

THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD

JOHN 1:14-18

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

¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

INTRODUCTION:

How important is it to get the Gospel right?

"Infinitely important!" said Pastor John Piper as he addressed thousands of people Friday in the Dominican Republic.

The Minneapolis, Minn., pastor was the featured guest speaker at a conference called "Back to the Cross." Organized by Wisdom & Integrity Ministries, the June 3-5 event was aimed at recovering and reinforcing the true essence of the Christian faith among believers throughout Latin America.

"We have to get this right if we're going to be the means of anyone's salvation, including our own," Piper underscored, as his address was translated into Spanish for the listeners.

"We need to be saved because we are all sinners," he said.
"There isn't any other way to be saved from hell into everlasting joy than ... [by] hearing and believing the Gospel."

1 John 2:23

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:2-3

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

1 John 4:15

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

REVIEW:

LESSON

I. THE EXPRESSION OF THE WORD

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

1. THE INCARNATION

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh

Word (3056)(**logos** from lego = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated word which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. To the Greek secular and philosophical mind, **lógos** was not merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object's name.

Became -

Original Word: γίνομαι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: ginomai

Phonetic Spelling: (ghin'-om-ahee)

Short Definition: I come into being, am born

Definition: I come into being, am born, become, come about, happen.

gínomai – properly, to *emerge, become, transitioning* from one point (realm, condition) to another. 1096 (*gínomai*) fundamentally means "become" (becoming, became) so it is *not* an exact equivalent to the ordinary equative verb "to be" (*is, was, will be*) as with 1510 /*eimí* (1511 / *eínai*, 2258 /*ēn*).

Not "made" but "became." Jesus was not created, but was the Creator ([Col 1:16](#), [Heb 1:2](#)) Who condescended to become part of His own creation, a thought too profound to fully comprehend by our mind, and yet a truth that can be fully received by our faith. Compare the verb "**was**" in [John 1:1](#) with the verb "**became**" here in [John 1:14](#)...

Verse 1 In the beginning WAS the Word...Imperfect tense indicates continuing action in the past. Language of continuing existence

Verse 14 The Word BECAME flesh...Aorist tense indicates an action that took place in a point in time. Language of change as the Word became something that He previously was not.

The Word took on flesh and, in doing so, brought about a change that will have eternal repercussions. The One who became God and man stayed that way. The One who was touched by a band of Galilean disciples is today worshiped by angels. (From [John Stevenson](#))

John Trapp - Put himself into a lousy, leprosy suit of ours, to expiate our pride and robbery, in reaching after the Deity, and to heal us of our spiritual leprosy; if he had not assumed our flesh he had not saved us.

Illustration - The story is told of a little girl who cried out to her mother from her bedroom, "Mommy, I'm afraid to be in my dark room alone." Her mother replied, "It's okay, Honey. The Lord is with you." She called back, "Yes, but I want someone with skin on." Jesus is God "with skin on." And He has come so that we never have to be afraid again.

Became flesh - "The same verb as in [John 1:3](#). All things **became** through Him; He in turn **became** flesh. "**He became that which, first became through Him.**" In becoming, He did not

cease to be the Eternal Word. His divine nature was not laid aside. In becoming **flesh** He did not part with the rational soul of man. Retaining all the essential properties of the Word, He entered into a new mode of being, not a new being. The word **sarx**, **flesh**, describes this new mode of being (cp [Php 2:6-8-note](#)). It signifies human nature in and according to its corporeal manifestation. Here, as opposed to the purely divine, and to the purely immaterial nature of the **Word**. He did not first become a personality on becoming **flesh**. The prologue throughout conceives Him as a personality from the very beginning — from eternal ages. The phrase **became flesh**, means more than that He assumed a human body. He assumed human nature entire, identifying Himself with the race of man, having a human body, a human soul, and a human spirit. See [Jn 12:27](#); [11:33](#); [13:21](#); [19:30](#). He did not assume, for a time merely, humanity as something foreign to Himself. The **incarnation** was not a mere accident of His substantial being. “He became flesh, and did not clothe Himself in flesh.” Compare, on the whole passage, [1 John 4:2](#); [2 John 7](#).

Flesh (4561)(**sarx - word study**) Ryle says that the use of this word, instead of “man,” ought not to be overlooked. It is purposely used in order to show us that when our Lord became incarnate, He took upon Him nothing less than our whole nature, consisting of a true body and a reasonable soul....When “the Word became flesh,” He did not take on Him “peccable flesh.” It is written that He was made in “the likeness of sinful flesh.” ([Ro 8:3](#).) But we must not go beyond this. Christ was “made sin for us.” ([2Cor 5:21](#).) But He “knew no sin,” and was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and without taint of corruption. Satan found nothing in Him. Christ’s human nature was liable to weakness, but not to sin. The words of the fifteenth Article must never be forgotten, Christ was “void from sin, both in His flesh and in His Spirit.”

