

# THE INCARNATION OF THE CHRIST



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## Introduction

I have chosen to use much of the text being offered by Got/Questions.org to start off this teaching. They do an excellent job of explaining, far better than my attempt. However, I will interject here and there with comments in red.

*Incarnation* is a term used by theologians to indicate that Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh. This is similar to the “Hypostatic Union”. The difference is that the hypostatic union explains how Jesus’ two natures are joined, and the Incarnation more specifically affirms His humanity.

The word *incarnation* means “the act of being made flesh.” It comes from the Latin version of **John 1:14**, which in English reads, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” Because of the near-exclusive use of the Latin Vulgate in the church through the Middle Ages, the Latin term became standard.

Biblical support for Jesus’ humanity is extensive. The Gospels report Jesus’ human needs including sleep (**Luke 8:23**), food (**Matthew 4:2; 21:18**), and physical protection (**Matthew 2:13-15; John 10:39**). Other indications of His humanity are that He perspired (**Luke 22:43-44**) and bled (**John 19:34**). Jesus also expressed emotions including joy (**John 15:11**), sorrow (**Matthew 26:37**), and anger (**Mark 3:5**). During His life, Jesus referred to Himself as a man (**John 8:40**), and after His resurrection His humanity was still recognized (**Acts 2:22**).

## The Purpose of The Incarnation

But the purpose of the Incarnation was not to taste food or to feel sorrow. The Son of God came in the flesh in order to be the Savior of mankind.

**First**, it was necessary to be born “under the law” (**Galatians 4:4**). All of us have failed to fulfill God’s Law. Christ came in the flesh, under the Law, to fulfill the Law on our behalf (**Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:5**).

**Second**, it was necessary for the Savior to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins (**Hebrews 9:22**). A blood sacrifice, of course, requires a body of flesh and blood and this was God’s plan for the Incarnation: “When Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering (under the Old Covenant) you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me’” (**Hebrews 10:5**). Without the Incarnation, Christ could not really die, and the cross is meaningless.

God did an incredible work in sending His only begotten Son into the world and providing us with a salvation we do not deserve. Praise the Lord for that moment in which “the Word became flesh.” We are now redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (**1 Peter 1:19**).

## The Hypostatic Union



The hypostatic union is the term used to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time. Jesus always had been God (**John 8:58, 10:30**), but at the incarnation, Jesus became a human being (**John 1:14**). The addition of the human nature to the divine nature equals Jesus, the God-man. This is the hypostatic union, Jesus Christ, one Person, fully God and fully man.

Jesus' two natures, human and divine, are inseparable. Jesus will forever be the God-man, fully God and fully human, two distinct natures in one Person. Jesus' humanity and divinity are not mixed, but are united without loss of separate identity. Jesus sometimes

operated with the limitations of humanity (**John 4:6, 19:28**) and other times in the power of His deity (**John 11:43; Matthew 14:18-21**). In both, Jesus' actions were from His one Person. Jesus had two natures, but only one personality.

The doctrine of the hypostatic union is an attempt to explain how Jesus could be both God and man at the same time. It is ultimately, though, a doctrine we are incapable of fully understanding. It is impossible for us to fully understand how God works. We, as human beings with finite minds, should not expect to totally comprehend an infinite God.

Jesus is both God and man. Jesus has always been God, but He did not become a human being until He was conceived in Mary. Jesus became a human being in order to identify with us in our struggles (**Hebrews 2:17**) and, more importantly, so that He could die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (**Philippians 2:5-11**).

So, the hypostatic union teaches that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine, that there is no mixture or dilution of either nature, and that He is one united Person, forever.

## The Importance of God In The Flesh

Since Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin, Mary (**Luke 1:26-38**), the real identity of Jesus Christ has always been questioned by skeptics. It began with Mary's fiancé, Joseph, who was afraid to marry her when she revealed that she was pregnant (**Matthew 1:18-24**). He took her as his wife only after the angel confirmed to him that the child she carried was the Son of God.



Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of God's Son:

*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).*

When the angel spoke to Joseph and announced the impending birth of Jesus, he alluded to Isaiah's prophecy:

*"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')"* (**Matthew 1:23**).

This did not mean they were to name the baby Immanuel; it meant that "God with us" was the baby's identity. Jesus was God coming in the flesh to dwell with man.

Jesus Himself understood the speculation about His identity. He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" (**Matthew 16:13; Mark 8:27**). The answers varied, as they do today. Then Jesus asked a more pressing question: "Who do you say that I am?" (**Matthew 16:15**). Peter gave the right answer: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (**Matthew 16:16**). Jesus affirmed the truth of Peter's answer and promised that, upon that truth, He would build His church (**Matthew 16:18**).

