself as a triune being: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. “The whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal” ([Athanasian Creed](#), 26). In the incarnation, Christ did not shed His glory as a snake sheds its skin; He veiled His glory in humanity. Those who see Jesus see God ([John 14:9](#)).

Christ Is True Man

Jesus isn’t almost like us. He didn’t come as close to experiencing full humanity as God could come without going all the way. He had a real body and soul ([Athanasian Creed](#), 32) because He was really human. Jesus’ conception was extraordinary ([Matt. 1:20](#)); the rest of His development as a

man was mundanely human. The Bible describes His birth in very typical fashion. "When the fullness of time had come God sent forth His son, *born of a woman*" ([Gal. 4:4](#)). He was nourished from Mary's body. He matured through the same phases as others. He was subject to pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, fatigue, disappointment, suffering, and death. He thought, reasoned, and felt as a man. The Bible puts it plainly: "In all things He had to be made like His brethren" ([Heb. 2:17](#)) because only as a real man could Christ be "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" ([Heb. 4:15](#)).

Christ Is One Person with Two Natures

The relation of Christ's natures to His person is mysterious, but it is important. If we fail to recognize the unity of Christ's person, we might see Him as divine with some human characteristics or as human with some divine characteristics or as a confused combination of the two. Jesus is one Christ with both a human nature and a divine nature, and these natures do not bleed together. In Christ, God added to Himself our humanity, while continuing to be God.

Highlighting the relevance of the incarnation, the Athanasian Creed transitions seamlessly from Christ's person to His work. During the whole of Jesus' earthly ministry (and into eternity), Christ the God-man secures salvation for His elect. He acts as man, because it is man who needs salvation. But, for a mere human, however infused with divine help, the call of duty is too great. Only God could provide man's remedy. In Christ, God and man meet, and sinners are saved.

To call the incarnation "relevant" almost sounds patronizing. But we need to recognize the intimate connection between this important doctrine and personal piety.

It Opens Up Scripture

Until we grasp that Christ is God-in-flesh, the Old Testament will remain a collection of stories about how men and women struggled with the call to faith. The incarnation helps us to see that the Old Testament sets the stage for God to once again live with man as He did in Eden. On every Old

Testament page, God promises a human deliverer who is also stronger than Satan ([Gen. 3:15](#)); both a suffering servant and an anointed king.

The reality of God-with-us is explained and applied throughout the rest of Scripture starting with Matthew. The New Testament is not simply a collection of ethical instruction, or even a commentary on the life of a certain Nazarene. It is the real-life story of what happened when God came to men that they might belong to Him. The New Testament is the answer to the Old Testament anticipation of a redeemer. Only in the incarnate Christ, are all of the promises answered with a resounding "yes!" ([2 Cor. 1:20](#)).

We need to know Christ as He truly is, God and man in one beautiful, glorious person.

Near the story's last chapter, John heard these words from heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and be their God" ([Rev. 21:3](#)).

It Makes God Accessible

In the Old Testament, God was accessible only through the mediation of prophets, priests, tabernacle, and temple. No Israelite could properly see God ([John 1:18](#)). John Calvin said the revelation of God prior to Christ was like a pencil sketch.

In Christ, God became accessible to us in a most familiar form. Six times in the opening of His first letter, John says, "We saw him!" ([1 John 1:1-4](#)). During Jesus' earthly ministry, the majestic God of heaven and earth cried out to the crowds, "Come to me!" ([Matt. 11:28](#)). If you want to know what God is like, study Christ. As Richard Phillips has written, Jesus' earthly posture, tone of voice, attitude, and reaction to events were those of God. "God is Christ-like."

It Reveals Our Only Mediator

At Mount Sinai Israel needed mediation; they were justly terrified by God's thunderings. "If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall

die.” ([Deut 5:25](#)). God gave Moses as a temporary mediator ([Deut. 5:27](#)) who admonished the people to look for a better one! ([Deut 18:15](#)). Of the man Jesus, Paul later wrote, “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men...” ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)). In His humanity Christ suffered our judgment for sin. In His divinity He endured that judgment to the very end.

It Reveals God’s Humility and Glory

Christ prostrated Himself to the earth because we needed rescue—that’s humbling. God lowered Himself to gather to Himself His rebellious children. Even the earthly body of Christ was lowly. It was as crude as the tabernacle in the desert compared with the pyramids of Egypt or the ziggurats of Babylon. Christ willingly compromised His reputation by becoming a man ([Phil. 2:7](#)). Paradoxically, in Christ’s humility, God also reveals His other-worldly glory. Phillips explains: “Jesus saw the event of His greatest earthly humiliation—the apex of His servant obedience—as His true glorification on earth. ‘The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified’ ([John 12:23](#)).” Calvin boldly states that the richness of God’s glory “is invisible until it shines forth in Christ . . . the majesty of the Father is hidden until it shews itself impressed” on Christ’s image.”

