

# WHO IS JESUS?

A Christian Guidebook 1



T. M. Moore

A *ReVision* Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Who Is Jesus?*

Who Is Jesus?  
A Christian Guidebook 1  
A *ReVision* Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe  
Copyright 2024 T. M. and Susie Moore

Waxed Tablet Publications

*Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Cover image Yahoo images.*

## Welcome to *Who Is Jesus?*

This may seem like a strange or elementary question for Christian readers. But it's not. We must clear about Who Jesus is, why Jesus came among us, what Jesus accomplished, and what that means for us?

An ancient Christian theologian can help us think this through. Anselm clearly explained both Who Jesus is and why it was necessary for Him to come among us. Only One Who is both God and Man could save us from our sins. Jesus is that God/Man.

This *Guidebook* is designed to help us be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us by reviewing essential Christian doctrines and shoring-up the Biblical foundations of each. Our goal is to lead you into the Word of God so that you can gain a clearer and more lively understanding of what we as Christian believe.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Reason and Revelation

*“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.  
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.”* Isaiah 55.8, 9

*An act of history*

Christmas, the celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, invites the consideration of many mysteries, chief among them, the question of why God became a Man. And the fact of Christmas provides a good opportunity to talk with friends about “the reason for the season.”

But we must make sure we are prepared for this conversation, so that we can answer the questions our friends may pose.

*That* Jesus lived and that He consistently claimed to be God—which, after all, was why they crucified Him—is not in question. The archaeological, historical, and documentary evidence for Jesus and His claims is simply overwhelming.

The real question is why did Jesus, the God/Man, come to earth? Why was the Incarnation necessary? Does the world really need Christmas? Or is this just some quaint mythology to which millions have clung for two thousand years to gain a false sense of comfort against a closed and uncaring cosmos?

To the Christian, the *fact* of the Incarnation is not disputed. [Christians have professed](#) from the earliest years to believe in “Jesus Christ, [God’s] only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary...” Luke’s [citing of the historical setting](#) in which Jesus became incarnate and the Church had its beginnings is accepted by historians from all perspectives.

But while the Incarnation is an act of history, many of our contemporaries may not be entirely clear on just *why* it was necessary. A clear understanding of this central doctrine of our faith is essential for helping those in whom interest in spiritual matters is beginning to stir.

Who is Jesus, and why did He come among us?

*Anselm of Canterbury*

Over a thousand years ago a young theology student named Boso thought the same thing. As he explained to his instructor, the great Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), “As the right order requires us to believe the deep things of the Christian faith before we undertake to discuss them by reason; so to my mind it appears a neglect if, after we are established in faith, we do not seek to understand what we believe.”

Boso was no Bozo. Merely believing in Jesus, while essential for salvation, is just the beginning of faith. Christians think deeply about their faith because by doing so we realize more of our great salvation. Moreover, the people with whom we share the Gospel will have many questions, and we must be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3.15).

Boso went on to request of his mentor that he kindly explain to him “for what necessity and cause God, Who is omnipotent, should have assumed the littleness and weakness of human nature for the sake of its renewal?”

## *Who Is Jesus?*

In other words, Why did God become a Man in Jesus? Why the Incarnation? Boso's question launched a conversation with Anselm which developed one of the great theological treatises in the history of the Church, *Cur Deus Homo*, or, *Why the God-Man*, that is, *Why God Became a Man*. Cast in the form of a dialog between the great Archbishop of Canterbury and his student, *Cur Deus Homo* remains a classic explanation of the reason for the Incarnation and, with that, of why we as Christians take the celebration of Christmas so seriously and with such joy.

It answers the question, Who is Jesus and why did He come among us?

Anselm wanted his readers to understand that this great mystery cannot be known by reason alone. Rather, we must be willing to think like God about this question, and to submit our reasoning powers to the teaching of God's Word. Reason can enable us to understand the plain teaching of Scripture; but the deeper meanings of what the Scriptures teach must be received in faith. Only thus will we be able to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of why the Incarnation was necessary.

