

December 25, 2016

The Incarnation of Christ

John 1:1,14

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to the gospel of John chapter 1. We're going to read together two verses. We're going to read verse 1 of chapter 1, then we're going to read chapter 1 and verse 14.

John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And now verse 14: "And the Word was made 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."

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year, because it compels us to focus our attention upon Jesus Christ, and anything that focuses our attention upon Jesus Christ is a positive blessing indeed. The world, of course, does all it can to divert our attention away from Christ, and it strives to turn our focus on to the material and the secular elements that have been established for the purpose of replacing Christ in the hearts and the minds of people. And because of this, there is danger of thinking little about Christ and forgetting His importance to us during this season of Christmas celebration.

Therefore, today we want to remind ourselves of the importance and the centrality of Christ to our lives, and why it is that we celebrate His coming into this world. We need to remind ourselves at this time of year that it is Christ who matters. It is Christ who is the Savior. And we must never think of salvation or any hope of salvation apart from Him. He is the one who saves us from our sins.

So Christmas is supposed to be the celebration of salvation from sin. It is supposed to be the celebration of reconciliation with God, all of which is accomplished through the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. And the wonderful message of Christmas that stands at the heart of Christmas and must be central to Christmas is that God has visited and redeemed His people. That's the message of Christmas—God visited and redeemed His people.

The fact that God has visited and redeemed His people is not only the message of Christmas, it is in fact the central message of the Bible itself—that God would become man in order to redeem men is the best news that we could possibly ever hear. And yet, that is exactly the news that the Bible conveys to us when it tells us that Jesus Christ became a man, in what John 1 and verse 14 describes as an incarnation, when it says, "and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

Now the word "incarnation" comes from two Latin words: the word *in*, which we all understand, and the word *carneas*, which is the Latin word for flesh. Incarnation means enfleshment, or to put something into flesh. To be incarnated, then, means to be put into flesh, or to be embodied. That which is spiritual is given a material and a human substance.

Now God the Son, called by the title “the Word,” had no beginning, and always existed from eternity past as a Spirit in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the other two persons of the Godhead. We read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And so Jesus both was with God and He was God, because the God of the Bible is a trinity—a tri-unity—where there are three persons, but one substance, one essence of God. And so we have one God in three persons, and that’s how Jesus can be with God and also be God. He can be with the Father and also be God, as the Father is God. This is the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

But 2,016 years ago, the eternal Son of God, who had always existed from eternity past with the Father, came down to earth and took to Himself a human body and a human nature, and dwelt among us for 33 years, in order to redeem us from our sins. And so what we want to consider today, is this incarnation of Christ—this concept of the eternal Son of God coming to earth and taking humanity to Himself, and thereby being enabled to redeem us and save us from our sins. And that incarnation, that Word being made flesh, is what we celebrate at Christmas.

So in the first place then this morning, let us consider together the nature of the incarnation. Now what does it mean when we say that God took to Himself humanity—the Word was made flesh? What does that mean? We have to use care in how we answer that question, because it’s easy to slip into terrible errors, on the left and on the right, and thus misunderstand who this God is that we worship, Jesus Christ.

The first thing we’re saying when we say that God took to Himself humanity is that Christ took to Himself a true human body and a true human soul; that is, He became just like us.

Now turn in your Bibles please, if you would, to Hebrews chapter 2. Now in Hebrews chapter 2 and in verse 14 through verse 18, it says this: “¹⁴Forasmuch then as the children,”—that’s us, that’s humanity—“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Now there’s a lot in that passage, but I want you to notice that three times we are told that Jesus’ humanity was just like ours. In verse 14, it says we are partakers of flesh and blood, and it says, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. The same kind of flesh and the same kind of blood you have, that’s the kind Jesus had. Notice verse 16. It says in the latter part of the verse, He took on Him the seed of Abraham. The characteristics of those who descended from

Abraham by physical generation, that's the characteristic that Jesus had Himself in His body. And then notice verse 17. It says, Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto His brethren. So three times we're told He's just like us, He's just like us—and by the way, He's just like us.

