

THE INCARNATION

INTRODUCTION

- Incarnation = in (*in*) flesh (*carne*)
- The very expression "incarnation" expresses something that is different and unique
- It is vital to understand that for an incarnation to occur there must be the pre-existence of a person in a non-fleshly form, and then that person must take upon himself a body of flesh.
- It means to be clothed in flesh...the act of becoming fleshly
- Definition: The condescension and humiliation of Christ who is fully God, where He voluntarily waived the rights and privileges of deity, and took on the limitations of humanity.
- Refers to the fact that God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ added humanity to his deity and became a man
- The incarnation refers to the "the act of God the Son, when He took upon Himself the form of a man & became flesh, the God-man"

John 1:14 ~ *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Hebrews 2:14 ~ *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*

1 Timothy 3:16 ~ *By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.*

Romans 8:3 ~ *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,*

Here are two mysteries for the price of one--the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus. ...Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation

J. I. Packer

We cannot appreciate Christ's worth with the depth we are able to, marvel at His Person with the awe we are able to, or glorify His name with the enthusiasm we are able to, if we do not understand His Incarnation to the extent that we are able to.

Matt Perman, Understanding the Incarnation

THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

- One could ask, "What purpose did God have in sending His Son in the "likeness of sinful flesh?"
- There are several reasons for the incarnation....the Scriptures reveal at least 7

To Fulfill the Promises of God

Acts 13:23 ~ *From the offspring of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,*

Genesis 3:15 ~ *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.*

Acts 13:33 ~ *that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.'*

Galatians 3:19 ~ *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.*

To Fully Reveal God

John 1:18 ~ *No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

John 14:9 ~ *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

Colossians 1:15 ~ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

Hebrews 1:3 ~ *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

To Take Away Sin

John 1:29 ~ *The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

1 John 3:5 ~ *And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.*

To Become a Merciful and Faithful High Priest

Hebrews 2:17 ~ *Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

To Demonstrate Perfect Humanity

1 John 2:6 ~ *the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

To Become the Head of the Church

Ephesians 1:20-23 ~ *which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.*

To Judge and Restore the Universe to God

1 Corinthians 15:25-28 ~ *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.*

FALSE VIEWS OF THE INCARNATION

Ebionites

- A Jewish sect that arose early in the Second Century
- Denied the reality of Jesus' divine nature
- Belief in Christ's Deity seemed incompatible with monotheism. They would say that Jesus was a prophet or rabbi. A man endowed with extra ordinary capacities for the work of God.

Gnostics

- Denied the reality of Jesus' human nature
- Arose when Paul and John were still on the scene and during the Second Century it spread with swiftness over the church.
- An amalgam of Alexandrian philosophy and Zoroastrian dualism.
- Belief that matter was evil thus denying the true humanity of Christ. Christ was a phantom.

Arians

- Arose in the Third Century by the followers of Arius, a presbyter (elder) in Alexandria.
- Belief that Jesus pre-existed as the first creature which came from the hand of God. Arianism denied the Deity and eternal existence of Christ. They used the verses in Colossians 1:15-17, "the first born of creation."
- Affirmed Jesus' preexistence, but denied His Deity.
- This is the position of the Jehovah's Witnesses

Nestorianism

- Arose during the Fourth Century by the followers of Nestorius, a Patriarch of Constantinople.
- They believed two persons actually indwelt the body of Christ, the human person and the divine.
- Viewed the relationship of the natures as a mere conjunction, not an essential union
- Denied the real union of the divine and human natures in Christ, thus two natures and two persons. He separated the human and the divine Christ to the point of denying that what could be said of the human and the divine in Christ could be said of one person.
- Nestorius was condemned for his views by the Synod of Ephesus in 431 A.D.

Eutychianism

- Arose during the Fourth Century by the followers of Eutyches, a presbyter of Constantinople.
- They said that both natures mingled to make up a third and totally different nature from the original two natures.
- Belief that there was but one nature in Christ because by the incarnation, or hypostatic union, the human was changed into the divine.
- Eutychianism was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

Modern-Liberalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, Neo-Evangelicalism

- Deny the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible and thus reject the historical Jesus Christ as true deity and true humanity
- Some of the key men are Ritschl, Schleiermacher, Barth, Neibuhr, and Bultman.
- General tendency to discredit the Bible as factual revelation and thus dilute the facts concerning the historical Jesus Christ as the God-Man, true deity and humanity.

