

The Incarnation of the Son

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There is no more profound subject than that of the incarnation; yet though unfathomable to the wisest, nothing is more enthralling to the affections of the Lords people. The wonderful truth is that One who is God Himself, while never ceasing to be God, became a real man, living amongst men on earth. The Holy Spirit has given us four accounts of that immaculate life. No creature could have thought up such unimaginable details: a perfect human life, yet with glimpses of the glory of His Person shining through the veil. If any human intellect tries to add anything from its own thoughts, how hollow and confused it sounds! as the spurious gospel of Thomas demonstrates.

Though the incarnation is beyond our reasoning powers, there are certain truths about it which we can confidently affirm, because they are firmly based upon the Holy Spirits own account in the Scriptures.

(1) TRUE GOD

The Eternal Son of God became Man, yet He never ceased to be the Infinite Creator. He emptied Himself of His reputation. His Manhood veiled His glory so that He did not receive the universal obeisance that was His due; yet He never ceased in His Person to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, upholding all things by the Word of His power.

(2) PERFECT MAN

He became a Man, entirely untainted by the fall. His Manhood was the same, in essence, as unfallen Adams, though, of course, there were differences. The main one was that His Manhood, though truly human, was joined to Deity in His Person, and therefore vastly glorified. Also Adam was innocent; that is to say he had no knowledge of good or evil. The Lord was not innocent, but He was holy. The Lord was in the midst of evil, but wholly undefiled by it.

(3) REAL MAN

He became a real Man, body, soul and spirit. When God created Adam, He breathed into him the breath (spirit) of life and he became a living soul. The animals were also living souls, but they did not have life by receiving spirit from God. As well as being a living soul, Adam had a spirit. In his soul he had physical life and emotions; in his spirit he had reason and awareness of himself and God. He could have rational communion with God and give God pleasure by his fellowship. For this he was created.

The subject of soul and spirit is a study in itself, and cannot be more than touched upon here.

The Lord took body, soul and spirit to Himself. He had a real body, visible and tangible, made of flesh and blood, capable of pain and suffering, but not partaking of the consequences of the fall. He was not subject to death as an inevitable event. He died by His own power. The ageing process, which is a result of the fall, was not in Him. His body was perfect. Also, as having a soul, He had real human emotions but without any sinful tendency. In His spirit He had real human thoughts by which He could have, even as Man, perfect fellowship with His Father.

(4) ONE PERSON

The Son of God is One Person. The Son of God is the same Person as the Son of Man. Now we are beginning to come up against the inscrutable mystery. Men will argue that body, soul and spirit make a person. This is correct. Therefore (they say) the Son of God and the Son of Man are two persons in unity. No, certainly not! The Scriptures are dead against such an idea. The Person who is in the form of God at the beginning of the sublime sentence in Philippians 2 verse 6, is the same Person who was obedient to the death of the cross in verse 8. The subject of the sentence is the same throughout. There is no change of Person halfway.

We may shrink from saying baldly, God died. How can God die who has immortality and is the Source of life? The bare statement, God died, needs important qualification. Firstly, the One who died was God the Son, not the Father or the Holy Spirit. Secondly, He did not die **as** God, but in the Manhood He had taken. However, to qualify a statement is not to deny it. To say it was the Son of Man and not God who died, is to divide His Person and make Him two Persons. The fact is that God the Son became a Man for this very purpose, that He might die. He did not cease to be God when He died. The blood that He shed was human blood, but it was the blood that He had taken as His own. The Son of God shed His blood, and experienced death. He who is God laid down His life for us. It is the infinitude of His Person that produces the infinite atonement.

This is the marvellous thing that takes our breath away. A divine Person has been through human experience from birth to death. He who is God, remembers His human experiences from birth to death, and sympathises with us in our infirmities. One who is both God and Man feels for us for He has felt the same. What a great High Priest He is!

(5) TWO DISTINCT NATURES

The opposite error to saying that He is two persons is to say that His two natures have combined into one. It was an ancient heresy that the two natures, Manhood and Deity, merged together. For this reason the writer does not like the expression the God-man. It implies to him (though not to many orthodox Christians) that He is half man and half God. Such an idea must be resisted. He is wholly Man and wholly God. He possesses all the attributes and properties of real, unfallen, holy Manhood, and at the same time possesses all the infinite attributes and properties of Deity. The unity consists, not in the amalgamation of essence, but in the Oneness of His Person.

If we suppose an archangel becoming incarnate, a creature tremendously powerful but still finite, and by becoming incarnate having two finite natures (but natures very different), we would say, rightly, that such a situation was impossible. Here would be a baby, unable to do anything except to cry and suck, with no ability to talk, unable to understand a word his parents were saying; at the same time that person would be an archangel with tremendous power, not only able to understand the parents but

knowing far more than they did. We would say, quite correctly, that it would be impossible for such things to be true in one person at the same time. Our finite judgment would be competent to come to such a conclusion. We would say that the archangel was only pretending to be a baby.

Of course, it is not an archangel but an infinite Person who has become incarnate. When we are facing the infinite it is right beyond our ken. We can make no judgment. Mathematicians tell us that both opposites and parallels meet in infinity. We cannot understand, and never will understand it, for we will never have infinite minds. But God has revealed it to us, and so we believe it.

The Lord grew in wisdom, yet was always omniscient, as we have seen. He said He did not know, and yet He knew all things. Yet it is very important to see that He could not make a mistake in what He said in Manhood; it would have been God who had spoken falsely and that would be a **moral** impossibility. To take human limitations is grace, but to take human fallibility would be to compromise Gods holy nature.

Lastly, let us consider Matthew 11:27: No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Here we see that it is possible for a man to know the Father if the Son reveals Him to him, but, without exception, it is not possible for a man to know the Son. Why then, is the Son unknowable, but not the Father? It is not the inscrutability of Deity, for that would apply equally to both Father and Son. Nor is it the inscrutability of divine relationships for if the relationship of the Son to the Father is unknowable, so would be the equivalent relationship of the Father to the Son. Clearly, it is the **Incarnate Son** who is unknowable. The Father, Himself, cannot explain this to us, for to understand the incarnation we would need to have the infinite understanding of the Father Himself.

W.R.D.

1 John 1: 14

2 Philippians 2: 7

3 John 2: 24-25; 21: 17

4 Matthew 8: 27

5 John 3: 13; Matthew 18: 20; 28: 20

6 That is to say, He had body, soul and spirit

7 Genesis 2: 7

8 Genesis 1: 21 & 24. (The word creature in the King James translation Nephesh should be translated soul as elsewhere).

9 1 John 1: 1-2

10 Hebrews 2: 14

11 John 10: 18

12 The Lord grew to maturity but this was not ageing in the sense meant here.

13 Matthew 26: 38; John 12: 27

14 Mark 2: 8; 8: 12; Luke 23: 46; John 19: 30 (dismissed His spirit).

15 1 Timothy 6: 16

16 Hebrews 2: 9

17 Acts 20: 28. (I believe the King James translation and most other translations are correct here).

18 1 John 1: 7

19 Romans 5: 10

20 1 John 3: 16

21 Hebrews 2: 17-18; 4: 14-16

22 Luke 2: 52

23 Mark 13: 32