



Lesson 10 | The Messiah in the Flesh | 2/10/2021

The word incarnation does not occur in the Bible but what it describes is. The words, derived from the Latin *in* and *caro* (flesh), meaning clothed in flesh, the act of assuming flesh, refers to that gracious act of the Son of God in which He assumed a human body, and more precisely, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became a man. It is one of the greatest events to occur in the history of the universe. It is without parallel. It is one of the most important lines of revelation in both the Old and New Testaments. The whole plan of the ages has the incarnation as its central and most important aspect. The incarnation is at once the intersection of the revelation of God, the revelation of man, and the revelation of salvation in the plan of God.

Without doubt, as we recently studied, the incarnation was prophesied in Messianic Prophecy. Messiah had a lineage in David. This well-defined line of prediction begins with Adam and Eve and is traced through a constantly narrowing focus until all the important factors are revealed. The coming Savior will be the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15); in the line of Seth (4:25); through Noah (6-9); a descendant of Abraham (12:1-3); in the lineage through Isaac (17:19), Jacob (28:14), Judah (49:10), through Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and David (2Sam 7:12-13). His birthplace was known too, plainly revealed in Micah 5:2; Isaiah said His birth would be a sign (Isa 7:14) and the evidence of God with us as Immanuel. With such a clear prophetic vision that the Messiah would have this lineage, be born of a virgin, be born into the human world and serve in human roles, he would have to come in human flesh. Paul wrote, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1Tim 3:16). While the Incarnation is outside normal human comprehension and apprehension – since it has never happened before – it has been made known by Divine revelation in Scripture and verified by miracle.

If we are to properly appreciate this mystery of the incarnation, we must first come to recognize its importance.

1. It is the basis of John's gospel (1:1,14) and through resurrection of the body, in Paul's gospel (1Cor 15:1-4).
2. It is the common exit point of when people leave Christianity (1John 2:22-23; 4:2; 1Tim 1:20; 2Tim 2:17-18).
3. It is the real stumbling-block in Christianity. It is here that Jews, Moslems, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many of those who feel the difficulties above mentioned (about the virgin birth, the miracles, the atonement, and the resurrection), have come to grief,

Incarnation has often been debated, and not just recently. An example from the first century itself, Cerinthus, a representative of the system which arose in the early church under the name of Docetism, claimed that our Lord had only an apparent human body. But John's statement, "the Word became flesh," indicates that Jesus had a real body. And in fact, He "dwelt among us" (John 1:14) and our hands handled (1John 1:1-3).

Before His Incarnation Paul says that Jesus was "in the form of God" (Phil 1:6). From the beginning He had the nature of God, existed as God, and that essential Deity which He once was could never cease to be. He is God. Yet, He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (vs. 6). Equality with God was not something He retained by force or by farce. He possessed it in eternity past and no power could take it from Him. In the Incarnation He laid aside, not His *possession* of Deity, but His *position* in and expression of the heavenly glory: "He made Himself of no reputation." And "took upon Him the form of a servant." His voluntary act of amazing grace, the almighty Sovereign stooping to become earth's lowly Servant, expressed Himself, though deserving to be served, He revealed Himself as one desiring to serve others (Matt 20:28). "He was made in the likeness of men." He participated in the same flesh and blood as man (Heb 2:14). "And being found in fashion as a man." When He came into the world, Christ was a real Man. As a Man He was made under the law, yet He never violated the law. As a Man He was tempted in all three points in which we are tempted (1John 2:16), yet He sinned not. "He humbled Himself." He completely humbled Himself and surrendered His will to the will of His Father in heaven. His desire was to do the will of the Father and testify, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). "He became obedient unto death." Did He die as God, or did He die as Man? He died as the God-Man (John 5:24). To subject Himself to the cruel death of a criminal on the cross was a necessary part of God's plan of salvation for men, ". . . even the death of the cross." Our Lord died as no other person died or ever will die. Down He came from heaven's glory to earth's sin and shame through His Incarnation.

We must appreciate the Mystery by understanding the purpose of His Incarnation.

1. **It revealed God To Men.** In the past, God had revealed Himself through His works (as recorded in the Scriptures), His world (Psa 19:1-6), and His word (19:7-14). In the coming of Christ, God was revealed in the



person of Jesus Christ: God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 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 (Heb 1:1-3a). And, For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 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 1:17-18). "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The Lord clearly claimed to be the very One whom the apostles represented as the incarnate Son of God (John 1:1; 6:38; 2Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6,7; Gal 4:4-5). To refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God incarnate is therefore to reject all of God's divine revelation, be that the Old or the New Testament Scriptures (cf. John 5:39-40; 6:45, 68; 8:26, 31-32, 42-47).

- 2. It reveals man himself to God:** He shows us what we are and what we may become. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him (John 1:4-5, 9-10). Before, God had revealed His standard of righteousness in precept and in principle, but in Christ that standard was revealed in person. The "measure of a man" is the measure of this Man (cf. Eph 4:13).
- 3. It brings redemption to a sinful humanity.** Nothing could be more clearly documented in the Scriptures than the fact that the principle purpose of the incarnation was to save men from their sins: "For the son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; cf. Matt. 9:13; Mark 10:45). And, "it is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all (1Tim 1:15; cf. 1Jn. 4:10). The inseparable relationship of the incarnation of Christ and the atonement can be seen at the communion table where the elements are evidence of the necessity of the incarnation. The bread is a symbol of the body--the human body of our Lord which was given for man's salvation. The unleavened bread reminds us that His body was without sin, which was also a result of the incarnation of our Lord. And the cup symbolizes the blood of our Lord which was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Blood could not have been shed apart from a human body. Thus, the atonement which our Lord accomplished for us was dependent upon the incarnation. To put in more directly, "apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (Heb 9:22), and apart from a human body, there could be no shedding of blood (cf. Heb 10:5-10).
- 4. It demonstrates God's purpose to restrain Satan.** Not only was the first Seed promise (Gen 3:15) spoken TO Satan about God's intent to overcome him, it is the writer of Hebrews, in three verses linked together, that asserts that the coming of Jesus (in his earthly sojourn in the flesh) was to destroy the devil: "Since therefore 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..." (2:14-18).
- 5. It shows that He came to reign.** When the Incarnation had been announced, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born *king of the Jews*? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him" (Matt 2:1, 2). The Old Testament prophets wrote of Messiah's offices, they included that of King (Zech 9:9; Psa 2:6). Our Lord is not only Prophet, and Priest, but also Potentate. The incarnate Son appeared in His resurrection body and sat on the throne. Jesus Himself spoke of the day "when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him; then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt 25:31). John writes, "Every eye shall see Him" (Rev 1:7). During our Lord's earthly ministry, those who sought His help called Him "the son of David" (Matt 9:27; Mark 10:47; Luke 18:38). Therefore, Christ's kingdom is literal and cannot be realized apart from the Incarnation "and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

God could never have been glorified if the Son would have failed in His earthly mission in the smallest degree. But the Lord Jesus could say, "I have finished the work You gave Me to do." Nothing was left undone, and in everything He did, the Son had the Father's glory in view. He glorified the Father; His earthly mission was complete. And now to all of us who have been redeemed by His precious blood, the Apostle Paul writes: "For you are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Cor 6:20).

Next Week | Lesson 11 | The Messiah on His Throne.