

JESUS' INCARNATION

1. The Definition of the Incarnation.

- a. The incarnation is the moment and resulting condition when God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary as the baby Jesus and thereby became, permanently and forever, fully man in addition to being fully God.

2. The Mystery of the Incarnation.

- a. The incarnation is a great mystery.
 - (1) **1 Ti 3:16** 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.
- b. “The mystery of the incarnation is unfathomable. We cannot explain it; we can only formulate it.”¹

3. The Plan of the Incarnation.

- a. The incarnation was the Father’s idea, and the Son immediately assented.
 - (1) **He 10:5-7** 5 Consequently, when Messiah came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. 6 In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. 7 Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your desire, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.

4. The Motivation for the Incarnation.

- a. Love.
- b. Humility.
 - (1) **2 Co 8:9** 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Messiah, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.
 - (2) **Php 2:5-8** 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Messiah Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form (μορφή) of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself by taking the form (μορφή) of a servant, being born in the likeness (ὁμοίωμα) of men. 8 And being found in human form (σχήμα), he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

5. The Necessity of the Incarnation.

- a. No incarnation, no redemption or restoration.

6. Prophecies of the Incarnation.

7. The Timing of the Incarnation.

¹ J. I. Packer.

- a. **Ga 4:4** 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law....

8. The Manner of the Incarnation.

- a. The incarnation took place precisely when Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb.
- b. "The incarnation was the way in which Christ took on humanity. The word means 'in flesh,' and the method of the incarnation was the virgin birth. Though there has been debate over the meaning of 'virgin' in Isaiah 7:14, there can be no question that the New Testament quotation of the prophecy intends us to understand 'virgin' (Mt 1:23)."²
- c. The physical appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament were in his preincarnate form. In the Old Testament, Jesus may sometimes appear angelic or human, but he was not fully either. At the incarnation, he becomes fully human. In the Old Testament, Jesus *appears* human. In the New Testament, he *is* human.
- d. Jesus was not human until he was conceived by the Spirit in Mary's womb.
(1) **Jn 1:14** 14 And the Word became (γίνομαι) flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- e. "Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home."³
- f. Jesus was incarnated not as a king's son but as a carpenter's son. He was not placed in a royal crib but in a stable manger.

9. The Results of the Incarnation.

- a. The incarnation did not at all diminish Jesus' deity.
(1) "When the second Person of the Godhead became incarnate there was immediately introduced the seemingly insuperable problem of uniting God with man and combining an infinite and eternal Person with one that is finite and temporal. Orthodox Christianity, however, has been united in the opinion that the incarnation did not diminish the deity of the second Person of the Trinity even during the period of humiliation and suffering while Christ was on earth. Such limitations as may have been involved in the kenosis did not subtract one attribute or in any sense make Christ less than God."⁴
(2) At the incarnation, the infinite one became finite yet retained his infinitude.
- b. Jesus had to be, and was, a Jewish male.
(1) See Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Jesus Was a Jew*.
(2) **Ge 12:3** 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
(3) **Jn 4:22** 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.
(4) **Ro 9:4-5** 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

³ G. K. Chesterton.

⁴ J. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*.

the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

- (5) **Ga 4:4** 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law....

10. The Purposes of the Incarnation.

- a. To fulfil the Davidic covenant.
 - (1) **Lk 1:31-33** 31 And behold, you [Mary] will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.
- b. To reveal God to man.
 - (1) **Jn 1:14-18** 14 The Word (λόγος) became flesh (σάρξ) and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory (δόξα), glory as of the one and only (μονογενής) from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... 18 No one has seen God at any time. The one and only (μονογενής) God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained (ἐξηγήομαι, aor.)⁵ him.
 - (2) **Jn 14:7-11** 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him. 8 Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. 9 Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, Show us the Father? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.
- c. To qualify as the Second Adam.
 - (1) **1 Co 15:47-49** 47 The first man [Adam] was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man [Jesus] is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.
- d. To save humanity from the curse of sin and death.
 - (1) **Mt 1:21** 21 She [Mary] will bear a son (υἱός), and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.
 - (2) **Lk 19:10** 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.
 - (3) **Ro 8:3** 3 For God has done what the Torah, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin (τὴν ἁμαρτίαν) in the flesh (τῇ σαρκί)...
 - (4) **Ga 4:4-5** 4 When the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

⁵ “[T]o set forth in great detail, *expound*. Oft. as t.t. for the activity of priests and soothsayers who impart information or reveal divine secrets; also used w. ref. to divine beings themselves ... *he has made known or brought news of* (the invisible God) J 1:18” (BDAG, 349).

