

THE WORD MADE FLESH

Implications of the Incarnation

(Part One of a 2 Part Series)

I. The Christmas Story In Two Verses

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...

John 1:1, 14

A. The Word Become Flesh is the “Incarnation”

If you understand the word incarnation, you’ll understand what Christmas is about.

Tim Keller

1. The dictionary definition:

“Incarnation” literally means embodied in flesh, or taking on flesh.

a. “en” + “carne” = “in the flesh” (like “chili con carne”, which literally means “chili in meat”)

2. But incarnation is the heart of Christian theology:

“Incarnation”

The Christian doctrine that the second person of the Trinity assumed human form in the person of Jesus Christ and is completely both God and man.

3. The birth of Christ is the miracle of “Incarnation”!

...that act of grace whereby Christ took our human nature into union with his Divine Person, became man. Christ is both God and man. The union is hypostatical, i.e., is personal; the two natures are not mixed or confounded, and it is perpetual.

Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary

a. **The Son of God didn't just "slip" into a body and animate the flesh like a "hand puppet";** He literally infused Himself in human flesh so completely He 'BECAME FLESH'...yet without losing His Divine nature as God!

4. There is NO GREATER MIRACLE in the Bible than this!

a. Here we have the eternal, all-powerful Creator of all things, united in one body with the nature of a human being! A "Divine Person united to a human nature", (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

5. Dorothy Sayers, a powerful voice for Christ and a close friend of the great C.S. Lewis, once said...

"The incarnation is the most dramatic thing about Christianity; and indeed, the most dramatic thing that ever entered the mind of man."

Dorothy Sayers

"A Divine Person united to human nature."

Easton's Bible Dictionary

6. But I wonder if the *busyness* of the Christmas season has tended to smother out our appreciation of the amazing doctrine of the God who "became flesh" and how unique it makes the Christian faith.

Christmas is doctrinal. The invisible has become visible, the incorporeal has become corporeal. In other words, God has become human.

This is not only a specific doctrine, but it's also unique among the world's religions.

Timothy Keller

a. The Buddhists and the Hindus have a God who is *immanent in everything* physical; God is in the physical things of the world, in nature, in animals, in people.

b. On the other hand, the Muslims and the Jews have a God who is so *transcendent over all things* that incarnation is impossible.

c. But the teaching of incarnation in Christianity rejects both extremes; the *transcendent* God has become *immanent*! As the Angel assured Mary she would fulfill Isaiah's ancient prophecy...

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name *Emmanuel*, which being interpreted is, *God with us*.

Matthew 1:23

7. This IS the Christmas story: the God who “became flesh and dwelt among us”.

8. We could stop right here and be blessed. But today and next week I want to show you how the Apostle Paul used the story of the incarnation to send a message to and me today. I’m calling it...

II. The Implications Of The Incarnation

A. Or, What Does The Christmas Message Look Like Applied To Us?

1. In the 2nd chapter of his letter to the Church at Philippi, the Apostle Paul takes the Christmas story to show what the Christian life ought to look like. He begins with this...

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4 NIV

- a. Do NOTHING out of selfishness!
- b. Stop thinking about yourself all the time!
- c. Start thinking about the interests of others!

2. How many of us can be honest enough to admit that we tend to be selfish; to think about ourselves more than others? But how can we do this?

3. The answer is in verse 5, where Paul says...

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”!

Philippians 2:5

- a. He did nothing out of selfishness
- b. He wasn’t thinking about Himself all the time; He was all about the interests of others.

4. We are to have the *mind of Christ*, or as other translations put it, have His *attitude*...

Have this *attitude* in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...

Philippians 2:5 NIV

5. So what did His attitude look like? Paul says, “if you want to know what it means to have the mind of Christ, look at the incarnation!

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2:6-7 NIV

a. Theologians call this the “kenosis” of Christ, taken from the Greek term which literally means “emptied Himself”. He was willing to lay aside certain attributes of His God nature without ceasing to be God.

