

The Incarnation

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 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” (John 1:1-14).

The main text of our study on the incarnation (which simply means deity united with humanity in an individual), taken from the above scriptures, is, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14).

The noted preacher and Bible scholar, E. Stanley Jones, once said concerning the incarnation, “We know now that God is like this that we have seen in Jesus. He is Christ-like, and if He is, He is a good God and trustable. If the heart that is back of the universe is like this gentle heart that broke upon the cross, He can have my heart without qualifications and without reservations. I know nothing higher to say of God than that He should live like Christ...Strange, a man lived among us and when we think of God we think of Him in terms of this man or He is not good. We may transfer every single moral quality in Jesus to God without loss or degradation to our thought of God. On the contrary, by thinking of Him in terms of Jesus, we heighten our views of God. All those who have tried to think of Him in other terms have lowered and impoverished our idea of Him.”

A Yale professor said, “The question in my mind is not as to the divinity of Jesus, but as to whether God will act like Jesus.”

During the early days of Christianity, the question of the humanity and deity of Jesus was contested more bitterly than almost any other question. It has been the battleground of speculators, philosophers and theologians ever since.

To the natural mind Jesus is a mystery. No other man has ever produced such startling results in the human being. He changes liars into truth tellers, lazy men into workers, and thieves into honest men. He causes corrupt society to become clean and wholesome. There is something in this man Jesus that changes one's nature the moment he takes Him as Saviour and crowns Him as Lord. What is there about Him that causes those who embrace Him to become so different?

You can read Shakespeare, but it does not change your nature. You might study the works of any great man, but your nature would not be changed. But you cannot embrace Jesus as your Saviour without having a miracle performed in your spirit. The reason for this is that Jesus is different. He was not generated after the common laws of nature.

The incarnation is the most striking miracle of creation. Yet from Heaven's point of view and man's need it is inevitable. The only solution to man's problem can be found in the incarnation.

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden he has been sinking steadily lower intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Man's only hope is for deity to become united with humanity in order to rescue him from his lost estate. It makes life with its burdens, sorrows, and griefs which culminate in death tolerable. It throws light upon this human problem which can come from no other source.

Down through the ages man has craved a belief in incarnation. Through ritual and tradition it has been passed down to all tribes and people in some form--by man's drinking blood and by cannibalism, by the naming of his kings after the titles of his deities, and by the universal reverence of the thing offered on the altar of the gods.

Incarnation is supernatural, but all peoples have believed in the supernatural. Education does not eliminate man's fundamental yearning for and belief in the supernatural. Incarnation is God's answer to the cry of the universal man for a visit of deity to the earth and for a union with deity. Incarnation means that deity has become united with humanity in an individual. Every false religion that denies the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth has attempted to provide a theory of universal incarnation to stimulate man to a higher moral and spiritual life. Most modern liberal theological teachers and preachers teach that all men have the nature of deity, that the so-called spark of divinity dwells in all men, that the new birth is simply the awakening of that spark of divinity.

If man had a spark of deity or any part of deity abiding in him, then man was already God's incarnate. We know that this theory is false for humanity has experimentally proven it false. The entire New Testament contradicts it. If we accept any of the Bible, we must accept it all.

Could the Son of God be incarnate if His body had been conceived by natural generation? Would it have been possible for God to come into a child who was born of the natural process of birth, dwell in that child and be incarnate? It could not be possible in the light of Paul's teachings that "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

If Jesus had been born of natural generation and God had come into Him, then Jesus would have been subject to the devil. That would not be an incarnation. This would utterly destroy the idea of a perfect incarnation of God. The seed must be of divine origin instead of human, for man is subject to the devil. His seed merely produces a fallen man. The Incarnate One could not be a subject of death or of the devil. Therefore, we believe that during Jesus' earthly walk He was not a subject of death, neither was He a subject of Satan. Death had no dominion over Him until the sins of the world had been laid upon Him on the cross, and not until then did He become a mortal being.

Jesus was a perfect human just as Adam was a perfect human before the Fall. If God could have changed the nature of a child after birth so that He (God) could be incarnate in the child, He could as well have changed the nature of the whole human race in the same way. But He would not do this because the sin problem had not yet been settled, and the penalty of man's transgression had not yet been paid. The Redeemer must be one over whom Satan had no legal claims or authority, and this could only come by His being conceived and born as was the babe of Bethlehem.

The incarnation of Jesus is no more difficult to believe and to understand than the creation of the first man or the birth of a child. If God is almighty, He has power to beget a child in the womb of the virgin Mary. If Jesus was incarnate, then man and God can become united. God can dwell in these human bodies of ours. God can impart His own life and nature to our spirits that we may have God's life in us.

If Jesus was incarnate, then immortality is a fact. If we do receive eternal life for our spirits,

then we have positive assurance that these bodies will become immortal at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ!

If the incarnation is a fact, then Christianity is supernatural. Every man who has been born again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle.

The incarnation is the basic miracle of Christianity. It proves the pre-existence of Christ and is the foundation and reason for all subsequent miraculous manifestations of divine power.

Man's condition demands an incarnation because he is spiritually dead and is without an approach to God. The incarnation of deity with humanity provides a substitute of deity and humanity united on such a ground that the Incarnate One can stand as man's mediator being equal with God on one hand and united with man on the other--He can bring the two together. Being both deity and humanity, He can assume the obligation of human treason, satisfy the claims of justice, and thereby bridge the chasm between God and man.

In Genesis 3:15 we see God's first promise of incarnation, given in His conversation with Satan just after the Fall. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Let us notice four remarkable statements in this scripture. First, God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman..." There will be enmity between Satan and the woman.