- (5) **Php 2:8** 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- (6) **Col 1:21-22** 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy, blameless, and above reproach before him...
- (7) **Heb 10:10** 10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- (8) “Only a man can die, so the Saviour had to become incarnate in order to be able to die.”⁶
- (9) Jesus’ incarnation cannot be separated from his crucifixion. Jesus was born to die.
- e. To give abundant life.
 - (1) **Jn 10:10** 10 I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
 - (2) **2 Co 8:9** 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Messiah, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.
 - (3) “The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”⁷
- f. To testify to the truth.
 - (1) **Jn 18:37-38** 37 Then Pilate said to [Jesus], So you are a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. 38 Pilate said to him, What is truth?
- g. To learn obedience through suffering.
 - (1) **He 5:7-8** 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.
- h. To be a merciful, faithful, and sympathetic high priest.
 - (1) **He 2:16-18** 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.
 - (2) **He 4:14-15** 14 Because then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- i. To provide an example for living.
 - (1) **1 Pe 2:21** 21 For to this you have been called, because Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.
 - (2) **1 Jn 2:6** 6 ...Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.
- j. To destroy the works of the devil.

⁶ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 178.

- (1) **He 2:14-15** 14 Because...the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.
- (2) **1 Jn 3:8** 8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
- (3) “God has landed on this enemy-occupied world in human form.”⁸
- k. To qualify to open the scroll, the title deed to the earth.
 - (1) **Re 5:4-7** 4 ...And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 5 And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. 6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.
- l. To qualify at the judge of humanity.
 - (1) **Jn 5:27** 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

11. The Permanency of the Incarnation.

- a. Jesus’ incarnation is permanent and will last forever into eternity future.
 - (1) “Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man. The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.”⁹

12. The Significance of the Incarnation.

- a. We count our years from the estimated date of the incarnation (*anno domini*).
- b. Without the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the gospel, would not have been possible.
 - (1) “The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say that God became Man.... If the thing happened, it was the central event in the history of the earth, the very thing that the whole story has been about.”¹⁰
- c. To be saved, we must agree that the incarnation happened, that Jesus is the God the Son who became a man, that he is fully God and fully man in one person forever.

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 53.

⁹ Anglican Article II.

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis.

- (1) **Jn 8:23-24** 23 You are from below. I [Jesus] am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I Am you will die in your sins.
- (2) **1 Jn 4:2** 2 By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Messiah has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.
- (3) **2 Jn 7** 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Messiah in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.
- d. Philosophically, Jesus' incarnation solves the problem of fact and meaning.
 - (1) "Those who believe in the Christian doctrine of incarnation do not need to make choices between fact and meaning because there is an archetype for understanding how the world of flesh and the world of spirit make contact. For if God was in Christ, and if the way to the Father is through the Son, then there is no need to accept a formulation that erects an unbridgeable gulf between the sensible and rational, object and subject, matter and mind. We do not need to choose between brute factuality and mystical derangement."¹¹
 - (2) Jesus, the God-man, is the archetype of mind-body dualism, a central truism of the biblical worldview.

13. Application of the Incarnation.

- a. *Believe* in the fact of the incarnation.
 - (1) If you oppose Christmas as it has become, use that time of the year to remember and celebrate the incarnation.
- b. Motivated by love and humility, *incarnate* yourself in the lives of others in order to win them to Jesus. Like Jesus, become poor in order to make others rich. Some call this "incarnational ministry."
 - (1) **2 Co 8:9** 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Messiah, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.
 - (2) **Php 2:5-8** 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Messiah Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form (μορφή) of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself by taking the form (μορφή) of a servant, being born in the likeness (ὁμοίωμα) of men. 8 And being found in human form (σχήμα), he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
 - (3) "Want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have done unto you."¹²

Bibliography

Morgan, G. Campbell. "The Purposes of the Incarnation." 1910.

¹¹ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 175.

¹² Steve Maraboli.