We'll need to make this point to our unbelieving friends. We can't reason our way to God. God is greater than our reason or our ability to "make sense" of Him. Rather, we must allow Him to *reveal* Himself and His will, which He does most fully in our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 14.9; Heb. 1.3). We do not ask our friends to suspend reason, but to [submit their reason to God's Word](#) if they would know Jesus and what He has accomplished for us.

### *Look to Scripture!*

At the outset of his dialog, Anselm explained to Boso, "I wish all that I say to be received with this understanding, that, if I shall have said anything which higher authority does not corroborate, though I appear to demonstrate it by argument, yet it is not to be received with any further confidence, than as so appearing to me for the time, until God in some way make a clearer revelation to me."

By "higher authority" and "clearer revelation" Anselm meant the Scriptures.

To know Jesus and to understand the Incarnation, we must look to Scripture. There we may understand this great historical event as God does. God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours, and we must engage His thoughts in the confidence that He understands our need better than we do. By doing so we may discover, as Boso did so many years ago, just how rich, beautiful, gracious, powerful, amazing, and eminently reasonable it is to believe in Jesus, the God/Man, Who became incarnate for our salvation.

### *Search the Scriptures*

1. How do the following texts establish the historicity of Jesus, that is, the fact that He lived? Lk. 1.1-5; 2.1-3; 3.1, 2.:
2. How do the following texts support Jesus' claim to be God? Matt. 26.63, 64; Lk. 22.66-71; Jn. 8.58; 10.21-23; 14.9-11:
3. Meditate on Isaiah 55.8, 9. We all have thoughts, and our thoughts can help us understand God. But our thoughts—our reason—are not sufficient to "make sense" out of God's ways. For that, we must submit our reason to what God reveals in His Word. If we will receive His Word as true, then His Word will help us make sense out of everything He reveals and all of life as well. Where would you turn in Scripture to support this claim?

*Next steps—Preparation: Unbelievers are no strangers to faith. In fact, they believe in many things, even things that yet remain unseen. What are some examples of such faith? Why would it be important to point these out to unbelievers?*

## 2 Since by Man Came Death

*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.* 1 Corinthians 15.21, 22

### *Never irrational*

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which Christians celebrate at Christmas, is but the opening act of a story of devotion, heroism, betrayal, torture, murder, and redemption which, were it not for the triumph of the resurrection, would seem to make a mockery of the idea that God is good.

Was it *necessary*, [to bring salvation to the world](#), that the Son of God, the God/Man, should be made to suffer the humbling of Incarnation and the horrors of suffering and death? Could not the almighty God of heaven and earth have devised some other means of accomplishing the same end?

This was the question Boso, the young theological student, pondered, and which he posed to his master, Anselm of Canterbury. Anselm made his question the center of discussion in his great theological treatise, *Cur Deus Homo*. We must not take this question for granted, because our unbelieving friends will not. They will have questions about why such a good Man should have to die so horrible a death. Could God not come up with some more “reasonable” plan?

To some of his contemporaries, Boso explained, it was irrational for God to act in such a way. Yet, as Anselm insisted, “the will of God is never irrational.” We cannot understand God’s ways and works at the same depth He does, but we can understand them as He intends, trusting that He knows all things, and does all things well. Thus we may come to see the reasonableness of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.

### *Not seemly?*

Boso explained to Anselm that some unbelievers he knew were insisting that it was an “injustice and dishonor to God” to insist on the Incarnation. All that fleshly living and dying seemed to them somehow “incompatible with Deity.”

In fact, as Anselm explained, the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God is inescapable for the salvation of sinners, who are such by their own choice. Anselm asked, “Does not the reason why God ought to do the things we speak of seem absolute enough when we consider that the human race, that work of His so very precious, was wholly ruined, and that it was not seemly that the purpose which God had made concerning man should fall to the ground...?”

God has a great and glorious plan for humankind, which we have forfeited by our pursuit of sin and selfishness rather than of the goodness and glory of God. God had to become a man to save us, Anselm explained, for if He had done so by any other means—say, by an angel—then we would by right have to be the servants of that being; and, if we were the servants of any being other than God, we would “in no wise be restored to that dignity” and abundant life which God intends for us and which would have been ours if we had not sinned.

