



The early church had to deal with many erroneous views about the character of Christ. Some thought that He did not have a human spirit, but rather a divine spirit united with a human body, thus denying His full humanity. Another view held that a divine Christ Spirit entered the man Jesus at His baptism and left before His crucifixion. Still others thought He was a created being, and therefore inferior to God. All these, and many others, deny either the full deity or the full humanity of Christ that is taught in Scripture.

John started off his Gospel by declaring the Deity of Christ. In the text before us he focuses on the fact that not only is Jesus fully God He is also fully man. Jesus is, in fact, God in the flesh – God incarnate.

***“¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testified about Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” ¹⁶ For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*”**

Three questions can help us understand these verses:

- What is the incarnation? (v. 14)
- How do we know the incarnation is real? (vs. 15-16)
- What is the significance of the incarnation? (vs. 17-18)

Four small words “the Word became Flesh” is all John uses to introduce probably the most profound truth in all of Scripture. The *Word* takes us back to verse one, “In the beginning was the Word.” There John used the idea of the *Logos* or *Word* to show the deity of Christ. He proved that Christ was God because He was pre-existent (in the beginning), co-existent (with God), and self-existent (in Him was life).

God in the person of Jesus Christ became a man – “became flesh.” The infinite became finite, the eternal entered time, the invisible became visible, the Creator entered His creation. He was a physical being of flesh and blood. His body was like ours in every way. Hebrews 2:17 says “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things.”

The idea of God interacting with His people was not new. In Genesis He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He “dwelt” with them when His Glory filled the tabernacle in Exodus, and again when He filled the temple in I Kings. Pre-incarnate appearances of Christ are found in the Old Testament as well, but they were brief. Now He had come in the person of Jesus, and it was not a brief visit.

Not only did He become a man, He “dwelt among us.” In the Greek this is the idea of pitching a tent. He lived among us experiencing everything we do in this world. It was not a brief appearance. He “moved in” for 33 years. All the good and the bad in this world that is part of our lives were part of His as well. Friendship, sickness, death, work, temptation – all are things He experienced, yet He was without sin.

“And we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John lived with Jesus and experienced life with Him. He saw the “glory” of God on display through Jesus’ life. When Jesus performed His first miracle at Cana, and turned the water into wine, Scripture says He “manifested His glory.”

Jesus’ glory was revealed through His divine attributes. As the disciples and others saw Jesus live, teach, and perform miracles, they were witnesses to the truth, love, wisdom, grace, knowledge, power, and holiness of God. Peter says in his second epistle “but we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty.

What is the Incarnation? It is the full representation of God through the person of Jesus. Fully man in every way, yet fully God in every way.

Verses 15 and 16 speak of testimony to the incarnation. John the Baptist had already been mentioned and here he is mentioned again because of his testimony to whom Jesus was. The part of his testimony quoted here is, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

How do we know the incarnation is real? There are many eyewitnesses to the person and deeds of Jesus. John was born before Jesus, he came first and his ministry

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started first, yet he recognized that Jesus was superior because He was eternal. Jesus existed before him because he was God, "He was in the beginning." John the Baptist is the first witness to the incarnation.

The second group the Apostle John calls as witnesses are himself and all believers. All believers have experienced the fullness of His grace through the forgiveness of sin. The grace of God is an abundant grace. It is grace upon grace or grace that follows grace in a never ending flow.

What is the significance of the incarnation?

¹⁷For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (vs. 17-18)

The incarnation has significant ramifications. There is a change that takes place with the coming of Christ. The Jews had the Law, specifically the first five books of the Bible given to them from God through Moses. Paul said of the Law in Romans 7:7 "The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."

However the Law does not save. It convicts sinners of their inability to perfectly keep God's standard of holiness and condemns them to eternal punishment of divine justice. The Law shows us our need for a Savior. Galatians 3:24 says, "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith."

What the Law pointed to was "realized through Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ brought the full realization of the "truth" and "grace" of God. As God, Jesus is the full truth about God, and His death for our sins is the full expression of His Grace. The coming of Jesus was the realization of all that had been promised in the Old Testament.

The second significant effect of the incarnation is that God was made known to us in a way previously unknown. God is Spirit and "no one has seen God at any time," but through Christ we see the "image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

God had revealed Himself through various ways in the Old Testament, but with Jesus we have a full display of what God is like.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³And He is the radiance of His

*glory and the exact representation of His nature."
(Hebrews 1:1-3a)*

"The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." This is a summary statement. "Only begotten God" is a reference to Christ. He is the unique, special Son of God and is God. He has intimate fellowship with the Father (in the bosom of the Father), and explains the Father to us. Whatever was lacking in the Old Testament about God is clearly revealed to us in Jesus.

Earlier we looked at the first part of Hebrews 2:17 "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things." It goes on to say,

[S]o that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

The great news for those that know Christ as their Lord and Savior is that they have a merciful high priest who understands all of their struggles and is faithful to make propitiation for their sins. Since coming to the Capitol, I have heard the phrase "seek first to understand and then to be understood" a number of times. We understand the importance of understanding others.

The Incarnation is God in the man Jesus Christ. Numerous eyewitnesses attested to Him. He is the realization of the grace and truth of God. We know what God is like because we have seen Him in the person of Jesus, and He is a sympathetic high priest because He understands what it is like to be human.

**"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail th' incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to dwell
Jesus our Emmanuel!"**



Bible Study Information:

Legislators Only

Next Study: Tuesday, February 13th

Time: 8:00 pm

Location: Perkins in Fort Pierre

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Behold your God

The Humanity of Christ

John 1:14-18

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