6. Look at 3 things in these verses:

The Kenosis Of Christ

1. He who was God

2. Became man

3. For the purpose of serving man

B. The Model Mind Of Christ

1. He was God.

a. Infinite—who had no beginning

b. Omnipotent—who made all things, and without Him nothing was made

c. He was co-equal with His Father and the Holy Spirit

2. But humbled Himself to become flesh.

a. Here was the infinite God, humbling Himself within the constraints of time

b. Here was the omnipresent God, submitting Himself to a human body, and so confined to be in only one place at a time

c. Here was the omnipotent, all-powerful God humbling Himself in the flesh of a helpless infant!

d. What amazing humility to unite Himself with human flesh; flesh that could become hungry and thirsty; flesh that could grow weary; but most of all, to flesh that could die!

3. And all so He could “become a servant”!

AND WHAT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO DO IT?

(We’ll spend the rest of our time on this one thought)

C. He Did Not Consider Equality With God A Thing To Be Grasped!

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped...

Philippians 2:6

1. Here is a revelation for the ages; the “mind of Christ” or the “attitude” of Christ begins with His CHOICE not to “grasp” or try to hold on to what He had every right to hold on to!

a. He is God; He always was God; but He did not consider His equality with God something He had to prove or clutch to Himself; but instead...

2. He CHOSE to humble Himself...

He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant...He humbled Himself to be found in fashion as a man (so he could) be obedient to God unto death, even the death of the cross.

3. The mind of Christ was not to grasp for position, but to instead choose humility and servanthood. With what result? The next 4 verses that begin with...

III. The Biggest “Therefore” In The Bible!

A. The Real Message Of The Incarnation

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should

**bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory
of God the Father.**

Philippians 2:9-12

1. “Therefore” means ‘BECAUSE’:

- a. Because the Son of God chose not to grasp to hold on to His high position
- b. Because He chose to humble Himself to become flesh
- c. Because He chose to become a servant
- d. Because He chose to submit Himself to obedience to the Father
- e. Even to the point of death; and not just any death...the most humiliating death imaginable...

2. THEREFORE God highly exalted Him...

- a. Therefore He gave Him a name above every name...
- b. Therefore God commanded every knee will bow before Him...in heaven, on earth, under the earth
- b. Therefore every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father

3. The great lesson of the incarnation of Christ is that in God...

THE WAY DOWN IS THE WAY UP!

**...and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for
God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble .**

**Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may
exalt you at the proper time...**

1 Peter 5:5-7 NASB

4. Imagine what the “now” Body of Christ might be if...
- a. We stop grasping (for promotion, for position)
 - b. We humble ourselves

- c. Willing to make ourselves of no reputation
- d. And all so can obey God and serve others

B. One Final Thought

1. **The 2 most important men in the Bible: Adam and Jesus Christ.**
2. The Apostle Paul refers to them as the “1st Adam” and the “last Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15.
 - a. Jesus was God
 - b. Adam was made in the image and likeness of God
3. The 1st Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden; the Last Adam obeyed God perfectly and became the Savior of the human race.
4. What was Adam’s great sin? Eating the forbidden fruit. But what was the great temptation?

Then the serpent said... "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:4 NKJV

5. The whole message of the Bible is modeled in the story of these 2 men:
 - The first Adam GRASPED to be God and lost everything;
 - The last Adam was God who REFUSED TO GRASP...
 - a. The 1st Adam sought promotion; the last Adam welcomed demotion
 - b. The 1st Adam sought to go higher; the last Adam sought to go lower
 - c. The 1st Adam was disobedient; the last Adam was obedient unto death

The Two Adams

The 1st Adam was a man who sought to become God and be served by men; the last Adam was the God who sought to become man to be a servant to men

6. Every human being in the world is an incarnation of one of these 2 minds:
 - a. Grasping or refusing to grasp

- b. Walking in pride or in humility
- c. Looking to be served or looking to serve

So which “Adam” is being incarnated in you and me?

Therefore...continue to work out your own salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13

C. Altar Call And Prayer

TITLE SLIDE FOR COMMUNION