It Compels Us to Godly Living

“For the love of Christ compels us . . . those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again” ([2 Cor. 5:14-15](#)). True godliness is lived out in a mutually loving experience with God. With biblical warrant, we usually think of the [cross](#) as the greatest manifestation of God’s love. But if on the [cross](#), Christ’s descent reached the pit of hell, the [incarnation](#) was His first step in that agonizing descent. We need to know Christ as He truly is, God and man in one beautiful, glorious person. Knowing Christ ensures being changed by Him.

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published on December 14, 2020.

Reasons for Christ's Coming/Incarnation:

Why Christ Came: 31 Meditations on the Incarnation

Author: [Beeke, Joel R. & Boekestein, William](#)

Description

When thinking about Christ's birth, we often focus our attention on Luke's detailed gospel account. But to appreciate the main point of the story—that the eternal Son of God assumed our flesh-and-blood human nature—we need to learn from the rest of the Bible why Christ came to earth. Why did Christ come? In this book, thirty-one thoughtful meditations answer this vital question, and the answers encourage us to celebrate Christ's birth more deeply, see more clearly how it is connected with the rest of His ministry, and recognize its importance for our lives.

31 Biblical Reasons Why Jesus Came

32. **To Do the Will of the Father** (John 6:38)
33. **To Save Sinners** (1 Timothy 1:15)
34. **To Bring Light to a Dark World** (John 12:46)
35. **To Be Made Like His People** (Hebrews 2:17)
36. **To Bear Witness to the Truth** (John 18:37)
37. **To Destroy the Devil and His Works** (1 John 3:8)
38. **To Give Eternal Life** (John 6:51)
39. **To Receive Worship** (Matthew 2:11)
40. **To Bring Great Joy** (Luke 2:10)
41. **To Demonstrate True Humility** (Philippians 2:5-8)
42. **To Preach the Gospel** (Luke 4:43)
43. **To Bring Judgment** (John 9:39)
44. **To Give His Life as a Ransom for Many** (Mark 10:45)
45. **To Fulfill the Law and Prophets** (Matthew 5:17)
46. **To Reveal God's Love for Sinners** (John 3:16)
47. **To Call Sinners to Repentance** (Mark 2:17)
48. **To Die** (John 12:27)
49. **To Seek and Save the Lost** (Luke 19:10)
50. **To Serve** (Mark 10:45)
51. **To Bring Peace** (Ephesians 2:14-18)
52. **To Bring a Sword**—referring to the division the truth causes (Matthew 10:34)
53. **To Bind Up Broken Hearts** (Isaiah 61:1)
54. **To Give Us the Spirit of Adoption** (Galatians 4:4-6)

55. **To Make Us Partakers of the Divine Nature** (2 Peter 1:4)
56. **To Reign as King** (Isaiah 9:6-7)
57. **To Restore Human Nature to Holiness** (Luke 1:35)
58. **To Be a Merciful and Faithful High Priest** (Hebrews 2:17)
59. **To Be the Second and Greater Adam** (Romans 5:14-15)
60. **To Satisfy Our Deepest Thirst** (John 4:13-14)
61. **To Be Loved by God's Children** (John 8:42)
62. **To Reveal God's Glory** (John 1:14)

Jesus declared His incarnation was necessary to save humanity by giving His life as a ransom, reveal the Father, and destroy the works of the devil. He came to fulfill the law, call sinners to repentance, and bring eternal life, acting as a merciful mediator to represent humanity.

Key reasons Jesus stated for His incarnation include:

- **To Save and Ransom:** Jesus came to seek and save the lost by offering His life as a sacrifice for sins.
- **To Do the Father's Will:** He came from heaven not for his own purpose, but to complete the mission sent by God.
- **To Reveal God:** He acted as the "express image" of God, making the invisible God known to humanity.
- **To Call Sinners to Repentance:** He came to invite sinners to turn to him, rather than to call the righteous.
- **To Fulfill Scripture:** Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the prophets, rather than to abolish them.
- **To Destroy the Devil's Work:** He took on human flesh to destroy the power of death and the devil.
- **To Give Abundant Life:** He came to provide eternal life to those who believe.
- **To Bear Witness to Truth:** Jesus declared his purpose was to bear witness to the truth.
- **To Act as High Priest:** By becoming human, He became a faithful, empathetic high priest who can mediate for humanity.

What is the meaning of woe in the Bible?

Woe means “grief, anguish, affliction, wretchedness, calamity, or trouble.”

The *Dictionary of Bible Themes* categorizes the uses of the word *woe* in the Bible: “Woe as an exclamation of judgment on others,” “Woe as an exclamation of misfortune on oneself,” “Woe as an exclamation of sadness over others,” and “Woe may give way to forgiveness, comfort, and deliverance” (Manser, M., ed., Zondervan, 1999).