J C Ryle applies the truth that the Word became flesh - Did the Word become flesh? Then He is One who can be touched with the feeling of His people's infirmities, because He has suffered Himself, being tempted. He is almighty because He is God, and yet He can feel with us, because He is man. Did the Word become flesh? Then He can supply us with a perfect pattern and example for our daily life. Had he walked among us as an angel or a spirit, we could never have copied Him. But having dwelt among us as a man, we know that the true standard of holiness is to "walk even as He walked." ([1 John 2:6](#).) He is a perfect pattern, because He is God. But He is also a pattern exactly suited to our wants, because He is man. Finally, did the Word become flesh? Then let us see in our mortal bodies a real, true dignity, and not defile them by sin. Vile and weak as our body may seem, it is a body which the Eternal Son of God was not ashamed to take upon Himself, and to take up to heaven. That simple fact is a pledge that He will raise our bodies at the last day, and glorify them together with His own.

Webster (1828) defines **incarnation** as - The act of clothing with flesh. 1. The act of assuming flesh, or of taking a human body and the nature of man; as the incarnation of the Son of God. 2. In surgery, the process of healing wounds and filling the part with new flesh.

Bioethicist Nigel M. de S. Cameron points to a significance of the incarnation that may be missed by many — what he calls "**the bioethics of Bethlehem.**" Cameron points back to the conception of Jesus in Mary by the Holy Spirit, and to the concrete reality of Christ's human nature during Mary's pregnancy:

God took human form; and he took it not simply as a baby, but as the tiniest of all human beings, a mere biological speck, so small and so undeveloped that it could be mistaken for a laboratory artifact, a research specimen, an object for human experimentation. But this speck was God; this complete genetic human organism, in its primitive and undeveloped form, was so much “one of us” as to bear the existence of the Creator. He dignified humanity by taking the form of this creature he had made in his image; and he did it at the most inauspicious and feeble point in the human life story. At the heart of the Christmas celebration lies the fact of all facts, that God became a zygote.

We believe that all human beings are made in the image of God. We believe that Jesus Christ was God taking human form for himself. And we believe that we started right at the beginning—that incarnation took place in embryo.

Carl F. H. Henry once stated that only a theology based in a vision of “divine invasion” could lay claim upon the church.

The Hypostatic Union

So “hypostatic union” may sound fancy in English, but it’s a pretty simple term. *Hypostatic* means *personal*. The *hypostatic union* is the *personal union* of Jesus’ two natures.

The theological term "hypostatic union" has its origins in the Council of Chalcedon and emphasizes that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man at the same time. It is used to affirm the union of Jesus' divine and human natures in one person--that Jesus Christ is perfectly God and perfectly man. Or, as theologians say, He is consubstantial with God as to His deity and with mankind as to His humanity.

Soon after the establishment of the church, doctrinal errors arose concerning the person of Jesus Christ. In October of A.D. 451, a large church council convened in the city of Chalcedon near Constantinople. After much discussion, the Council issued a statement to correct the errors and to establish an accurate theological statement concerning the person and nature of Christ. The fruit of their labor is perhaps the most significant Christological statement in the history of the church:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential, of the same substance] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeable, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us.

Jesus has two complete natures—one fully human and one fully divine. What the doctrine of the hypostatic union teaches is that these *two natures* are united in *one person* in the God-man. Jesus is not two persons. He is one person. The hypostatic union is the joining of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.

Jesus was Fully Human

Jesus has a human body, emotions, mind, and will. And this in no way compromises his deity.

When the Word became flesh—when the eternal Son of God took on full humanity—he did not merely become human in part. He fully became truly human.

Jesus' Human Body

It is clear enough from the New Testament that Jesus has a human body. John 1:14 means at least this, and more: “The Word became flesh.” Jesus’ humanity is one of the first tests of orthodoxy (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). Jesus was born (Luke 2:7). He grew (Luke 2:40, 52). He grew tired (John 4:6) and got thirsty (John 19:28) and hungry (Matthew 4:2). He became physically weak (Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26). He died (Luke 23:46). And he had a real human body after his resurrection (Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 27).

Jesus' Human Emotions

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus clearly displays human emotions. When Jesus heard the centurion's words of faith, "he marveled" (Matthew 8:10). He says in Matthew 26:38 that his "soul is very sorrowful, even to death." In John 11:33–35, Jesus is "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" and even weeps. John 12:27 says, "Now is my soul troubled," and in John 13:21, he is "troubled in his spirit." The author to the Hebrews writes that "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7) John Calvin memorably summed it up: "Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh."

Jesus' Human Mind

Jesus also has a human mind. Two key texts make this undeniable:

- Luke 2:52: "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."
- Mark 13:32: "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Jesus Is God

The Bible teaches that Jesus is not merely someone who is a lot like God, or someone who has a very close walk with God. Rather, Jesus is the Most High God himself. Titus 2:13 says that as Christians we are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of *our great God* and Savior, Christ Jesus." Upon seeing the resurrected Christ, Thomas cried out, "My Lord and *my God!*" (John 20:28). Likewise, the book of Hebrews gives us God the Father's direct testimony about Christ: "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever" and the gospel of John calls Jesus "*the only begotten God*" (John 1:18).

