

Why was Christ incarnated?
Episode 9

+**Nahed:** My dear viewers, you are most welcome again to our program “Questions About Faith”. It is always our pleasure to receive your questions and to answer them. And once again it is our pleasure and honor to have with us Reverend Father Zakaria Botros. Welcome to you Father.

+**Father:** It’s my pleasure.

+**Nahed:** We have introduced in several episodes before the fact that God is Triune and that He is not three gods. We also presented the fact of God’s incarnation and manifestation in Jesus Christ. And today we meet with the Reverend Father to discuss the topic of the crucifixion of Christ. Was Christ truly crucified? Or was it made to appear so to them? This topic involves so many questions. For one, how could Christians believe in a crucified God? And who ruled the universe when Christ died on the cross and was buried in the grave? And so many other questions which by the grace of God you will be answering. Shall we start then with the first question? You remember Father in a previous episode I asked you about the reason Why God was incarnated. And why does Christianity believe in God's incarnation in Christ? And do you recall that you said the incarnation was for the purpose for redemption. In fact there was no time to discuss this topic. So would you please clarify what you meant by the statement: Incarnation was for the purpose of accomplishing redemption? Please go ahead.

+**Father:** This is a well formulated question and the topics are all well-linked. Truly the concept of incarnation and its true purpose is the redemption of man. Why? This will drag us to tell the story from the beginning. So let us start at the beginning. And what is the beginning? And what is the story? The beginning goes back to the creation of man, that's the very

beginning... man's creation, and the story is man's fall, and then the designing of a plan for his salvation. So shall we start the story?

+**Nahed:** O, please.

+**Father:** Let's start the story at the beginning. The Bible points us to a very important fact about the very beginning at man's creation. In the book of Proverbs, the Proverbs of Solomon the Wise chapter 8 and verse 31 it says "And My delight was with the sons of men." That is God's delight is with the sons of men. What does His delight mean? His happiness, His joy, His gladness, His glee is with mankind, with the sons of men, and therefore God who is omnipotent had it in mind to create man after the best pattern and the best likeness. And that is why the book of Genesis says that when God thought about creating man, He created him in the most wonderful image and likeness, isn't that right?

+**Nahed:** Yes.

+**Father:** Or also according to the Quran "God created man in the best formation." Isn't that right? So it says here "God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him" not with eyes and nose as we mentioned previously; it's the image of magnificence, of transcendence, of intellect, of eternal life. Man is an intelligent being, just as God is, immortal like God, isn't that right? So then God created man in the most refined image that is out of love: "My delight is with the sons of men." Isn't that right? He could have created man like a lion, but the lion is an animal, He could have created a woman like a deer, but a deer is still an animal. An articulate animal in this case, an articulate deer. Thus we see God's love since eternity past because God in the expression of the Bible about who God is, it defines God as Love. His heart overflows with love for the creation of His hands, and most particularly for man who was made in God's image and likeness. So He created man and

placed him in the Garden of Eden, after having provided him with all convenience and means of sustenance. An entire paradise, joy, gladness. He rejoiced in him. Man was living in happiness with his Father, just like a child in his father's home. Can you imagine the amount of joy that a child experiences in his father's home? The days of childhood are the days of true happiness, with no cares, no distress, spoon-fed life in his father's home. This was the commencement of mankind, the creation of mankind, until the danger point came when Satan was envious of man and was envious because the state in which man was found. Man had it better and more than he did, because he was an archangel when he fell, owing to his pride. And then all the trouble began and you know the rest...

Let's go to the main point; which is: We have spoken now about man's creation and we said that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him." And why? Because His delight is with the sons of man and at the same time in Surah 95 verse 4 it says "We have created man with the finest formation." Well, there is at least some common ground. Then it goes on to say that "the Lord God commanded the man saying "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for the day you eat from it you shall surly die." And this is the touchstone. This is the beginning of the problem. You know the same narrative is reported in the Quran in Surah 20 verse 100, no I mean in Surah 2 from verse 35 to verse 38 where it says "We said: Adam, settle down in the garden both you and your wife, and eat freely from it anywhere either of you may wish, yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers." Exactly the same idea. And this is where the trouble began: the problem of the fall. Do you want to know in more detail?

+**Nahed:** Yes Father, if you would please.

+**Father:** Also for the benefit of the viewers to know the story in its proper sequence.

+**Nahed:** Exactly.