Sometimes in the Bible, the suffering person has brought about his or her own woeful condition as a natural result of foolish choices (see [Proverbs 23:29–30](#)). More often, woe is tied to sin and rebellion against God, and the resulting judgments are referred to as “woes.”

In [Matthew 23](#), Jesus pronounces seven “woes” on the hypocrites of His day;

IN REVELATION, A GROUP OF GOD’S FINAL JUDGMENTS ON MANKIND ARE CALLED THE THREE “WOES.”

Dr. John MacArthur examines Jesus’ use of woe in the Bible: “In His castigation of the false Jewish leaders, Jesus repeatedly used two words, **woe**, and **hypocrites**” (emphasis is the author’s). MacArthur goes on to say, “But Jesus used **Woe** against the scribes and Pharisees not as an

exclamation but as a declaration, a divine pronouncement of judgment from God. . . . As was already noted, it was not His desire that they be condemned but rather that they repent and come to salvation. But He knew that if they did not repent and believe they were doomed to hell under God's righteous and just wrath. When God utters **Woe** against evil men He sets divine judgment in motion" (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: [Matthew 16—23](#)*, ch. 35, Moody Publishers, 1988, p. 375).

The fiery language of the Old Testament uses the word woe in several passages of judgment. For example, in [Ezekiel 16:23–27](#), we read of God's anger toward Jerusalem over their idolatry: "Woe! Woe to you, declares the Lord GOD" (verse 23). In [1 Samuel 4:6–8](#), we see that even pagans feared the presence of God and the woes that He could bring upon them: "And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, 'What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?' Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp. So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, 'God has come into the camp!' And they said, 'Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who will save us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness'" (NASB).

HOSEA, ZEPHANIAH, HABAKKUK, AND MANY OTHER PROPHETS PRONOUNCED WOE AGAINST SINFUL PEOPLE ([Hosea 7:13](#); [Zephaniah 2:5](#); [Habakkuk 2:15](#)).

Job understood that sin leads to woe: "If I am guilty—woe to me!" ([Job 10:15](#)). And in this we see the way to avoid woe: be [forgiven](#). The Bible says that forgiveness of sin comes through Jesus Christ. By Jesus' death and resurrection God cleanses guilty sinners and declares them to be righteous in His sight. The command is to repent and believe in Christ ([Matthew 4:17](#); [Acts 16:31](#)). "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"

(Romans 8:1). Hard times may come in this life, but the one who has faith in Christ will never know the eternal woe of God's judgment.

Why did Jesus mention Tyre and Sidon in Luke 10:14 (and Matthew 11)?

[Tyre](#) and [Sidon](#), ancient cities of Phoenicia, are mentioned several times in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus mentions Tyre and Sidon in [Luke 10](#) in the context of judgments He was pronouncing against the cities of [Chorazin](#) and [Bethsaida](#).

Tyre and Sidon are port cities located in modern [Lebanon](#) on the Mediterranean coast. Sidon is believed to have existed prior to 2000 BC, with Tyre being just a little younger. The Old Testament mentions Israel's dealings with these cities, including the Israelites' failure to conquer Sidon in the conquest of the Promised Land ([Judges 1:31](#)), their worship of Sidonian gods on several occasions ([Judges 10:6-16](#); [1 Kings 11](#)), and their obtaining materials from Sidon and Tyre for the building of the temple ([1 Chronicles 22:4](#)). King Hiram of Tyre provided many of the temple furnishings for Solomon ([1 Kings 7:13-51](#)). Tyrians and Sidonians are also mentioned in helping rebuild the temple in Ezra's time ([Ezra 3:7](#)). [Queen Jezebel](#) was a Sidonian ([1 Kings 16:31](#)). The Sidonian city of Zarephath was where a [widow](#) took care of Elijah and the Lord provided oil and flour for her through the famine; later, the widow's son became ill, and Elijah raised him from the dead ([1 Kings 17:8-24](#)).

THE OLD TESTAMENT ALSO HAS SEVERAL PROPHECIES AGAINST TYRE AND SIDON THAT

PREDICTED A COMPLETE OVERTHROW ([Isaiah 23](#); [Jeremiah 25](#); [27](#); [47](#); [Ezekiel 26–28](#); [Joel 3](#); [Amos 1:9–10](#); [Zechariah 9:1–4](#)). Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre from 585–572 BC. Alexander the Great conquered Tyre in 322 BC, completely destroying the city. The Persian king Artaxerxes conquered Sidon. In short, **GOD’S PROPHESED JUDGMENT CAME TO PASS. LATER, BOTH CITIES BECAME PROSPEROUS PROVINCES OF ROME.**

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities north of Israel, and Jesus had been sent to the Jews ([Matthew 15:24](#)). But Jesus still ministered to them: crowds from Tyre and Sidon came to see and listen to Him ([Mark 3:7–8](#)). Jesus helped a [Syrophenician woman](#) and commended her faith ([Matthew 15:21–28](#)).