So because Jesus had a true human body and a true human soul, He could suffer, He could die, He could be tempted—in every respect, He was fully man and fully human. And when we look at the record of His life, every element of the human condition was on display. Jesus ate, Jesus drank, He was thirsty and tired, He was happy, and He was sorrowful. He slept, He worked, He learned, He spoke. He acted in every way that a normal human being would act. And so Jesus took upon Himself a true human body and a true human soul so that He was as fully human as each of you are.

The second thing we want to say about the incarnation of Christ is not only that Christ took upon Himself a true human body and soul, but secondly, that this incarnation was accomplished by means of a virgin birth. Now turn in your Bibles please to Luke chapter 1. We want to look together at verses 26 to 35. It says:

“²⁶ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. ²⁹ And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. ³⁰ And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. ³¹ And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. ³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: ³³ and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Now here's the question, in verse 34: “Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” In other words, You're telling me I'm going to conceive in my womb and bring forth a child, but I've never had sex. So how exactly is this going to come to pass? Verse 35: “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

This was no ordinary human conception, as all of us were conceived. This is unique in all of human history, that a woman would become pregnant and bear a child while still being a virgin. But by this means of this virgin birth, God the Son—the Word that was with God in the beginning, from all eternity past—by this means, God the Son was united by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit to the human body and nature formed in the virgin's womb from her seed.

And so the seed of the woman provided the humanity of Jesus, and of course, His divine nature came down from heaven and was united with that humanity, and thus the God-man was born.

In Isaiah 9 and verse 6, it says, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” And so when it says “unto us a child is born,” that’s speaking of His humanity; “unto us a son is given”—that’s speaking of His deity, where the Father gave His Son. And although Christ in this fashion obtained a human body and human nature, He did not receive the guilt and the defilement of Adam’s sin or a sinful nature. When Jesus was conceived in this fashion, He got a human body, and He got a human nature, but He didn’t get a fallen nature, and He did not inherit the guilt of Adam’s sin, as we all inherit from our parents, or a fallen nature, which we all derive from our parents. Jesus took to Himself all of our human weakness and all of our human limitations, but verse 35 says that He was holy. “Therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

None of us when we were born were holy. Every one of us when we were born, were born sinful and defiled, because we were born with a sinful, defiled nature, and we were born with the guilt of Adam’s sin imputed to us before we ever committed any personal sins ourselves. When Jesus was born, when Jesus was conceived, He did not have a fallen human nature, though He had a human nature. Furthermore, He did not have the guilt of Adam’s sin imputed to Him. He was “that holy” One. And so the sinless God could be joined to natural humanity, but not sinful humanity. God cannot be united to sin or have fellowship with sin.

Furthermore, if Jesus had had a sinful human nature, He could have never made satisfaction for the sins of others, because He would have had to have died for His own sinful nature, and of course, the sins that would have flowed out of it. Hebrews 7 and verse 26 says of Jesus, “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” So Jesus had a human nature and He had a human body that had every faculty, limitation, and characteristics that ours do, except that His human nature was not sinful and it was not depraved. So when He was born, He was born sinless, though fully human.

The third thing we’re saying when we talk about the incarnation of Jesus is not only that Christ took to Himself a true human body and soul, not only was that incarnation accomplished by means of a *virgin* birth, and thus He was protected from having a fallen nature or having Adam’s sin imputed to Him, but thirdly, we must understand that Christ did not lose His divine nature when He took to Himself a human nature. Christ was unique among all beings, in that He had two natures, the human and the divine, distinct from one another, and yet inseparably joined together into one personality.