+**Father:** Alright. We spoke about the creation out of God's love. God created man in the best image and likeness, then Satan came and began to attack this happy man, who rejoiced in God's love, so he started to entice him. God had a tree in the garden called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This may also raise some questions from the viewers: Why did God create such a tree to start with?

Nahed: Well, yes.

+**Father:** Isn't that right?

+**Nahed:** He would have saved us all this trouble then...

+**Father:** He already knew that man will fall into sin, rebel and eat from the tree. So why didn't He remove from the beginning?

You know there is a question prior to this one: Satan himself, why had God created him, since He knew Satan would entice man and bring him down? Why had He created him? Why had He allowed him? Aren't these all questions? I do believe you would like to ask these questions too, they occur to everyone.

+**Nahed:** Yes, they occur to every man.

+**Father:** Then, let us start with Satan. Why had God created Satan? The truth is God had not created Satan. Has Satan created himself?

No, not at all, God created angels, God had created angels. Satan was an archangel- you'll find this in the book of Isaiah chapter 14 and also in the Book of Ezekiel chapter 28. Shall we look them up? First Isaiah 14, what does it say? Here it is, it says "How have you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer son of the morning?" This is a metaphor denoting the archangel Lucifer,

son of the morning. “How you were cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations?” What is the reason? It goes on to say “For you have said in your heart ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will also sit on the mountain of congregation, on the farthest sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. -Pay close attention to this bit- I will become like the Most High’.” Pride. “I want to become like God.”

“Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.” This was how the angel was created in a superior band, an Archangel, but pride entered his heart and when he was filled with pride “Pride goes before destruction, and a high spirit before fall.” We find the same thing in Ezekiel chapter 28, but with the use of another illustration. What does it say? “You” God is addressing the angel; his name was Sataniel the angel, Sataniel

+**Nahed:** Where did the word Satan come from then?

+**Father:** I tell you where it came from. The word Sataniel is made of two syllables 'Satan' and 'iel', Satan and 'iel.'

+**Nahed:** You mean Satan is the devil.

+**Father:** What about 'iel'? It means God. The same as Bethel the house of God, Michael the angel Mikha and then God. Gabriel is Gabor of God. So 'iel' is the Hebrew word for God, so his name was Sataniel, sounds nice, isn't it? Satan now sounds bad and then he was separated from God, so the 'iel' part is dropped off and now his name is Satan, are you following? So this is the meaning of Satan, at the beginning he was an angel among God's angels, see what it says here? “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, you were in Eden the garden of God.” And here is the evidence he was talking about an angel in verse 14 he says “You were the anointed Cherub” What is a Cherub? Cherubim are a type of an

angel “You were the anointed Cherub, who covers, I established you, you were on the Holy mountain of God, you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you.”

+Nahed: Right. That is pride.

+Father: Yes, pride. He still continues “And you sinned, therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God and destroy you. Oh covering Cherub, your heart was lifted up because of your beauty” Here comes the pride “your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you corrupted your wisdom, for the sake of your splendour, you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of you splendour” when you saw how beautiful you were, pride entered you. And until today man experiences the same thing. When man is healthy he is proud when a woman sees that she has a pretty face, she gets proud. Conceit is an essential part and why? Because Satan has planted the seed of conceit into man, and you will see how “You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour; I cast you to the ground. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities. You shall become a horror; you shall be no more forever.” So this is how Satan was created as an angel.

+Nahed: What does it mean here “and you shall be no more forever” Does it mean annihilated?

+Father: No, it means no more in the presence of God forever, he was finished. He fell. And when he had fallen, he lost his prior glory.

+Nahed: He lost his prior glory.

+Father: Then he saw Adam in splendour and envied him. He would not leave him alone; it’s contrary to his nature.

Nahed: Yes, he wouldn't be Satan.

+**Father:** Well it rubbed him the wrong way; he couldn't bear it and he made up his mind to bring him down. "I will bring him down." So Satan went to him, which we find in chapter 3 in the Book of Genesis is that Satan went to whom?

+**Nahed:** To poor Eve.

+**Father:** Well I am only quoting here, no offence intended. I will only tell the truth and God is my witness whether you like it or not, whether you kick me out of your studio, this is not my problem, but I must be telling the truth.

+**Nahed:** Well I have a comment on that later.

