

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ

I. Definition of the Incarnation (in the flesh, embodiment)

The voluntary and humble act of the second person of the Trinity, God the Eternal Son, emptying and taking upon Himself full humanity and living a truly human life. It entails an abiding union in the singular Person of Jesus Christ of Godhead and manhood without the integrity or permanence of either being impaired. And it assigns the beginning of this mysterious union to a definite and known date in human history, celebrated in Advent and Christmas.

- It signifies an enthusiastic *affirmation* of the goodness of creation and the glory of the uncorrupted human body and human nature.
- It entails a close *identification* of God with mankind in experiencing all things human, including temptation, yet without sin.
- It results in the cosmic *redemption* and restoration of human beings and a sin-wrecked creation through the incarnate One's substitutionary life, death, and triumphant resurrection by which sin, death and Satan have been defeated, a redemptive work to be completed at His second advent.

II. The Incarnation in the New Testament

Matt. 1:22 Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, Matt. 1:23 " Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, " God with us."

Luke 1:31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. Luke 1:32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; Luke 1:33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end. " Luke 1:34 And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God."

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. John 1:3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light

of men. John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. . . .

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 1:15 John *bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" John 1:16 For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 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.}

Phil. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Phil. 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Phil. 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, Phil. 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, Phil. 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Heb. 2:14 Since then 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; Heb. 2:15 and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. Heb. 2:16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Heb. 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. Heb. 2:18 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.

III. The Incarnation in the Creed of Chalcedon (A. D. 451)

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and also in human-ness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul and a body. He is the same reality as God as far as His deity is concerned, and of the same reality as we are ourselves as far as His human-ness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began He was begotten of the Father in respect of His deity, and now in these last days, for us and on behalf of our salvation, this

selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect of his human-ness.

We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ—Son, Lord, Only-begotten—in two natures; and we do this without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, with dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the properties of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one person and in one *hypostasis*. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of the [Nicene] Fathers has handed down to us.

IV. The Incarnation in Poetry and Song

Good is the Flesh (words Brian Wren; music J. A. C. Redford, *Welcome All Wonders: A Christmas Celebration*)

God is the flesh that the Word has become,
 Good is the birthing, the milk in the breast,
 Good is the feeding, caressing, and rest,
 Good is the body for knowing the world
 Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

God is the body for knowing the world,
 Sensing the sunlight, the tug of the ground,
 Feeling, perceiving, within and around,
 Good is the body from cradle to grave,
 Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the body from cradle to grave,
 Growing and ageing, arousing, impaired,
 Happy in clothing, or lovingly bared,
 Good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,
 Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,
 Longing in all, as in Jesus to dwell,
 Glad of embracing, and tasting and smell,
 Good is the body for good and for God,
 Good is the flesh that the Word has become.