Further, because sin had entered the world through men, justice required that sin should be vanquished by a man. Those who are guilty must be made to pay. Yet no human being born of women would ever qualify for such a task, given the stain of original sin and our inability to overcome it through our own efforts. Thus, all humankind would appear to be doomed, since none among their kind could be found to redeem them.

### *The new Man*

We need a new Man for our salvation, a Man sent from God Who is both Man *and* God—a God/Man. For only such a Man can fulfill the righteousness that we have spurned, and only such a Man can break the power

### *Who Is Jesus?*

of death which we deserve.

And Jesus is the only such Man.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, is thus the *only* way salvation can be accomplished for human beings (Acts 4.12), for, by obeying and fulfilling all the Law of God, He has fulfilled the righteousness we spurned. This is what theologians refer to as the *active obedience* of Christ.

And He has borne the judgment we deserve, according to the justice of God's Law, by His *passive obedience* offering Himself as a substitute on our behalf. And each of these acts of obedience He accomplished as God in the human flesh with which He was born of the Virgin Mary.

#### *Who is Jesus?*

Who is Jesus? He is the fulfillment of God's righteousness and the bearer of our judgment: "For [God] made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5.21).

As by a man death came to the world, so it was necessary that, by a Man—the God/Man—death should be defeated in death, and life should reign in righteousness through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the Biblical perspective on humankind's greatest need and only hope. It may seem irrational or unseemly to the mind which is not submitted to God's Word; but to those who will allow their thoughts to be enlightened by Scripture, the redemptive work of Jesus makes perfect sense.

#### *Search the Scriptures*

1. We must submit our thinking to God's thinking if we're going to understand God's salvation. What do the following verses teach us about why this is so difficult for some people? Ephesians 2.1-3; Romans 8.5-7; 1 Corinthians 2.13, 14:

2. Read John 3.1-20. How did Jesus respond to a man who said to Him, "This doesn't make sense"? What were His main points?

3. Read Acts 17.22-34. How did Paul seek to influence the thinking of some "worldly-minded" men?

*Next steps—Preparation: Nicodemus knew the Scriptures The worldly philosophers of Athens did not know the Scriptures. How were Jesus' and Paul's presentations alike? How were they different? How did each appeal to the reason of the hearers?*

### 3 Obedience Restored

*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*  
Romans 5.19

#### *Obedient unto death*

It's possible, as we engage someone with the Good News of Jesus—even someone whose heart is being stirred to consider spiritual things—that we may hear an objection about sin. Put simply, our friends may not consider themselves to be sinners, or they may insist that if God is love He will accept us just as we are, sin and all.

We'll need to be ready to help them see, not what seems to make sense to them, but what the Bible clearly teaches.

The Scriptures explain that the disobedience of Adam plunged the entire human race into sin and death (Romans 5.12-17). All people are born in sin and are thus naturally inclined to disobey God, preferring instead the sinful desires of our own hearts (Rom. 1.18-21). This is what is referred to as the doctrine of original sin. Nothing in us is either willing or able to overcome this preference for disobeying God. The Scriptures even speak of us as enemies of God while we are in this condition (Rom. 5.10).

How, then, can we ever be made acceptable to Him, and how can we live in His favor, since we *will* not and *cannot* obey His Word? How will we ever be restored to a path of obedience, so that we might know the blessings of God in every area of our lives, and thus realize the fullness of His good and perfect plan?

Anselm explained that it was to restore obedience to humankind that the Son of God became a man and willingly submitted to the righteous Law of God and the punishment of our sin. God the Father did not compel His Son to die, Anselm explained to Boso, “but He suffered death of His own will, not yielding up His life as an act of obedience, but on account of His obedience in maintaining holiness; for He held out so firmly in this obedience that He met death on account of it.”

Whereas Adam chose to sin, plunging us all into rebellion against God, Jesus chose the path of obedience, perfect obedience, and endured the hostility of sinners. Thus He opened the way to salvation through Himself (Jn. 14.6).