+**Father:** So he goes to Eve, because Eve is curious; she is knowledge-hungry, and she likes to know everything. Perhaps Adam was busy working and doing his thing, yet there are men who are like that too. So he goes and says to her, and now pay close attention to the craftiness of the devil. He says to her "Is it true that God told you not to eat of all the trees of the garden?" Do you see how crafty? He is dragging her into the conversation. She said "Of course not. Who told you that? Of course He told us to eat from all the trees of the garden except for one single tree, that tree over there, the tree of knowledge of good and evil." So the devil asked: Why? -A subtle question- But Why? Why that in particular? Well, this is what God said. He said the day you eat from it you will surely die, so we simply keep away from it" But he says to her "Oh, no, no you won't die." He began to make God a liar. He said, no you won't die. Well, why has God forbidden it, if we are not going to die? He said: Oh well, you don't know. I know God pretty well. I was up there with Him but you don't know Him. God is sly, He is afraid, if you eat from that tree you would become like Him, you would know good from evil, all by yourselves. You eat of that and you become independent of God." He called it "independence", but in reality it is "separation from God."

+**Nahed:** He could not have told her you will be separated from God. He could not have mentioned the reality; he had to wrap it up in a nice package.

+**Father:** Right. He had to say “independence” “You would know good and evil all by yourselves. You won’t need Him any more.” Well, she ate and she gave the poor guy, her husband.

+**Nahed:** Oh, no don't say poor guy.

+**Father:** Oh the weakling then.

+**Nahed:** Why are you taking sides Father? Both of them were equally guilty.

+**Father:** Well. He tried to be courteous to her then.

+**Nahed:** He ate just as she did. It is true that the devil worked first on the weaker and more impulsive individual, but of course he took part in the transgression. It was his responsibility.

+**Father:** Yes he was responsible of course, but you know how it is!

+**Nahed:** Yes you want to blame it all on Eve.

+**Father:** No, no, no he was an active partner, an active partner in failure- he was a failure. He should have told her you can't do that woman.

+**Nahed:** Oh, yes, yes spit it out again,

+**Father:** Go to perish alone. Anyway, they both sinned.

Then remains a question. We answered the first one: Why has God created Satan? Well, He didn't create Satan. Satan rather fell. So now remains the second question: Why did God create the tree?

+**Nahed:** Oh, yes.

+**Father:** For the devil used it as an access point to trick them.

+**Nahed:** Yes, He left it right in front of them.

+**Father:** Yes right in front of them and told them don't come close to it, but why? I will tell you why. This is a very important part. If one does not understand this point, one will not understand God's plan at all, at all.

But this is an essential part, how? God created animals, right? And the birds and the fish and the trees, does any one of those have an intellect? No. But He created man with what? With an intellect, right?

+**Nahed:** Yes.

+**Father:** So the one with an intellect and you know what the proverb says “The one with an intellect discerns.” Right? He can discern things. The giving of an intellect to man requires that... requires giving him free will, so that his mind would want to go this way and not that way, to choose this way or that way. This is how the mind functions; otherwise the mind would be useless. There must be free will, and in order to have a free will there must be also a free choice, that is you have the freedom to choose either this or that, that is to want this and not to want that, so the one endowed with an intellect must be also characterized by free will, and a freedom to want and free choice, a freedom to choose to chose either this or that, but it will be impossible to worship God by remote control with no choices, right? So God gave him a litmus test

+**Nahed:** Certainly.

+**Father:** Certainly. To choose between living happily with God, or to fall, or to eat from the tree and be separated, so he might discern and choose. Then he will be truly intelligent, because what is the man worth, a complete man, if he has no intellect. I recall at the beginning of my ministry that I used to go around visiting. So I was once visiting a home. I found the people to be excellent; the man was very rich, a very important

official and it was a very happy home, but they had one spot of sadness. This sad aspect was that they had a young man; he was about 16, 17 years old, very respectable young man, such a good boy, very reasonable. He was sitting there, so they told me about the tragedy that they were going through. I asked about it and they told me “Well our son as you see him right there, he neither moves unless we move him, nor eats unless we feed him, nor go to the toilet – excuse me – unless we take him, he does not sleep unless we put him to sleep, he does not get up unless we wake him up.” “But why is it so?” And they said “Well, he is got no brains, but he was not dangerous, he poses no danger.”

+**Nahed:** He does not harm any body around him.