Now when it says that the Word became a man, it does not mean that He was transmuted *into* a man. It simply means that humanity was added to His deity. We say “the Word became flesh.” That doesn’t mean the Word turned *into* flesh, but that it was *in* flesh; it maintained all of its characteristics and its nature. It was just joined with flesh. We might say, for example, the wheelbarrow became heavy. Why did it become heavy? You filled it with dirt, right? But when

you put dirt in the wheelbarrow, did that change the nature of the wheelbarrow? It didn't change it at all. The wheelbarrow's still the wheelbarrow, but it had something added to it. And so we can say the wheelbarrow became heavy.

So when we say that God became man, we're not saying that God was turned into a man; we're saying that God had humanity added to Him in such a way that they were inseparably joined, and yet remained distinct, just like the wheelbarrow and the dirt are joined together, and yet they remain distinct. And yet it's all expressed through one single personality.

For example, we see Jesus saying, "I and the Father are one." And when He says I and the Father are one, He uses "I" when speaking of His deity and its characteristics. And then when He says on the cross, "I thirst," He is speaking of His humanity and its needs. And He uses the personal pronoun "I" for both natures. So He says, I am God, and I am man, and yet I am I... I am a single personality. I am not two persons, though I have two natures.

And so Jesus has two natures, the divine and the human, distinct from each other. One is not blended with the other or turned into the other. And yet they are inseparably joined together into one single personality, the God-man, Jesus Christ. Now two passages that I would like for you to look at make this very clear.

Turn please first to Romans chapter 1. We'll start reading at verse 1, but our focus will be on verses 3 and 4. Romans 1:1: "¹Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ²(which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)"—now the gospel, verse 3, is—"concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

And now he's going to define who Jesus Christ our Lord is. He says, first of all, He "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." Who was Jesus in the flesh? He was a physical descendant of David. Now notice the next phrase, verse 4: "and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

So He was a descendant of David, and He was the Son of God, at the same time. He was fully man, and He was fully God. And so these two natures, His humanity—the seed of David, and His deity—the Son of God, were both combined into this one person, verse 3, Jesus Christ our Lord. What can we say of Jesus Christ our Lord? He is the seed of David and He is the Son of God. This one person is both, in that one person.

Turn please to Colossians chapter 2. I want us to notice verse 9. We'll start out in verse 8 to pick up the context. Notice verse 8. It says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." There's a lot of bad information floating around out there about life and death and morals and religion, and every other topic under the sun. Humanity in its fallenness and rebellion against God has produced infinite amounts of false teaching regarding the nature of all things. And so he

says, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

Now here’s our verse, verse 9: “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Notice it says “in him”—that’s a singular, personal pronoun. And so in this one person dwells “all the fullness of the Godhead”—there’s His divine nature—“bodily”—there’s His human nature. What I want you to notice is, it doesn’t say, “in they” or “in them” dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. So there’s not two persons. There’s one person with two natures.

Now the reason why I stress all of this, and the reason why it’s so important, is because there are those who exalt the deity of Christ to the point they deny His humanity. And there are those who exalt the humanity of Christ to the point they deny His deity. And neither of those characterizations of Jesus are biblical. Both of them are idolatrous, and either of them will take you to hell if you believe them.

And so this is what is meant when it says, “The Word became flesh.” It means that God the Son took to Himself a human body and a human nature that was undefiled by sin, so that these two distinct natures are joined together into one personality, Jesus Christ, the God-man. And so when we look at Jesus, we say, Jesus is a man, and when we look at Jesus, we say, Jesus is God, and we are not contradicting ourselves, and we are not talking about two separate people.

Now that brings us then this morning to our second major point. Having seen the nature of the incarnation and having identified what it means that the Word became flesh, now we want to talk about the necessity of the incarnation. Now why did this complex Being need to come to earth? Why was all this necessary? What did God intend to accomplish by becoming man?