## Nature & Identity

The true nature and identity of Jesus Christ has eternal significance. Every person must answer the question Jesus asked His disciples: "Who do you say that I am?"

He gave us the correct answer in many ways. In **John 14:9-10**, Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."



The Bible is clear about the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ (**see John 1:1-14**). **Philippians 2:6-7** says that, although Jesus was "in very nature God, He did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." **Colossians 2:9** says, *"In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."*

Jesus is fully God and fully man, and the fact of His **incarnation** is of utmost importance. He lived a human life but did not possess a sin nature as we do. He was tempted but never sinned (**Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15**). Sin entered the world through Adam, and Adam's sinful nature has been transferred to every baby born into the world (**Romans 5:12**)—except for Jesus. Because Jesus did not have a human father, He did not inherit a sin nature. He possessed the divine nature from His Heavenly Father.

**(This could have only happened through a “Virgin Birth”)**

Jesus had to meet all the requirements of a holy God before He could be an acceptable sacrifice for our sin (**John 8:29; Hebrews 9:14**). He had to fulfill over three hundred prophecies about the Messiah that God, through the prophets, had foretold (**Matthew 4:13-14; Luke 22:37; Isaiah 53; Micah 5:2**).

Since the fall of man (**Genesis 3:21-23**), the only way to be made right with God has been the blood of an innocent sacrifice (**Leviticus 9:2; Numbers 28:19; Deuteronomy 15:21; Hebrews 9:22**).

## The Final Sacrifice



Jesus was the final, perfect sacrifice that satisfied forever God's wrath against sin (**Hebrews 10:14**). His divine nature made Him fit for the work of Redeemer; His human body allowed Him to shed the blood necessary to redeem. No human being with a sin nature could pay such a debt. No one else could meet the requirements to become the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (**Matthew 26:28; 1 John 2:2**). If Jesus were merely a good man as some claim, then He had a sin nature and was not perfect. In that case, His death and resurrection would have no power to save anyone.

Because Jesus was God in the flesh, He alone could pay the debt we owed to God. His victory over death and the grave won the victory for everyone who puts their trust in Him (**John 1:12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 17**).

## Both God & Man At The Same Time

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is both God and man. Many Christians are understandably confused when it comes to understanding how Jesus can be God and man at the same time. How could our divine Creator become a human? Could a first-century Jewish man really be God? While a certain amount of mystery will always accompany this issue, both Scripture and, to a lesser extent, church tradition provides for us important distinctions to help us make sense of this matter. While previous church councils had deliberated over issues pertaining to the nature of Christ and His relationship to the Father, it was the **Council of Chalcedon** (AD 481) that affirmed that Christ is “the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man.” This statement is not true simply because the council taught it. Rather, the council’s declaration was authoritative only insofar as it aligned with what the Bible teaches on the subject.

Scripture is clear that Jesus is God (**John 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8**), and it is equally clear that He is truly human (**Romans 1:2–4; 1 John 4:2–3**). Jesus claimed the divine name (**John 8:58**) and did things that only God can do (**Mark 2:1–12; Luke 7:48–50**). But Jesus also displayed the weaknesses and vulnerabilities common to humanity (**Luke 19:41; John 19:28**).

The belief that Jesus is both God and man is of fundamental importance. The apostle Paul wrote that an affirmation of the divinity of Jesus is required to be saved (**Romans 10:9**), and the apostle John provided a sober warning that those who deny Christ’s true humanity are promoting the doctrine of antichrist (**2 John 1:7**).



The Triune God of the Bible has existed and reigned from all eternity, and the second Person of the Trinity, the Son, took on human flesh at a particular point in time (**Luke 1:35; Hebrews 1:5**). God, the Son, added a sinless human nature to His eternally existent divine nature. The result was the Incarnation. God the Son became a man (**John 1:1, 14**). **Hebrews 2:17** gives the reason that Jesus had to be both God and man: “He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful

and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.” The Son of God took on human flesh to provide redemption to those under the law (**Galatians 4:4–5**).

At no time did Jesus ever cease to be God. Although He was made fully human, there was never a point when He abrogated His divine nature (**see Luke 6:5, 8**). It is equally true that, after becoming incarnate, the Son has never ceased to be human. As the apostle Paul wrote, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, *the man*, Christ Jesus” (**1 Timothy 2:5**). Jesus is not half-human and half-divine. Rather, He is *Theanthropos*, the God-man. The Lord Jesus Christ is one eternally divine Person who will forever possess two distinct yet inseparable natures: one divine and one human.