#### *Two aspects*

There are two aspects to the obedience which Jesus accomplished on behalf of sinful men. I mentioned these briefly in our previous installment, but I want to visit them again here.

The first is what theologians refer to as Jesus' *active* obedience. By His active obedience Jesus perfectly fulfilled all the righteous requirements of God's Law. He never failed in a single jot or tittle of the Law, but kept and fulfilled all it requires, perfectly, and at all times. Thus He presented to God a righteousness full and complete, without stain or fault. We have no righteousness of our own and thus no right to be in the Presence or know the salvation of a righteous God. Our only hope of righteousness is in the *imputed* righteousness of the God/Man (2 Cor. 5.21). His righteousness is the ground on which God is willing to accept us.

The second aspect of Christ's obedience is what is known as His *passive* obedience. By this Jesus allowed Himself to be taken and crucified to suffer the punishment of a holy and just God against the sins of every human being. God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, as Paul said, so that, through His active and passive obedience—not ours—we might be declared righteous in the sight of God. Jesus' death for sin is



## *Who Is Jesus?*

*sufficient* to pay for the sins of every human being (1 Jn. 2.2). But His death and resurrection are only *efficient*—that is, they only have saving effects—for those who believe in Him as Savior and Lord (Acts 2.36-47).

By actively submitting to the *requirements* of the Law of God, Jesus accomplished the righteousness we require to know, enjoy, and serve God. By submitting to the *punishment* of the Law at the hands of wicked men, He became our Substitute, and, taking our sins upon Himself, bore our sin away, so that all who believe in Him have no reason to fear the wrath of God. Now all people possess the means, through Jesus Christ, for enjoying fellowship with God forever.

### *Obedient and exalted*

Anselm summarized this reason for the Incarnation of Christ: “So the Father desired the death of the Son, because He was not willing that the world should be saved in any other way, except by man’s doing so great a thing as that which I have mentioned [he means, restoring obedience]. And this, since none could accomplish it, availed as much with the Son, Who so earnestly desired the salvation of man, as if the Father had commanded Him to die; and, therefore, as the Father gave Him commandment, so He did, and the cup which the Father gave to Him He drank, being obedient unto death.”

Because of His obedience—active and passive—and as the culmination of it, [Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God](#) and has received a Kingdom and glory and honor (cf. Dan. 7.9-14; Ps. 110). Now He is advancing His rule on earth as it is in heaven (Phil. 2.5-11), giving His Kingdom to His saints, who inherit and rule in it forever (Dan. 7.18-27). The obedience of Jesus Christ our King cancels our sins and provides a power for righteousness by which we are increasingly transformed into His image as His Word and Spirit work in us (Phil. 2.13; 2 Cor. 3.12-18).

As Jesus obeyed the Father, fulfilling all righteousness, so all who believe in Him are called to obey His Word as well, not that they might earn salvation, but that, being saved, they might participate in the life of Christ by the power of His Spirit, and thus know full and abundant life in Him. Through the obedience of Christ, we are saved, and through the obedience of Christ we obey, unto righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, precisely according to God’s eternal plan.

### *Search the Scriptures*

1. Explain the *active* obedience of Jesus. Support your answer with Scripture, either those cited here or others.
2. Explain the *passive* obedience of Jesus. Support your answer with Scripture, either those cited here or others.
3. Why do those who might be searching for God need to know both these forms of Jesus’ obedience?

*Next steps—Demonstration: How visible is the righteousness of Jesus in you? What opportunities for demonstrating that righteousness will you have today?*

## 4 For the Honor of God

*“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”* John 17.4

### *The honor of God*

In *Cur Deus Homo*, his great dialog on the reason for the Incarnation of the Son of God, Anselm of Canterbury, explained to his student, Boso, that God had to become a man because He desired the salvation of men so much. And, since there was nothing men could do to save themselves, God would have to restore them to His original purposes in the same way they had initially fallen from them. As a man had been the occasion of humankind’s fall from grace, so only a Man, and only One capable of perfect obedience, and thus also God, would be able to accomplish the salvation God desires for us.