Well the simple answer as to why the incarnation was necessary, is that it was necessary to accomplish our salvation from sin. Nothing less and nothing else than an incarnation of God could save us from our sin. Nothing else would do. He had to be a man so that He could represent men, and He had to be God so that the work He did in representing men would have infinite value and merit. If Jesus were just a man, He could only substitute, at best, for one other man—an equal for an equal. And if Jesus were only God, He could never represent man, because He wouldn’t be like us. And if He’s only God, He certainly can’t die in our place. So He had to be man to fully represent us, and He had to be God so that His humanity had infinite value and merit and worth that enabled Him to be a substitute, not just for one other man, but for a multitude of people which no man can number, of every kindred, tongue, tribe, and nation on the face of the earth.

Now theologians often say, and rightly so, that all of the work of Jesus in redeeming us from our sins was accomplished in His three offices—that of being a prophet, that of being a priest, and that of being a king. Jesus is a prophet to teach us; He is a priest to forgive us; and He is a king to rule us. And so consider His three offices, then, through which He saves His people: that of prophet, priest, and king.

Now He had to be both God and man to be able to accomplish His office as a prophet. He had to be both God and man to accomplish His office as a priest. And He had to be both God and man to accomplish His office as a king.

As a prophet, being God, He perfectly knows the mind of God and perfectly knows the will of God so that he can convey those things to us, with not only infallibility, but at a depth and a degree that no human prophet could ever rise to.

It says in John chapter 1 and verse 18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Who can declare the mind of God, really, except God Himself? If we want to know what God is like, this human can tell you what God is like, and that human can tell you what God is like, but do you know who can best tell you what God is like? God, when He speaks for Himself. That is the clearest, the highest, the fullest, and the best explanation that we could ever have so that we could come to know the truth about who we are, about who God is, and about how we might be reconciled to Him. And so as a prophet being God, He perfectly knows the mind of God and the will of God.

But as prophet being man, He is able to impart that knowledge in a manner that is suitable to us. I want you to turn please to Deuteronomy chapter 18. We’re going to find out why we needed to have a man be our prophet and speak to us. Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 15 to 18. Here’s Moses speaking at the end of his life, all right? And Moses says this:

“¹⁵ The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;” Now this prophet, of course, is none other than the Lord Jesus. We know that because this passage is quoted in the New Testament and applied to Jesus. So Jesus is the Prophet that God will raise us from the midst of the children of Israel, “of thy brethren,” notice, “like unto me”—a man like I am—“unto him ye shall hearken;” ¹⁶ according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb,” that’s Mount Sinai, “in the day of the assembly, saying”— Now remember what happened in Exodus chapter 19 and 20. They’re at Mount Sinai, and the thunder and the lightning comes down, and God is there, and His voice rolls out, and the people are just terrified when God speaks directly to them. Remember that? Okay, here we go.

Verse 16: “according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. ¹⁷ And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”

Listen, you don't want God showing up and talking to you directly. You would wither like a bug cast into a hot wood stove. And so the children of Israel said, We can't have God speak directly to us! And so God says, You're right. I'll send you a Prophet. I'll send you a man, and that man was none other than Jesus Christ.

And so it was essential that God become a man so that as a prophet, He could represent God, because He was God; and as a man, He could speak to us in such a way that we could hear the message without dying in the process.

Secondly, think about the work of Jesus as a priest. As a priest, if Jesus had not been man, He could not have shed His blood and died in our place. Hebrews 2 and verse 17 says, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, [in order] that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." If we're going to have a priest represent us to God, he has to be a man.

And in Galatians chapter 4 and in verses 4 to 5, it says regarding the Lord Jesus, "⁴but when the fulness of the time was come,"—that's 4,000 years after Genesis 3—"but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law"—why?—"to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." If God hadn't come to earth and been made of a woman, He could have never redeemed us from our transgressions of God's law. It says in Romans 5:19, "...so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous."

So Jesus was born under the law; He perfectly kept the law; He obtained a righteousness as a result, which He then imputes to us, that we might have a righteousness to stand in the presence of a righteous God and be accepted by Him.