Jesus mentions Tyre and Sidon in [Luke 10:13–14](#) (see also [Matthew 11:20–24](#)), comparing them to several cities in which He had performed miracles. These cities of Israel had been blessed with Jesus’ presence, preaching, and power, yet they had not repented. **Jesus pronounces woes on them, stating that Tyre and Sidon, given the same opportunity, would have turned from their wickedness and been saved:** *“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.”* Jesus also says [Capernaum](#) is under God’s judgment for their rejection of Christ (verse 15), because “whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me” (verse 16).

Jesus used the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon to highlight the way God’s chosen people refused Him.

The Israelites of Jesus’ day believed themselves to be righteously following God, yet they did not recognize God in their midst.

Jesus, in essence, shamed Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—they, who were supposed to be God’s representatives on earth, refused to listen; yet pagan cities would have quickly repented.

Jesus' comments demonstrate the importance of responsibility and stewardship.

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked”
([Luke 12:48](#)).

God's desire is for His Word to be known and believed, with the result that people are transformed (see [Luke 6:46](#)).

To reject the light we've been given is to remain in darkness. To spurn the grace of God and reject the Savior is to receive the due penalty for our sin.

What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom?

The different terms used in the Bible for heaven and hell—*Sheol*, *Hades*, *Gehenna*, [the lake of fire](#), *paradise*, and [Abraham's bosom](#)—are the subject of some debate and can be hard to keep straight.

The word *paradise* is used as a synonym for *heaven* ([2 Corinthians 12:3–4](#); [Revelation 2:7](#)). When Jesus was dying on the cross and one of the thieves being crucified with Him asked Him for mercy, Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise” ([Luke 23:43](#)). Jesus knew that His death was imminent and that He would soon be in heaven with His Father. In His words of comfort to the penitent thief, Jesus used *paradise* as a synonym for *heaven*, and the word has come to be associated with any place of ideal loveliness and delight.

Abraham’s bosom is referred to only once in the Bible—in the story of Lazarus and the rich man ([Luke 16:19–31](#)). *Abraham’s lap* was used in the Talmud as a synonym for *heaven* (*Seder Nashim, Kiddushin* 72b). The image in Jesus’ story is of Lazarus reclining at a table leaning on Abraham’s breast at the heavenly banquet—as John leaned on Jesus’ breast at the Last Supper. The point of the story is that wicked men will see the righteous in a happy state, while they themselves are in torment, and that a “great gulf” that can never be spanned exists between them ([Luke 16:26, NKJV](#)). Abraham’s bosom is obviously a place of peace, rest, and joy after death—in other words, paradise.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word used to denote the realm of the dead is *Sheol*. It simply means “the place of the dead” or “the place of departed souls/spirits.” The New Testament Greek equivalent to *Sheol* is *Hades*, which is also a general reference to “the place of the dead.” *Sheol/Hades* is divided into a place of blessing (where Lazarus was in [Luke 16](#)) and a place of torment (where the rich man was in [Luke 16](#)). *Sheol* also seems to be a temporary place where souls are kept as they await the final resurrection. The souls of the righteous, at death, go directly into the presence of God—the part of *Sheol* called “heaven,” “paradise,” or “Abraham’s bosom” ([Luke 23:43](#); [2 Corinthians 5:8](#); [Philippians 1:23](#)).

The Greek word *Gehenna* is used in the New Testament for “hell” (see [Matthew 5:29](#); [23:33](#)). The word is derived from the Hebrew word *Ge-hinnom*, which designated a valley south of Jerusalem—a cursed place that had been the site of human sacrifice ([2 Chronicles 28:3](#); [33:6](#)). Jesus referenced *Gehenna* as a symbol of the place of judgment after death, alluding to prophecies in [Jeremiah 19:6](#) and [Isaiah 30:33](#).

The lake of fire, mentioned only in [Revelation 19:20](#) and [20:10, 14-15](#), is the final hell, the place of eternal punishment for all unrepentant rebels, both angelic and human ([Matthew 25:41](#)). It is described as a place of burning sulfur, and those in it experience eternal, unspeakable agony of an unrelenting nature ([Luke 16:24](#); [Mark 9:45-46](#)). Those in *Hades/Sheol* who have rejected Christ will have the lake of fire as their final destination.

But those whose names are written in the [Lamb’s book of life](#) should have no fear of this terrible fate. By faith in Christ and His blood shed on the cross for our sins, we are destined to live eternally in the blessed presence of God.