Jesus Christ became the God/Man to take away the pains of death and restore people to a path of obedience and abundance before God, by bringing them salvation through His own active and passive obedience. Thus He set God’s eternal plan on a fast-track toward glorious fulfillment.

Another reason for the Incarnation, Anselm explained, was to restore to God the honor that sin had taken from Him. Anselm explained, “to sin is nothing else than not to render to God his due.” To which Boso asked, “What is the debt which we owe to God?” And the Archbishop replied, “Every wish of a rational creature should be subject to the will of God...For it is such a will only, when it can be exercised, that does works pleasing to God...He who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of His own and dishonors Him; this is sin. Moreover, so long as he does not restore what he has taken away, he remains in fault; and it will not suffice merely to restore what has been taken away, but, considering the contempt offered, he ought restore more than he took away.”

Jesus, the Son of God became a Man to restore both the blessedness of human beings and the honor of God.

### *The demand of justice*

God cannot restore His own honor merely by compassion, Anselm explained. He cannot simply wave off our sins and forget them. This would be to dishonor Himself by ignoring His justice. As Anselm explained, “It is not fitting for God to pass over anything in His Kingdom undischarged.”

Further, simply to forgive sins without appropriate payment for them would be to remove any difference between those who are guilty and those who are not, “and this is unbecoming to God,” Anselm insisted. Moreover, to do this would be to equate injustice with justice, and even to equate injustice with God Himself, because He forgives injustice without proper judgment.

“God maintains nothing with more justice than His own dignity,” Anselm wrote. “Therefore the honor taken away must be repaid, or punishment must follow; otherwise, God will not be just to Himself, or He will be weak with respect to [the just and the unjust alike].” God’s justice must be satisfied if His honor is to be vindicated and restored, and for God to allow His honor to be neither vindicated nor restored would be to make injustice equal to God.

When Jesus prayed that He had accomplished the work for which God had sent Him, and had glorified Him on earth (Jn. 17.4), this is what He had in mind. Jesus restored the honor of God by His work of obedience, and, by so doing, He has made it possible for us to honor Him henceforth in every aspect of our lives. But the greater glory of God, which Jesus had already fulfilled in His heart and mind, was accomplished on the cross of Calvary, and then, out of the tomb on the first Easter morning.

## *Who Is Jesus?*

### *To glorify God in all things*

“Man’s chief end,” the catechism declares, “is to glorify God.” We could not glorify or honor God, but would instead only continue to dishonor Him, apart from the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dead in our trespasses and sins and inclined in our hearts only to disobedience, we need a power beyond this world to rescue us from our transgressions and to set us on a path of knowing and glorifying God.

We were created to know, love, and glorify God; and this is the life in which we know our greatest joy and fulfillment. But more important than this, the life of redemption is that life which alone can give to God the honor and glory and praise which are His due, and which we are enabled to offer by the grace of Jesus Christ our Savior and King.

Why did God become a Man? Because we all have incurred a debt we cannot pay, the debt of honoring God according to His due. He made us. He gave us life. He fills our lives with good things. And His goal in this is that, through thanksgiving and praise, we might honor and glorify Him and, in so doing, know the joy of His pleasure and fullness of life. Jesus came to restore us to such a life, that we might honor and glorify God and thus know abundant life in Him, precisely as He intended.

### *Search the Scriptures*

1. According to Paul in Romans 3.10-20, what are the effects of our being fallen in sin?
2. How did God restore us from this fallen condition (Rom. 3.21-26)?
3. For those who are thus restored, how should they seek to honor God (vv. 27-31)?

*Next steps—Demonstration: Jesus honored God, thus making it possible for us, through His obedience, to honor God as well. How will you honor God today?*

## 5 For the Happiness of Men

*“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* John 10.10

### *Not what God intended*

The Scriptures expose to the light what every wrong-believing person knows to be true about their life: that happiness and fulfillment are elusive, and disappointment and disillusionment are pretty much the norm in life.

To which Christianity says, “Not so.”

Paul tells us that apart from God people have no hope in this life (Eph. 2.12). Everything on which they depend for happiness is either fleeting or inadequate, leaving them wondering aloud, “Is that all there is?”