However, not only did His humanity of perfect law-keeping allow Him to obtain a righteousness that is given to us, His humanity also allowed Him to die and shed His blood on the cross so He could obtain our forgiveness by making atonement for the transgressions of God's law that we had committed.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 10. It says in Hebrews 10 and verse 4, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." None of those animal sacrifices ever took away anybody's sin. They were mere ceremonies and symbols, pointing to the sacrifice that would and could take away sin, namely, the sacrifice of Jesus.

Verse 5: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,"—He didn't want the blood of bulls and goats—"but a body hast thou prepared me." God the Father gave God the Son a body so He could do with that body what bulls and goats couldn't do with their bodies.

Verse 6: “in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.” They provided no satisfaction of God’s wrath against sin. Verse 7: “Then said I,” Jesus speaking here, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” Jesus came to do the will of God, which of course was to provide the taking away of sins.

Verse 8: “Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;” that is, by the Old Covenant, “⁹ then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first,” that is, the animal sacrifices, “that he may establish the second,” that is, the sacrifice of His own body. Now here it is, verse 10: “by the which will,” by the will of God, “we are sanctified”—how?—“through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Now if there was no humanity, there would be no body to offer, and therefore, His human body and soul were the instruments through which He lived a perfect obedience to the law, and thereby obtained righteousness for us, and that body also allowed Him to experience physical and spiritual death on the cross so that He could provide forgiveness for us.

And so we have forgiveness through His death and righteousness through His perfect law-keeping. The forgiveness takes away all of our sins, and His obedience provides us with an imputed, personal righteousness, with which we can appear before God. So when God looks at us, He sees no sin, because it was all forgiven in the death of Jesus, and He sees perfect righteousness, which is the obedience of His Son to the law, without failure, that is imputed to us. And when God sees in us no sin, and perfect righteousness, He says regarding us, “Justified!” You have perfectly kept the law; there are no violations of the law on your record; enter into the joy of the Lord. And so that’s why He had to be a man—to live as a man under the law, and to die as a man on the cross with that body He had, to offer a sacrifice for our sins.

But if He had not been God, this sacrifice on our behalf would not have had sufficient value in order to be able to save us all from our sins. Jesus made satisfaction for sin in His human body and His human nature, but the worth and the excellency and the efficacy of that satisfaction flow from His divine nature, which was joined to that humanity.

First Peter 1 and verse 18 says, Forasmuch as you know you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, but you were redeemed with, what? “The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot.” And what was it that made blood so precious, so valuable? Acts 20:28, Paul says to the Ephesian elders, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Feed the church of, who? God—which He, God, purchased with His own blood.

You see, it was the blood of God that was shed on the cross, because anything Jesus did He did as both God and man, and when He died, He died as a man, but when that blood was shed, it was the blood of God. And that’s what gave it the infinite worth and value to be able to redeem all of

the sins of all of God's people, and deliver them from an eternity of damnation in hell. It was precious blood because it was the blood of God.

And then consider the work of Jesus in saving us, not only as a prophet, not only as a priest, but also as a king. Now as a king, He must be a man in order that He might set a visible example for us to follow. One of the things a king has to do is lead his people. He needs to be of the people, and then he needs to visibly lead the people. Imagine a king that you never saw, you never knew anything about him—he was absent, he was invisible. Such a king would be difficult to follow and to be loyal to. And therefore, Jesus came as a man.

In First Peter chapter 2, verses 21 to 23, it says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." And so as our king, we can view His actions, we can view His speech, we can view His attitudes and behavior as a man, and do as He did. Jesus said, Follow me. I am your Lord. I am your King. Follow me. Well, He needs to be a man so we understand how, as men, we can follow Him. The way He conducted Himself as a man leaves us an example of how we can conduct ourselves as men. And so, as a king, He leads us by His visible, human example, as a man living among us, which we can see and follow.

