

Foundations of the Faith 103
Systematic Theology
“Christology”
The Incarnation of Christ
Pt. 17

I. The Meaning of Incarnation

1. The word *incarnation* does not appear in scripture, however its components (“in” and “flesh”) do.
2. The word means *in-flesh* and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity through the virgin birth. The result is that Christ remains forever unblemished deity, which He has had from eternity past; but He also possesses true, sinless humanity in one person forever.
3. See John 1:14, I John 4:2, II John 7, Phil. 2:7-8 & I Tim. 3:16. Romans 8:3, “In the likeness of sinful flesh.”

II. The Explanation of the Incarnation

The two genealogies found in the New Testament books of Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38 give us an explanation for the incarnation.

“There is considerable discussion and controversy concerning the relationship of these two genealogies. One thing is noteworthy: both genealogies trace Jesus to David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:31). It appears Matthew describes Joseph’s lineage (cf. v. 16), and because an heir made his claim through the father, Jesus’ right to the Davidic throne comes through Joseph, His adoptive father. Luke cites Jesus’ descent through Mary to Adam, ‘connecting Christ with the predicted seed of the woman.’” - Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

III. The Means of the Incarnation

The Virgin Birth was the mean of the incarnation.

“The virgin birth was the means whereby the incarnation took place and guaranteed the sinlessness of the Son of God. For this reason the virgin birth was essential. Isaiah 7:14 predicted the virgin birth and Matthew 1:23 provides the commentary, indicating its fulfillment in the birth of Christ. Matthew 1:23 identifies Mary as a “virgin” (Gk. *parthenos*, clearly denoting a virgin). The texts of Matthew and Luke are both clear on the teaching of the virgin birth. Matthew 1:18 emphasizes Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph lived together; moreover, the same verse indicates her pregnancy was due to the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:22-23 stresses that the birth of Christ was in fulfillment of the prophecy of the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14. Matthew 1:25 emphasizes that Mary remained a virgin until the birth of Christ. Luke 1:34 states that Mary had not had contact with a man, while in Luke 1:35 the angel explains to Mary that her pregnancy was due to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.” - Paul Enns

See Matt. 1:18-25, its importance. Also, Isa. 7:14.

IV. The Purpose of the Incarnation

1. To Reveal God to Us

Though God reveals Himself in various ways including the magnificences of nature around us, only the Incarnation revealed the essence of God, though veiled (John 1:18; 14:7-11). The only way man can see the Father is to know about the Son, and the only way we can do that today is through studying the record of His life in the Scriptures. Because He became a man, the revelation of God was personalized; because He is God, that revelation is completely truthful.

2. To Provide an Example for Our Lives

The earthly life of our Lord is held up to us as a pattern for our living today (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6). Without the Incarnation we would not have that example. As man He experienced the vicissitudes of life and furnishes us an experienced example; as God He offers us the power to follow His example.

3. To Provide an Effective Sacrifice for Sin

Without the Incarnation we would have no Savior. Sin requires death for its payment. God does not die. So the Savior must be human in order to be able to die. But the death of an ordinary man would not pay for sin eternally, so the Savior must also be God. We must have a God-Man Savior and we do in our Lord (Heb. 10:1-10).

4. To Be Able to Fulfill the Davidic Covenant

Gabriel announced to Mary that her Son would be given the throne of David (Luke 1:31-33). This is not fulfilled by the invisible God reigning over the affairs of men (which He does to be sure). To have an occupant of David's throne requires a human being. Therefore, Messiah had to be a human being. But to occupy that throne forever requires that the occupant never die. And only God qualifies. So the One who ultimately fulfills the Davidic promise has to be a God-Man.

5. To Destroy the Works of the Devil (I John 3:8)

Notice that this was done by Christ's appearing. The focus is on His coming, not on His resurrection as might be expected. Why was the Incarnation necessary to defeat Satan? Because Satan must be defeated in the arena he dominates, this world. So Christ was sent into this world to destroy Satan's works.

6. To Be Able to Be a Sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16)

Our High Priest can feel our weaknesses because He was tested as we are. But God is never tested, so it was necessary for God to become man to be able to be tested in order to be a sympathetic Priest.

7. To Be Able to Be a Qualified Judge

Though most people think of God as the Judge before whom all will appear, the truth is that Jesus will be that Judge (John 5:22, 27). All judgement will be executed by our Lord “because he is the Son of man.” This is the title that links Him to the earth and to His earthly mission. Why is it necessary for the Judge to be human and to have lived on earth? So that He may put down all excuses people might try to make. Why must the Judge also be God? So that His judgement will be true and just. Thus the Incarnation has ramifications in relation to our knowledge of God, to our salvation, to our daily living, to our pressing needs, and to the future. It truly is the central fact of history.

V. The Humanity of Christ

1. He had a human body.

His conception was supernatural, but His birth was natural. His human body grew and developed Luke 2:40, 46, 52. Jesus called Himself a man; John 8:40.

2. He had the appearance of a man John 4:9.

3. He had a human soul and spirit.

His humanity included a perfect immaterial nature as well as a material one. Luke 23:46; John 19:30.

4. He exhibited the characteristics of a human being.

- a. Hunger, Matt. 4:2
- b. Thirst, John 4:7; 19:28
- c. Weary, John 4:6
- d. Love and compassion, Matt. 9:36
- e. He wept, John 11:35
- f. Sleep, Matt. 8:24

5. He was called by human names.

His favorite designation of Himself was “Son of man” (over eighty times). This name linked Him to the earth and to His mission on earth. It focused on His lowliness and humanity (Matt. 8:20); on His suffering and death (Luke 19:10); and on His future reign as King (Matt. 24:27). He was also the Son of David, a title that linked Him to His ancestor David and to the royal promises to be fulfilled ultimately by Messiah. Paul call Him man in I Timothy 2:5.