What’s more, all people live in the fear of death (Heb. 2.15) and are stalked by the prospect of judgment for their wrongdoings. Guilt and shame run like polluted rivers in the souls of all but the most hardened of heart. Many perhaps resonate with the bumper sticker that reads, “Are we having fun yet?”

This is not what God intended when He created men and women. He made us to be upright, happy, full of joy, abounding in pleasure, and flourishing in good works. His purpose for us is to know and enjoy Him, and to serve Him in full and bounteous flourishing with all the gifts of personality, relationships, creation, and culture.

But sin has ruined the promise of our being. Sin not only robs God of His honor, but it also robs human beings of their longed-for happiness. Unless something is done to take away our sin, we will never know the kind of happiness which God intends for us.

### *The way to happiness*

Here, Anselm explained to Boso, is yet another reason why God had to become a Man. By satisfying the debt of our sins, Jesus has opened the way to true and lasting happiness for all who believe in Him. Indeed, our happiness could not be achieved, Anselm explained, apart from the work of Christ in the Incarnation: “Therefore, consider it settled that, without satisfaction, that is, without voluntary payment of the debt, God can neither pass by sin unpunished nor can the sinner attain that happiness, or happiness like that, which he had before he sinned.”

The reason for the Incarnation is, besides satisfying the debt of sin and bringing honor to God, to provide for the joy and happiness of men. Most people have completely lost sight of the “reason for the season” of Christmas. However, so powerful was the work of Christ’s Incarnation that untold millions of those who do not believe in Him share—if only for a season—in the happiness He has made possible for us.

### *The penalty, power, and presence of sin*

God became a Man, Anselm explained in *Cur Deus Homo*, so that human beings, trapped in a misery of our own creating, might be set free to know the happiness of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. That happiness, moreover, consists of two dimensions.

First is the happiness we may know here and now.

In this life those who come to salvation through faith in Christ are not immediately translated out of the world of sin; nor are they even completely freed from their own sinful tendencies. In this life we continue to know the blows and bruises of sinful behavior, both ours and that of others. The *penalty* of sin has been

### *Who Is Jesus?*

removed from us, but the *power* of sin continues to affect us, though we daily strive to make progress against it. However, despite this, believers who know their sins to be forgiven and who are pursuing a life of obedience to God through Jesus Christ can know true happiness, a deep-seated joy that not even the direst of circumstances can take away (cf. Hab. 3.17-19).

Yet our happiness now, while real, is but a foretaste of the eternal happiness which is yet to be, when we are finally translated from the *power* and the very *presence* of sin to live in glory with God forever.

And the greatest happiness we have, now and forever, is that of knowing God and living in His Presence. That we may know this increasingly day by day is a happiness from which nothing can keep us. That we will know it forever in a new world of untainted, unremitting beauty, goodness, and truth is the great hope and happiness of every Christian.

As Anselm explained, “rational nature was made holy by God, in order to be happy in enjoying Him...It is, therefore, established that rational nature was created for this end, viz., to love and choose the highest good supremely, for its own sake and nothing else...Wherefore rational nature was made holy, in order to be happy in enjoying the supreme good, which is God.”

Human beings could not be happy as God intended, unless God became a Man in the Incarnation of the Son of God to take away our sins and restore us in His righteousness to the Father Who made us. His having done this in Jesus is the reason for “joy to the world.”

#### *Search the Scriptures*

1. Read quickly through Ecclesiastes 2. No one ever enjoyed more favorable material conditions than Solomon. But where did this leave him? Why?
2. Read Habakkuk 3.17-19. Why could the prophet be filled with joy despite the loss of every material good?
3. What is it about the *Presence* of God that brings us such joy? Why can nothing else provide this?

*Next steps—Conversation: When have you known the Presence of the Lord unto deep and lasting joy? In a service of worship? During a time of Bible study and prayer? Wandering about in creation? What provoked that joy? How did it compare with mere happiness? Give thanks to God for the joy of your salvation. Then share this experience with a friend.*

## 6 To Defeat the Devil

*“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3.8*

### *Beginning and ending*

Christmas, every believer knows, is the celebration of a new beginning, the beginning of our redemption. In Jesus Christ God became a Man that He might destroy death, take away our sins, open to us the path of righteousness, and bring us into the happiness which knowing God affords for all who believe in Jesus Christ.