But He must not only be a man, He must also be God in order that His example as our king would be perfect and without blemish. I mean, we have plenty of kings on the earth, right? How perfect are they? Well, because they're just men, we can see them, but you don't want to follow their example very often. But Jesus, as God, set a perfect example as to what a king should be and what he should be like.

It says of Jesus, He did no sin. Can you say that of any of our judges, any of our senators, our congressmen, our presidents? And so whatever example our King set, we cannot only see it because He's a man, but we can follow it without question, because He was God, and it was a perfect example.

In John chapter 13, verses 13 to 15, you remember Jesus was washing the disciples' feet, and when He got all done, He says, Do you know what I've done to you? He says, If I, your lord and master—if I, your king—have washed your feet, then you wash one another's feet. He says, For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. And so He must be a man so that we can see how we should live as men, but He must be God so that His rule and His example and those commandments are perfect and infallible. Furthermore, He must be God, so that He might have the authority and the wisdom and the power to lead and to rule His church.

And so the necessity of the incarnation—the *necessity* of the incarnation—is that He that would satisfy God must be God Himself, and He that would represent man must be man Himself, and that these two natures must be joined together into one person to be a mediator between man and God, whether He is acting as a prophet, as a priest, or as a king. He that would satisfy God must Himself be God, and He who would represent man must himself be man. First Timothy 2 and verse 5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ

Jesus.” And so, Christmas isn’t something we can dispense with. It’s something that’s absolutely essential to our reconciliation with God.

And that leads us to our third and final point this morning. Having seen the nature of the incarnation, and having seen the necessity of the incarnation, notice thirdly, the implications of the incarnation—the implications of it.

Now there are many, many implications of the incarnation, but I want to just bring three before your mind. First of all, we see in the incarnation the great love that the Son had for us, that He would endure such humiliation.

Now we’ve got to understand, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God. And He had all the prerogatives, and the position, and the power, and the blessings of being *God*. It says in Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 to 11: “⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶ who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Jesus wasn’t stealing something that didn’t belong to Him when He said, “I am God.” But notice what He did. It says, “⁶ who, being in the form of God, . . . ⁷ made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

And so the central figure of the universe became a nobody! The one who was served by angels became a servant to people. The exalted one became humiliated. The sovereign ruler became obedient. The giver of life was made subject to death. Jesus was willing to enter our situation and our condition to meet our need for one reason, and one reason only, and that’s because He loved us. No greater love has a man than this, than that a man lay down his life for his friends. And God can’t lay down His life, because God can’t die. But a man can lay down his life for another man, and thereby display his love.

And so Jesus bypassed the nature of angels, a higher and much more exalted creature, and provided no redemption for the fallen angels, in order that He might take on the nature of man, a much lower creature, and provide redemption for them by stooping to the very lowest level, beneath all men.

He took our nature upon Himself, not in order to experience the pleasures of the body, but rather, He took our nature upon Himself so that He would be capable of sorrows, and tears, and suffering, and pain, and death. That’s why He took it on, so that He could experience the negative side of the worst of all that humans can experience, in order to save us from our sins.

It says in Hebrews 2 and verse 9 that “He was made a little lower than the angels”—Why?—“for the suffering of death.” He came to die. And that’s why He took our nature to Himself, and thus we see the marvelous manifestation of His love.

It says in John 13 and verse 1, “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world..., having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them [to the fullest extent].” No greater love has ever been displayed than the love of God taking on Himself humanity so that He could endure suffering and tears and sorrow and death, in order to save an ungrateful, and rebellious, and defiant people from their sin and from their damnation, which they were blinded, and hardened, and careless, and indifferent to. What love is this? This is divine love. This is God so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and the Son loving us enough to come and be our Savior.

