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D I S C O U R S E 1

Divine Incarnations:
God's Emissaries

The Mission of Divine Love That Jesus Came to Fulfill



The Nature of an Avatar's Consciousness



The One Spirit: Source of All Creation



True Meaning of the Holy Trinity



The Cosmic Word or Holy Ghost:
Intelligent Creative Vibration of Aum



"Only Begotten Son" Refers Not to Jesus' Body,
but to His Christ Consciousness



How the Darkness of Delusion Blinds Man
to the Light of God's Presence in Creation



All Souls Are Children of God, Made in His Image

"The opening verses of Saint John's Gospel may rightly be called Genesis According to Saint John....[They] should be considered first when the true meaning of the life and teachings of Jesus is being sought."

Come to Me, O Christ, as the Good Shepherd

O Christ, beloved Son of God! thou didst embark on a storm-tossed sea of prejudiced minds. Their cruel thought waves lashed thy tender heart.

Thy trial on the Cross was an immortal victory of humility over force, of soul over flesh. May thine ineffable example hearten us to bear bravely our lesser crosses.

O Great Lover of Error-Torn Humanity! In myriad hearts an unseen monument has arisen to the mightiest miracle of love—thy words: “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Mayest thou remove from our eyes the cataracts of ignorance, that we see the beauty of thy message: “Love even thine enemies as thyself. Sick in mind or asleep in delusion, they are still thy brothers.”

O Cosmic Christ, may we, too, conquer the Satan of dividing selfishness that prevents the gathering in sweet accord of all men in the one fold of Spirit.

As thou art Perfection, yet wert crucified, teach us not to resent the inevitable tests of life: the daily challenge to our fortitude by adversities, our self-control by temptation, and our goodwill by misunderstanding.

Purified by contemplation on thee, innumerable devotees perfume their lives with emanations from thy flower soul. O Good Shepherd! thou ledest thy countless flock to the evergreen Pastures of Peace.

Our deepest aspiration is to see the Heavenly Father with open eyes of wisdom, as thou dost; and to know like thee that we are verily His sons. Amen.*

* From Paramahansa Yogananda's *Whispers from Eternity* (published by Self-Realization Fellowship).



D I S C O U R S E 1



Divine Incarnations:
God's Emissaries



“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

With these words, Jesus placed his signature on a unique life that enthroned him everlastingly on the altar of worshipful hearts as the incarnation of God's loving compassion. The Good Shepherd of souls opened his arms to all, rejecting none, and with universal love coaxed the world to follow him on the path to liberation through the example of his spirit of sacrifice, renunciation, forgiveness, love for friend and enemy alike, and supreme love for God above all else. As the tiny babe in the manger at Bethlehem, and as the savior who healed the sick and raised the dead and applied the salve of love on the wounds of errors, the Christ in Jesus lived among men as one of them that they too might learn to live like gods.

For mere mortals to cope with a life of unsolved and unsolvable mysteries in an inscrutable universe created by the omnipotence of God, of the omniscient essence of His omnipresence, would indeed be an overwhelming challenge were it not for divine emissaries who come on earth to speak with the voice and authority of God for the guidance of man.

Aeons past, in ancient higher ages in India, *rishis* enunciated the manifestation of Divine Beneficence, of “God with us,” in terms of divine incarnations, avatars—God incarnate on earth in enlightened beings. The eternal, omnipresent, unchanging Spirit has neither a corporeal nor heavenly form called God. Nor as the Lord God Creator

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does He fashion a form in which He then deigns to dwell among His creatures. Rather, He makes Himself known through the divinity in worthy instruments. Many are the voices that have intermediated between God and man, *khanda avatars*, or partial incarnations in God-knowing souls. Less common are the *purna avatars*, liberated beings who are fully one with God; their return to earth is to fulfill a God-ordained mission. The Lord in the sacred Hindu Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, declares: “Whenever virtue declines and vice predominates, I incarnate as an Avatar. In visible form I appear from age to age to protect the virtuous and to destroy evildoing in order to reestablish righteousness” (IV:7–8). The same one glorious infinite consciousness of God, the Universal Christ Consciousness, *Kutastha Chaitanya*, becomes familiarly apparelled in the individuality of an enlightened soul, graced with a distinguishing personality and godly nature appropriate to the times and purpose of the incarnation.

Without this intercession of God’s love come to earth in the example, message, and guiding hand of His avatars, it would scarce be possible for groping humanity to find the path into God’s kingdom midst the dark miasma of world delusion, the cosmic substance of human habitation. Lest His benighted children be lost forever in creation’s delusive labyrinths, the Lord comes again and again in God-illumined prophets to light the way. The glory of Christ in the form of Jesus made visible the Invisible Light that leads to God.

Because the periodic recurrence of divine incarnations is a part of God’s creative enterprise, signs of such a birth are imprinted in the Grand Master Plan. Sages, through their awakened soul intuition, can read the heavenly inscriptions; and if it be in accord with God’s will that such a future event be made known, they prophesy in plain or veiled revelations. This is one of the many ways in which God assures His children of His awareness of their need for His presence amongst them. Of the future coming of Lord Jesus, several references in the Old Testament are cited by devout Christians and Biblical scholars. From the book of prophet Isaiah:

“*The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel*”* (7:14).

* “Which being interpreted is, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

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My servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high....So shall he sprinkle many nations (52:13, 15).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all....He was taken from prison and from judgment...he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was he stricken....He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (53:6, 8, 12).

Divine intercession to mitigate the cosmic law of cause and effect, by which a man suffers from his errors, was at the heart of the mission of love Jesus came to fulfill. Moses brought the law from God to man, emphasizing the awful justice that befalls willful heedlessness. Jesus came to demonstrate the forgiveness and compassion of God, whose love is a shelter even from exacting law. Similarly, Jesus was preceded by Gautama Buddha, the “Enlightened One,” whose incarnation reminded a forgetful generation of the Dharma Chakra, the ever-rotating wheel of karma—self-initiated action and its effects which make each man, and not a Cosmic Dictator, responsible for his own present condition. Buddha brought heart back into the arid theology and mechanical rituals into which the ancient Vedic religion of India had fallen after the passing of a higher age in which Bhagavan Krishna, India’s most beloved of avatars, preached the way of divine love and God-realization through the practice of the supreme spiritual science of yoga, union with God.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* Such was the exceptional mission shouldered by Jesus. Intercession by intimates of God is the palliative elixir that gives a weakened mortal the necessary strength to rise and conquer the forces of cosmic law he has roused against himself by disobedient behavior. The interceder stands with the devotee, offering him defense in the form of impermeable wisdom, and sometimes deflecting onto himself a portion of a devastating onslaught.

Jesus came in a darkened age that was little able to appreciate him; but his message of the love of God and his intercession on behalf of suffering humanity was not only for that time but for all ages to come—that God is with man in his darkest moments as well as in enlightened times. He reminded a world fearful of their Creator as a God

* John 15:13 (see Discourse 71).