Only a God/Man could do this, only Jesus Christ.

Christmas marks the earthly beginning of a Kingdom without end and everlasting life with God (Is. 9.6, 7). And His Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven at the expense of the reign of the devil.

Because Christmas also marks an ending—the end of the reign of Satan. When the devil tempted Adam and Eve, and humankind fell into sin, a great insult was done by man against the honor of God. Happiness became a fleeting, unsatisfying experience. Human beings handed the devil a victory which he indulged for thousands of years, but which could not last forever.

Anselm explained to Boso, “Man being made holy was placed in paradise, as it were in the place of God, between God and the devil, to conquer the devil by not yielding to his temptation, and so to vindicate the honor of God and put the devil to shame, because that man, though weaker and dwelling upon earth, should not sin though tempted by the devil, while the devil, though stronger and in heaven, sinned without any to tempt him. And when man could easily have effected this, he, without compulsion and of his own accord, allowed himself to be brought over to the will of the devil, contrary to the will and honor of God.”

Just like we continue to do today.

### *A Man’s victory*

This treachery could not be allowed to stand, Anselm insisted: “Decide for yourself if it be not contrary to the honor of God for man to be reconciled to Him, with this calumnious reproach still heaped upon God; unless man first shall have honored God by overcoming the devil, as he dishonored him in yielding to the devil.”

How could the redemptive work of Christ ever be secure and certain apart from the utter defeat of the one who had made that work necessary by his rebellion against God and treachery against the human race?

Further, this had to be a victory achieved by a man, since defeat had come at the hands of men in the first place. Anselm: “Now the victory ought to be of this kind, that, as in strength and immortal vigor, [a man, Adam] freely yielded to the devil to sin, and on this account justly incurred the penalty of death; so, in His weakness and mortality, which He had brought upon himself, [the Man, Jesus] should conquer the devil by the pain of death, while wholly avoiding sin.”

God Himself was in no need of coming down from heaven to conquer the devil. He had already done that, expelling the devil from heaven and consigning him to eternal separation from divine happiness and bliss. Rather, Anselm explained, “God demanded that man should conquer the devil, so that he who had offended by sin should atone by holiness. As God owed nothing to the devil but punishment, so man must only make amends by conquering the devil as man had already been conquered by him.”

Such a victory could not be achieved by just any man, Anselm explained; it had to be achieved by a God/Man, the Son of God come to earth in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

## *Who Is Jesus?*

### *Total victory!*

This is what John meant when he wrote that Jesus Christ appeared at Christmas to destroy the works of the devil. “This little Babe, so few days old, is come to rifle Satan’s fold!” wrote Robert Southwell (1561-1595). The devil’s works had been introduced by men; they could only be erased by a Man, but not just any man, only the God/Man.

At His temptation in the wilderness Jesus bound the devil (Matt. 4.1-11; 12.22-29). On the cross He put the devil to public shame and sent him scurrying (Col. 2.15). Out of the tomb Jesus overcame the devil’s greatest weapon, the fear of death (Heb. 2.15). Now He reigns in glory, and is putting the devil and all His enemies under His feet, until the time when He, the God/Man, shall return in power finally and completely to destroy the devil and His works.

Jesus’ victory over the devil means that we, in His power, may continue in that victory, resisting the devil, growing through temptation, and bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7.1).

The devil still stalks about, and he can be dangerous for those who trust in their own power to defeat him (1 Pet. 5.8-10). But as we rest in Jesus, and draw on His Word and Spirit, the victory He gained over the devil during His earthly sojourn can be ours, every day of our lives.

At Christmas and every day we may rejoice in the new beginning we have in Jesus; but we rejoice as well in the victory over the devil which Jesus in His Incarnation achieved for us.

### *Search the Scriptures*

1. Read Matthew 4.1-11. How would you describe Jesus’ approach to defeating the devil?
2. What did Jesus accomplish during His temptation in the wilderness, and how did He describe that in Matthew 12.22-29? What are the implications of that for us?
3. How does Peter counsel us to keep the devil defeated in 1 Peter 5.8-10?