## First Born Theology

*Here’s what Biblestudyguide.org has to say*...Under the law of Moses, the term "firstborn" was used literally and figuratively, expressing a relationship, an inheritance, preeminence, and privileges.

The firstborn son's inheritance was a double portion. He had special privileges as the firstborn male of the family.

"But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a **double portion** of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the **right of the firstborn**" (**Deut. 21:17**).



God called Israel His firstborn son. This communicates the relationship He had with Israel, and the preeminence, privileges, and inheritance He granted the nation.

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "**Israel is My son, My firstborn**"'" (**Ex. 4:22**).

God calls David, who was a type of Christ, His firstborn. This communicates the relationship of David with God, looking forward to the relationship Jesus would have with God.

“I also shall make him *My* firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:27).

In Scripture, God uses the term "*firstborn*" to communicate several things about Jesus and Christians, which we'll investigate.

## Jesus: Firstborn, Preeminent

Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. "He is the image of the invisible God, he firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). The phrase "firstborn over creation" does not mean that God created Jesus, because He's divine and therefore eternal (John 1:1). Rather, it means that He's preeminent.

"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:16-18).

"And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22).

## Jesus: Firstborn From The Dead



Jesus is firstborn from the dead. In other words, He was first to resurrect from the grave, having conquered death.

"He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:18).

"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and **released us** from our sins by His blood --" (Rev. 1:5).

Because Jesus conquered death, and rose by the power granted Him by God (**Jn. 10:18**), we too will resurrect to eternal life by the power of God if we obey Jesus (**1 Cor. 6:14; Heb. 5:9**).

## Jesus: Firstborn Among Many Brethren

Paul says that Jesus was the firstborn among many brethren.

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren" (**Rom. 8:29**). Since we are flesh, Jesus became flesh to author our salvation, and save us.

"But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (**Heb. 2:9-11**).

Therefore, since 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, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (**Heb. 2:14-15**).



As Christians, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus (**1 Pet. 2:24**). Therefore, we are His brethren because we have conformed to His image, making Satan powerless against us in respect to death (**Heb. 2:9-15**).

This means that every "Born Again" believer also has two natures. From God's viewpoint, our body has been redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus. He became sin for us that we might be the righteousness of God in Him. (Jesus). **II Corinthians 5:21**... "For he has made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Then He filled

us with His very own Spirit. Like Adam, He breathed into our nostrils the breath of life (His Holy Spirit) and we became alive spiritually. Thus we now are His brethren, Man & God in the same place at the same time.

We are and can never be gods. Some folks have espoused such a notion but that is not so. We are fully mankind being filled with God's Spirit. We are the image and likeness of God through Jesus. We can never attain a god status.

## Church of the Firstborn

Since Jesus is the firstborn, His church is called "church of the firstborn" in Scripture. "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect" (**Heb. 12:23**).

Members of the church of the firstborn have a relationship with God, an inheritance from God, preeminence in the world as God's people, and privileges given to them by God. They're enrolled in heaven, and possess eternal life.

If you're a Christian, you're a member of Jesus' church, the firstborn's church, and have all these blessings from God. But if you're not a Christian, you're missing out on the most precious things of life.

## Conclusion

The literal meaning of, "Incarnation" is Jesus, the Son of God, taking on human flesh." He did this through the virgin birth. The result of that event was multi-purpose:

1. To redeem mankind.
2. To destroy the works of the devil.
3. To bring many sons into glory as His Brethren.
4. To seek out and save that which was lost, His image and likeness on the earth.
5. To become the mediator between God and man.
6. To bring the kingdom of God here on earth.
7. To reestablish fellowship between God and man.



I am sure you will come across more benefits to add to this list. This is enough to strengthen our faith and become the basis for our praise and adoration.

Let us always give praise to God, who came from Heaven to become the God-Man for us. He didn't have to do it, yet He did. He is God. We are not. He is not God and Man mingled together. He is fully God dwelling in a fully human body. The only difference between His body and ours in His has no sin.

Do not think that you will ever become a god to rule over nature or any other realm. God is God over everything. If we rule over anything, it will be at His direction and with His guidance. We are joint heirs with Christ, poised to inherit the kingdom of God that will come here on earth, as it is in Heaven. This is our destiny.

## **Praise The Lord**