+**Father:** “He just sits there like a chair. You pull him away you take him along he goes along with you without objection. If you let him he sits around even the whole day no problem.” They were really really mournful, they were sad. “But why be sad if you have such a good young man, worth a whole lot?” They would say “How could he be worth a whole lot if he doesn't even understand?” And they would cry... they would really weep. This man was an irrigation inspector, an engineer working as an irrigation inspector that was ages ago almost 45 years ago. So he was very sad over his son, and he was really upset with God: Why God would try him with such an ordeal, Why would he give him such a child like that? Until he had a dream, that he was going his rounds on the canals, because he was an irrigation inspector, and went to a village that wanted to kill him because he had cut the water supply from them and channelled it to another village. It was in his power. “But how can you cut the water off from us? We are going to kill you.” And they were all carrying their axes and they wanted to chop him down, and all of a sudden he found the mayor running and telling all of them to stop. He said, “All of you, knock it off. Let him be, let him go because of his son who he is taking care of.” He woke up from his dream and he went and kissed his son's

hand and said “Thank you Lord, you are prolonging my life because of my son.” And despite his sadness in his heart, because his son was mindless. What would you have thought if God had created Adam, Adam and Eve without minds like the cattle?

+Nahed: That would have been very hard.

+Father: Would He have said “My delight is with the sons of men.” What delight would that be; it will be sorrow. But God created man with a mind to be perceptive, to choose and do things even if he lives with God he would live with his full will, and his full choice, wouldn't he? That is the advantage. So He placed for him the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as a litmus test, as a litmus test. Let me tell you a short story. You know how it is, one story brings another. Are you in a hurry?

+Nahed: No, you're most welcome Father

+Father: Once upon a time an atheist went to a pastor and said to him “The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the root of all our trouble. If you believe in such a thing, would you tell me why it existed?” He told him it is meant to be a test.” “What's this nonsense about a test? It shouldn't have been there.” The pastor said, “Ok. I am inviting you today to lunch at my place, we will have lunch together.” The man said “Ok.” He went to have lunch with him, so the pastor had prepared for him a very big table and all the pots were open except for a big dish that was covered. After a while he left the guy and went out to do his business. The atheist sat there looking at the food, looking at the other things, looking everywhere. Ok, the vegetables are there. Ok, but what's that dish? And he ended up uncovering it, and he found a rat that jumped up in his face. He screamed. So the pastor came to him and said “What have you done? Have you uncovered the dish?” Then he told him “This is the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

Isn't it? It is all about obedience. When I tell you not to do something you should obey willingly, but you disobeyed, and that is the result. Do you see my point?

So the intellect is essential, God created man as an intellectual human being and that's why He had to create for him a litmus test of choice and will, so that he could exercise his will, and exercise his mind. So Eve ate and gave Adam her husband. Both ate and both fell into sin, both fell and that's why the Bible says in Genesis 3 "Then the serpent said to the woman 'You will not surely die, for God knows on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" So she took from its fruit and ate, she also gave her husband with her and he ate, then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves covering".

Let us see the same thing in the Quran. Surah 20 verse 117 and verse 123. The same story. "Satan whispered to him, and said, 'Adam, shall I lead you to the tree of immortality and such control such will never disappear?'" So they both ate some of it and their private parts become apparent to them" private parts that is the nakedness "So they set to patching themselves over with leaves from the garden. Adam had disobeyed his Lord and was misled." This is the fall, this is the fall. This is the beginning of the story, the creation of man in love; they were living and having everything available to them. Then man exercised his mind, his free choice, his free will, listening to the devil and fell from the elevated status where he was. Isn't that clear?

+**Nahed:** Yes, this is the beginning of sin.

+**Father:** Well. Now this fall requires punishment.

+**Nahed:** Definitely.

+**Father:** Because the wages of sin is death. And punishment requires... you know I mean God in His love must forgive, and in order to forgive there must be a plan for redemption, and that is what we are going to talk about in its proper sequence. Isn't that right?

+**Nahed:** Yes, Father. Well of course the most urgent question comes after this one. It says: What's the relation between man's creation and the topic of redemption?

+**Father:** Well, we said that God created man in the best image and likeness out of love, but it was man who did not keep this magnificent image. As he fell into sin, his image was distorted; righteousness was turned into evil, purity became impurity, unity became separation from God, and that requires redemption, a plan of salvation.

+**Nahed:** Well, as a matter of fact we are running out of time. The program is almost over, and I am sure we will have many more discussions Father, because this topic is quite big, and it raises so many questions with everybody, both Muslims and Christians.

Thank you, my dear viewers and let me repeat again: if you have any questions or inquiries, please send them in to us and we are ready to answer you.

Thank you and we'll see you again.