Another way the Bible teaches that Jesus is God is by showing that he has all of the attributes of God. He knows everything

(Matthew 16:21; Luke 11:17; John 4:29), is everywhere (Matthew 18:20; 28:20; Acts 18:10), has all power (Matthew 8:26–27; 28:18; John 11:38–44; Luke 7:14–15; Revelation 1:8), depends on nothing outside of himself for life (John 1:4; 14:6; 8:58), rules over everything (Matthew 28:18; Revelation 1:5; 19:16;), never began to exist and never will cease to exist (John 1:1; 8:58), and is our Creator (Colossians 1:16). In other words, everything that God is, Jesus is. For Jesus is God.

Why the INCARNATION

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form

morphé – properly, form (outward expression) that embodies essential (inner) substance so that the form is in complete harmony with the inner essence.

of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form *morphé*

of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness

Definition: (originally: a thing made like something else), a likeness, or rather: form; a similitude.

homoíōma (a neuter noun derived from *homos*, "the same") – properly, the same as; *likeness, similitude* (resemblance).

of men. ⁸ And being found in **appearance**

sxma – properly, *exterior* shape (form); (figuratively) *the outer "shape" (manner, appearance)*.

/sxēma ("outward, visible form") is used of Jesus' earthly body (Phil 2:7,8). Christ incarnated into a *genuine physical* body, which was not an "exact match with typical humanity" because His body was *never touched or tainted by sin* (even original sin).

as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹

AW Pink

This union of the two natures in the Person of Christ was necessary in order to fit Him for the office of Mediator.

1. Brings God to Us

Matthew wrote that the virgin birth was to “fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us)” (Matt. 1:22-23). What the prophet Isaiah wrote symbolically, eight centuries earlier, actually happened at the dawn of the first century: Jesus Christ is, literally, “God with us.”

2. Explains God To Us

Incarnation shows us God’s character. In Jesus’ teaching, we see God’s teaching. In His miracles, we see God’s power. Jesus said that He never did anything of His own initiative; it was His Father doing His own work through Him. If you want to see God’s compassion, see Jesus’ healing miracles. If you want to see

God's judgment, see Jesus' rebuke of the hypocritical Pharisees. If you want to see divine love, see the way Jesus loved sinners. To see what God is like, look at Jesus.

- 3. Enables God to Fulfill the Law** The Son of God came in the flesh in order to be the Savior of mankind. First, it was necessary to be born "under the law" (Galatians 4:4). All of us have failed to fulfill God's Law. Christ came in the flesh, under the Law, to fulfill the Law on our behalf (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:5).
- 4. Enables God to be A Sacrifice** , it was necessary for the Savior to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). A blood sacrifice, of course, requires a body of flesh and blood. And this was God's plan for the Incarnation: "When Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering [under the Old Covenant] you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me'" (Hebrews 10:5). Without the Incarnation, Christ could not really die, and the cross is meaningless.
- 5. Enables God to be A Compassionate High Priest**

By being made like us, Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. He knows what it is like to be tempted and to suffer as a man. He was also able to demonstrate his faithfulness by his unswerving and glad obedience to the Father while on earth (Heb 3:2). As his people, we have every reason to trust such a high priest.

HEBREWS 4:14

¹⁴ Seeing then that 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 cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Author Philip Yancey relates a modern day story that illustrates so wonderfully this truth.

One raw winter night, a farmer heard an irregular thumping sound against the kitchen storm door. He went to a window and watched as tiny, shivering sparrows, attracted to the evident warmth inside, beat in vain against the glass.

Touched, the farmer bundled up and trudged through fresh snow to open the barn for the struggling birds. He turned on the light, tossed some hay in a corner, and sprinkled a trail of saltine crackers to direct them to the barn. But the sparrows, which had scattered in all directions when he emerged from the house, still hid in the darkness, afraid of Him. He tried various tactics: circling behind the birds to drive them toward the barn, tossing cracker crumbs in the air toward them, retreating to his house to see if they'd flutter into the barn on their own. Nothing worked. He, a huge alien creature, had terrified them; the birds could not understand that he actually desired to help.

He withdrew to his house and sadly watched the doomed sparrows through a window. As he stared, a thought hit him like lightning from a clear blue sky; if only I could become a bird - one of them - just for a moment. Then I would not frighten them so. I could show them the way to warmth and safety. At the same moment, this man had grasped the principle of the incarnation – why God had become man.

5. THE HABITATION

V. 14and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

II. THE EXALTATION OF THE WORD

¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ”

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.
¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

1. HIS PREEXISTENCE

¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ”

2. HIS PREEMINENCE

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.
¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

III. THE EXPOSITION OF THE WORD

¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

1. THE INVISIBLE GOD

¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time.

Yuri Gagarin the first Soviet cosmonaut used in 1961 when he said in space, "I don't see any God out here."

So when John says in verse 18: "No one has ever seen God,"

2. THE VISIBLE GOD

V. 18 The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.