The second implication of the incarnation is, not only do we see the great love that the Son has for us that He would endure such humiliation; secondly, we see in the incarnation our only ground of hope. We see in the incarnation our only ground of hope, because when we look at the demands of the law of God, the Ten Commandments, when we look at the curse that lies upon those who violate it, that they will be cast into hell for eternity in conscious torment and suffering in the flames of the lake of fire, then we tremble with distress and we are filled with anxiety.

We cry out with Micah, in chapter 6 and verse 6, How can I come before the Lord? We know the very best we have to offer God is not satisfactory or sufficient to satisfy the demands of the law, or the wrath of God. Micah starts saying, Well, shall I bring rivers of oil, shall I bring thousands of lambs? What about if I offer my own firstborn son? Will that satisfy the Lord? And the answer comes back, None of that is going to satisfy the wrath of God against my sins. I have no offering, I have no atonement to bring to God to propitiate His wrath towards me, to placate, to satisfy, or to quench His wrath towards me.

We know that in our own persons we cannot stand before God, nor represent ourselves to God. We need another. We need a mediator. We need a substitute. We need someone who has an offering of sufficient value to satisfy the wrath of God against our sins, and who has a righteousness in his person that can be given to us so we can stand before a righteous God.

In Christ, we have all we need as both an offering and a representative. He is able by His life, and by His death, and by His person, to meet the need we have for forgiveness, and righteousness, and representation to the Father as our advocate and as our intercessor. And because He is all these things, we have hope. He is the *only* hope we have. But, oh, He is a sufficient hope, and we need no other hope.

Jesus plus nothing and no one, is able and willing to save us from our sins if we just cast ourselves on Him and cry out to Him and say, Lord Jesus, forgive me of my sins, save me from my sins. I trust you to present me faultless before your Father by your saving work. And when you do that, you have forgiveness, you have righteousness, and you have everlasting life. You have reconciliation with God, you have redemption, you have adoption as a child of God. You have a ticket into heaven to be in the presence of Christ and His people forever, in the new heavens and the new earth. Will you not receive Him? Will you not believe in Him?

The third implication of the incarnation is that we see, therefore, in the incarnation, our only object of faith. We not only see in the incarnation our only ground of hope, we also see in the incarnation our only object of faith. The fact that Christ took to Himself humanity and became the God-man saves no one. Let me repeat that. The fact that Christ took to Himself humanity and became the God-man saves no one, *unless they exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ*.

John 3 and verse 36 says, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” You see, the difference between being under the wrath of God and being in the favor of God is just one thing—it’s believing in Jesus. It says if we believe in the Son, we have everlasting life; if we don’t believe in the Son, the wrath of God remains on us. And so to trust in everything but Christ will never be sufficient. But to trust in nothing *but* Christ will meet every need we have for redemption and reconciliation with God.

And so, I have to ask you the question today, Will you trust Him? Will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin? Will you? Have you? Do you? And if you do, then you understand the meaning of the incarnation and you understand the meaning of Christmas. You understand that at Christmas, Christ visited His people and redeemed them from their sins. If somebody says to you, What does Christmas mean to you? The answer is: God was made flesh and dwelt among us to save us from our sins.

And so I hope that today as you reflect on the coming of Jesus, that you will understand that this coming was not just to make people feel warm and fuzzy about a new baby, and giving gifts. It’s about redemption from sin and reconciliation with God through the work of the God-man Jesus, in whom we trust and in whom we believe, and thereby we obtain forgiveness, righteousness, and reconciliation with God. So I say to you, Merry Christmas. Be merry, because of Christmas. Shall we pray together.

O, our Father, we are so grateful for the gift of your blessed Son. Father, thank you that the Word was made flesh, that Immanuel God was with us, and as our prophet and as our priest and as our king, He provided all we needed to be delivered from the works of the Devil and to be brought into the eternal kingdom of God.

Father, how thankful we are for this blessed song of redemption, this message of reconciliation, of peace on earth and of God’s goodwill toward men. For unto us has been born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Thank you for that, Father. Thank you. Thank you for Christmas. Thank you for Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.