*Next steps—Preparation: How would you counsel a new believer to beware of the devil’s attacks and to resist him when necessary? Make sure this is your own practice every day.*

## 7 Only God Could Redeem Us

*None of them can by any means redeem his brother,  
Nor give to God a ransom for him—  
For the redemption of their souls is costly,  
And it shall cease forever—  
That he should continue to live eternally,  
And not see the Pit. Psalm 49.7-9*

### *A dialog*

The essential argument of Anselm of Canterbury's *Cur Deus Homo* is that only God could redeem men from their sins. Men, by our disobedience, have incurred a debt which we cannot repay. In the Incarnation of the Son of God, God came to earth to pay a debt which He did not owe.

Here is an exchange between Anselm and his student, Boso, which summarizes this point as well as any section of this wonderful book.

Anselm: "Yet we may say, although the whole work which God does for man is of grace, that it is necessary for God, on account of His unchangeable goodness, to complete the work which He has begun."

Boso: "I grant it."

Anselm: "But this cannot be effected, except the price paid to God for the sin of man be something greater than all the universe besides God."

Boso: "So it appears."

Anselm: "Moreover, it is necessary that he who can give God anything more valuable than all things in the possession of God, must be greater than all else but God himself."

Boso: "I cannot deny it."

Anselm: "Therefore none but God can make this satisfaction."

Boso: "So it appears."

Anselm: "But none but a man ought to do this, other wise man does not make the satisfaction."

Boso: "Nothings seems more just."

Anselm: "If it be necessary, therefore, as it appears, that the heavenly kingdom be made up of men, and this cannot be effected unless the aforesaid satisfaction be made, which none but God can make and none but man ought to make, it is necessary for the God/Man to make it."

### *All of grace*

But we must never lose sight of the fact that all this great and glorious work of God was not done out of necessity. God was not required to create men and the world, nor to redeem fallen men, and the Son of God was not commanded or forced to take on human form for their redemption. Nothing outside of God compelled Him to undertake this glorious and amazing work of redemption at such cost to Himself and His own dear Son. He simply chose to do so, motivated by nothing more than infinite and unfathomable love.



*Who Is Jesus?*

Here's how Anselm summarized this: "For this He became man; for this He did and suffered all things undertaken by Him; for this He chose as He did. For therefore were they necessary [the things He suffered], because they were to be, and they were to be because they were, and they were because they were; and if you wish to know the real necessity of all things which He did and suffered, know that they were of necessity, because He wished them to be. But no necessity preceded His will."

*The meaning of Christmas*

The Incarnation of the Son of God – the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – is supremely and solely an act of divine grace, a measure taken out of love for poor, miserable, rebellious creatures such as you and I.

Only God could redeem us, and only by coming among us as one of us—a God/Man. In the Incarnation, Jesus of Nazareth destroyed death, restored obedience to men, returned honor to God, achieved our everlasting happiness and bliss, and destroyed the works of the devil. This is why Christians celebrate Christmas, and why we are determined to preserve its meaning against every secularist and materialist assault on its real significance.

Who is Jesus? He is the God/Man. The Redeemer of the world. And there is salvation in no other Name than His.

Read *Cur Deus Homo*. If you will, you will discover new depths of meaning, gratitude, and joy to the timeless words of our most glorious Christmas carol, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come!"

*Next steps--Conversation Summarize Anselm's argument in answering the question, "Why the Incarnation?" Then, go back to one or two of those friends you talked with earlier, and share your understanding of Christmas.*

*Who Is Jesus?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why do people need to be redeemed? Why can we not redeem ourselves?
2. Why was it necessary for God to become a Man in Jesus? Why do we say He is the God/Man?
3. Why did Jesus need to restore the honor of God?
4. How did Jesus make it possible for us to know true happiness?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this installment of *A Christian Guidebook*?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship to help us extend our ministry and resources to others. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, P. O. Box 8213, Essex, VT 05451.

Thank you.