

48-02-02.wpd --Christ's Epiphany in You
Epiphany, manifestation, glory, death, life, light, body
Gal 2:20
God wants the glory in Christ to shine out from us.

INTRODUCTION:

–**Title.** This subject could be preached from several passages in the NT, but I've chosen, as our **text**, Gal 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

–*Epiphany means manifestation.* It describes how God, through Christ, was made visible to humanity. Christ's manifestation is the theme of Epiphany season, which starts January 6th and ends on Ash Wednesday. What Christmastide announced was God's Incarnation. Epiphany *tells* what His Incarnation demonstrated. Various episodes in Jesus' life are talked about during this season, but each story has this in common: the manifestation of God's glory in Christ always came about through His *physical* presence, His *bodily* presence. His epiphany is incarnational.

–God is eternally committed to this incarnational pattern of ministering to His creation. We see His intention at the start of human history in the Garden, but it was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Not only has He wed Himself to a real human body for all eternity, but He wants to expand that epiphany. **HOM.idea.** Gal 2:20 explains that process

I. The Cross Is Judgment Day Early

- A. That concept is best seen in a prophecy about Christ 600 years before He came-- Isa 53:6, We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
1. Because our Creator is a God of justice, human sin had to be dealt with justly. (God put justice as an ideal in human hearts. *People know* what justice is and cling to it as *a standard by which to evaluate* the governments that rule them.)
 2. But because our Creator is also a God of mercy, He wanted to establish justice with mercy. The only way He could do that was to get personally involved. [a quote I made up to use at the bottom of emails: "The only way God could get any closer to humanity than by taking upon Himself our human flesh was to take upon Himself our human sins."]
- B. When God wed Himself to our humanity by the Incarnation, a door

was opened up for us to wed ourselves to Him. *His Incarnation, the humanity He shares with us*, is that doorway, but it opened up at only one location: *at the Cross--* Gal 2:20a, *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*

- C. The judgment that fell on Jesus when "the LORD . . . laid on him the iniquity of us all" was our own judgment. It was *Judgment Day early!* (at least for all of us who have joined ourselves by faith to the God-Man who died on that Cross.)
- D. **God wants the glory of the life of Christ to shine out from us**, but for that to happen, Christ's life must be in us and our life must be in Him. The Cross is the point of rendezvous where that union takes place: Gal 2:20a, *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*

TRANS: God in Christ wed Himself to humanity by *Incarnation*; by faith, we wed ourselves to God through that same Incarnation, but only at the cost of death, both His death and our own. [At a wedding altar: two lives become one, symbolized often with two candles that are extinguished after a single common candle is lit by their separate flames. A marriage is ignited, a common life begins, but only at the cost of two deaths, the death of a bachelor and of a virgin.] This is why the Communion Table represents both death and life, not only the death of Christ but our own death to self. And the food we eat there sustains not our old life, but God's incarnated life, which He invites us to share. That's why it's called "Communion," a "sharing."

II. Salvation Is Heavenly Life Early

- A. If we have Christ's life abiding in us, we have *heavenly life early*; we're walking around Earth with the life of Heaven in our hearts.
1. Just as Christ's glory was manifest by His *incarnational presence*, we also become incarnational channels for the glory of Christ to be seen in our physical, bodily presence on Earth-- Gal 2:20b, *The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 2. After years of meditating on the Incarnation, I now *say* and *think* and *write* so much about the human body. [After being in art classes, I see why artists historically have placed such emphasis on depicting the human figure. It's like a built-in reflex of copying the artwork of the Almighty Artist!]
- a. God's original purpose in making humans was not to have more angels, but to have spirits intrinsically integrated with physical

bodies made out of the cosmic dust of this universe.

- b. Our bodies are still awaiting their glorifying transformation promised on Resurrection Day, but *right now*, we already have the glorious life of the resurrected Christ living inside them.

B. This is what Epiphany means today: the glory in Christ shining out from us.

1. The doorway opened by the Cross for our union with Christ was God's means of restoring to us the divine glory of His image that we were supposed to manifest from the beginning.
2. Heaven is not different from this . . . it's just more of the same [in real estate, they say it's "location" that counts.] In salvation, it's not whether we are located on earth or in heaven, but it's Who inhabits our real estate.

C. What does it mean for us to be epiphanies for Christ, for His glory to shine out of us?

1. It means we're to be like light bulbs lit up with God's glory in Christ-- 2 Cor 4:6-7, For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.
2. It means our actions are to incarnationally reflect our union with God-- Mat 5:16 (NASB), "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
3. It means we must depend utterly upon God for both receiving His glory and reflecting it back to Him, just as Jesus prayed in John 17:1b, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."

CONCLUSION:

--Epiphany season started long before the modern habit of making New Year's resolutions. But I wonder if the idea of resolving to do better has its roots in this season of the Christian year. The best resolution we can have is to make Paul's affirmation our own: (Gal 2:20, TLB) "I have been crucified with Christ: and I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the real life I now have within this body is a result of my trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."