We see this through woman's history. She has been the special object of Satanic hatred and malice in all ages. She has born the brunt of the Fall. She has been the burden bearer among all peoples. She has been bought and sold as common cattle. In India today she is not worth as much as a cow on the open market. She is unwanted at birth, the plaything of man's passion, the neglected, the outcast, the sufferer. Only where Christianity has reached the heart of a country has woman been elevated above the brute creation.

Second, God said, "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed." Satan's seed is the unregenerate human race. What was meant here by "her seed"--woman's seed? We know that woman has no seed. The seed is of the man. Therefore, what does this mean? It is a prophecy that woman shall give birth to a child independent of natural generation that is to be called the seed of woman.

Woman's seed is Christ. Christ was hunted from His babyhood by Satan's seed until He was finally nailed to the cross. From the resurrection of Jesus until this day the Church has been the subject of the bitterest persecution and enmity of the world. This is not a Hebrewism, for it does not occur anywhere else in the entire Hebrew scriptures. This is a direct statement of fact that there shall be a seed of woman and that seed, Paul tells us, is the Christ.

Third, in His conversation with Satan, God went on to say, "...and He (this seed of woman) shall bruise thy head (the head of Satan)." In all languages, bruising the head means breaking the lordship of a ruler. Satan has just come into his dominion. He has the dominion that God had given to man. God had given that dominion to Adam and Adam sold out to Satan. And so, Satan has just come into his dominion when God said this to him. He has the dominion that God had given to man, and he is going to exercise this dominion without any interruption until this wonderful seed of woman comes who is going to break his lordship.

Fourth, God said to Satan, "...and thou shalt bruise his heel." The heel is the Church in its earthly walk.

This is a remarkable prophecy, and how clearly it has found fulfillment; first in Jesus' bitter persecution which finds its culmination in His death on the cross and then in the persecution of the Church, the body of Christ which is carrying out the will of Christ on earth. The long ages of persecution of the Church by the seed of Satan is today merely a matter of history.

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20). Adam named his wife Eve, which in the Hebrew is “have” and literally means “the living one” or “the mother of the life-giver.” Here God tells man that his wife shall be the mother of life or the mother of the life-giving one, our Christ.

Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would give birth to a son in a supernatural way and she would call Him Immanuel, meaning “God with us,” or “incarnation.” “And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:13, 14.).

Then in Luke 1:31-35 we read, “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. 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: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 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.”

Notice that this child is conceived of the Holy Spirit. It is a supernatural birth. The prophet Isaiah had looked down through the ages and had singled out Mary, the daughter of Eli of the family of David. She was a cousin of Joseph who was also of the family of David. And so, the prophet exclaimed, “...O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men...I will show you a sign...” He was pointing out this daughter of David who would give birth to that wonderful being in a manger in Bethlehem 750 years later.

In Jeremiah 31:22 God declares, “...a woman shall compass a man,” or more literally, “A woman shall compass a man-child.” The Incarnate One could not be born of natural generation because man is a fallen being and his seed is subject to Satan. The seed must be of one who is not a subject of Satan; therefore, this wonderful being must be conceived of the Holy Spirit. The womb of Mary was simply to be the receptacle of that Holy One until the day He was brought forth.

Isaiah 42:6 says, “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”

Adam was created, the rest of the human race was generated by natural process, but Isaiah prophesied that this child that was to be born was going to be formed. “...I have formed him...” (Isaiah 43:7). He was to be formed by a special act of divine power.

Paul speaks of His birth in Philippians 2:6-8, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Another translation reads, “Who, existing in the form of God counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant, taking the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, yea the death of the cross.”

The King James Version says, “Who being in the form of God...” The other translation says, “Who existing in the form of God.” Christ had always existed in the form of God, but now He empties Himself and takes the form of a bond servant, being made in the likeness of man and being found in fashion as a man.

All of these suggest a separate and distinct operation of God, different from natural generation.

Here is a being with whom God performs a miracle by removing Him from the Godhead in heaven and placing Him in the womb of a virgin to be unioned with flesh by a unique conception.

Paul said, "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5). God prepared a special body for this being called the Son of God.

Let's look at some scriptures now that deal with the pre-existence of Christ:

"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psa. 107:20).

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:14). One translation says, "...and tabernacled with us..."

"God was manifest in the flesh..." (I Timothy 3:16).

"...God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh..." (Romans 8:3).

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:4-6).

The incarnation presupposes that this being who became incarnate had an existence prior to His coming to earth. Seventeen times in the gospel of John it is declared that Jesus was sent forth from the Father and came into the earth, then He again left the earth and went unto the Father. The entire gospel of John is based upon the fact that Jesus had a previous existence with the Father. While He walked on the earth He remembered His experiences in the other world and spoke to His Father of them and also of when He would return to take up life again with the Father.

Following are a few verses from John's gospel, the first being the familiar:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42).

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God" (John 13:3).

In John 16:28 Jesus Himself said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

"Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God" (John 16:30).

In John 17:3-8 Jesus is speaking, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have

believed that thou didst send me.”

Notice especially that fifth verse, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

In Micah 5:2 we have a remarkable prophetic utterance of the pre-existence of Jesus and His coming to the earth. “...Out of thee (Judah) shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Here is one to be born of the family of Judah to be a ruler in Israel, and His going forth has been of old from everlasting. He has traveled up and down from the eternities and has left His footprints on the ages.

We have shown on these pages both prophecy and fulfillment of the wonderful story of Jesus. We have seen the reason for the incarnation. We have learned why the Word became flesh and dwelt among us--that man is spiritually dead, a servant of Satan, and no man by natural generation can redeem him. The incarnation was absolutely necessary because humanity must be delivered by a human and any human born of natural generation must be under Satan's dominion.

Jesus was God manifested in the flesh and He came to redeem us.