THE KENOSIS

Definition

- The incarnation involved Christ voluntarily giving up of the full expression of His divine rights and attributes
- It is the self-emptying of Christ in the incarnation (i.e. the relinquishing of equality with God and the taking on of a human nature)
- The word “kenosis” comes from the word *kenoo* in Philippians 2:5 ~ emptied Himself
- The word means: 1) to empty, make empty; 1a) of Christ, he laid aside equality with or the form of God; 2) to make void; 2a) deprive of force, render vain, useless, of no effect; 3) to make void; 3b) cause a thing to be seen to be empty, hollow, false
- The kenosis is the giving up of equal state with God and taking on the real nature of man.
- The kenosis of Christ involved the two aspects of condescension seen in:
 - 1) His incarnation or leaving heaven's glory to take a human nature
 - 2) Humiliation or His life of suffering leading to and including the cross
- It was more than just taking on flesh. Either aspect would have been a kenosis.

John 17:5 ~*Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*

2 Corinthians 8:9 ~ *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

Philippians 2:5-9 ~ *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,*

- When Paul says, “he emptied himself”, he does not mean that Christ divested himself of His divine nature...Christ did not lay aside his Divine nature
- He did not surrender any attributes of deity
- So what does it mean? → NASB marginal note says “laid aside his privileges” → That’s a good meaning
- Christ laid aside His privileges of deity
- How? → Phil 2:7 ~ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men
- The phrases following “emptied Himself” describe what that means
- Christ emptied Himself by:
 1. taking the form of a bondservant – he became a servant
 2. being made in the likeness of men – he took on a body
- Jesus emptied Himself not by subtraction but by addition
- Jesus emptied himself NOT by taking something away (i.e. his divine nature) but by adding something (i.e. his human nature)
- This is a paradox: being ‘made nothing’ or ‘emptying Himself’ means adding humanity to deity rather than subtracting deity from his person
- He emptied Himself by adding a human nature
- Christ did not strip Himself of his deity...he added humanity to it

- That is an emptying because it is impossible for the full glory and majesty of God to be expressed in a body
- God is exceedingly great and glorious and majestic and therefore it is impossible that the full expression of that be reduced to a human body
- That adding of humanity to Christ's deity was an "emptying" is because it veiled the full expression of Christ's deity
- Christ's divine attributes were veiled by his humanity
- We could say it this way: What Christ emptied Himself of was not the **possession** of His divine attributes, but the **expression** of them
- He did not set aside His deity, but he did set aside the outward expression of His deity
- When Christ left his environment of glory and took on the limits and constraints of humanity, He voluntarily waived the full expression of his divine nature

The finite and limited human nature hindered a full manifestation of the omniscience of the deity. This was a part of the humiliation of the eternal Logos. He condescended to unite himself with an inferior nature, through which his own infinite perfections could shine only in part. When deity does not work as simple deity untrammelled, but works in 'the form of a servant,' it is humbled.

Shedd

What Happened to Christ's Divine Attributes?

- It was a voluntary restriction of the use of His attributes.
- That He might perfectly experience human relationships.
- That He might function in the role of a servant.
- His divine attributes were veiled by the body of flesh.
- He fully conformed to all the essential principles of human life.
- He did not surrender his divine attributes; nor did He set aside His deity and just become a man

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

Definition

- It is the unique combination of full deity and true humanity in the person of Christ.
- Christ had a human and divine nature united in one person
- In Christ, the one person, the two natures were inseparably joined together without conversion, composition or confusion.
- In Christ humanity and Deity are united in one person forever
- That is the mystery: Christ is 100% God and 100% man
- He's not 50/50 – not half God, half man...He is 2 natures in 1 person

John 1:14 ~ *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 6:51 ~ *I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.*

Support for the Union of Deity and Humanity in One Person

1. Christ consistently speaks of Himself as a single person (John 17:22-23; 1 John 4:2; John 1:14)

2. The attributes and powers of both natures are ascribed to the one person, Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:3; 1 Peter 3:18; Col. 2:9).
3. The fact of Christ's death having infinite value is only intelligible when we understand that Christ is not just a man of God, but the God-Man (1 John 2:3; 1 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:9).

Necessity of the Hypostatic Union

Necessity of His Manhood

1. The essence of a being a mediator requires that Christ be the God-man

1 Timothy 2:5 ~ *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,*

2. Since man sinned, it was necessary that the penalty should be borne by man.

Romans 5:18-21 ~ *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

- The paying of the penalty involved suffering of body and soul which only a man is capable of bearing.

3. It was necessary for Christ's sympathetic support of believers.

- It was necessary that Christ should assume human nature, with all the infirmities to which it is liable after the fall and descend to the depths of degradation to which man had fallen,

Hebrews 2:17-18 ~ *Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

Hebrews 4:15 ~ *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

4. It was necessary for him to be a perfect human example.

1 Peter 2:21 ~ *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,*

Matthew 11:29 ~ *Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.*

5. It was necessary for His manhood to be sinless

Hebrews 7:26 ~ *For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;*

Necessity of His Deity

1. He could bring a sacrifice of infinite value and perfect obedience
2. He might fully bear the wrath of God.
3. He might apply the fruit of His accomplished work to those who accept Him by faith