

Incarnation

Last week we explored the Son of God before Bethlehem. Today we examine the mystery of the Son's willing humility and sacrifice: being made in human likeness (Fully man and fully God). As I read God's plans being revealed to Mary, listen for key phrases pointing to the long-awaited Savior King: 'descendant or throne of David', Son of the Most High, reigning over Jacob's descendants forever, His Kingdom will never end.

Read Luke 1:26-33

This is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Jacob, which includes all nations will be blessed through this birth. We've established that God has blessed Mary with being the mother to the Savior King. Now we will get a peak at the mystery of incarnation.

Read Luke 1:34-35

The mystery of Isaiah's prophesy (7:14) is revealed. The virgin who gives birth to Immanuel is Mary! And now Mary know that her son will truly be 'God with us'. For the father is none other than God. The seed of God being planted by the Holy Spirit. Here's three great reasons for the incarnation.

1. **Fulfills God's Promises** (Prophecy)

Some have counted at least 350 prophecies concerning the Messiah. We looked briefly at how the virgin birth of Immanuel in Isaiah is accomplished through the incarnation

of Jesus. The genealogy in Matthew (1:1-17) establishes Jesus' claim to the throne of David through Joseph's adoption. And Luke's genealogy of Mary (3:23-38) establishes that the blood running through Jesus' veins was royal. And not only that, it fulfills the promise of blessing through the line of Abraham and all the way back to the promise of vindication on Satan through the line of Eve (Gen 3:15). The incarnation fulfills prophesy of the Messiah.

2. **Fulfills God's Rescue** (atonement)

The name 'Jesus' means the LORD (Yahweh) will save. From the beginning, the death of the innocent was need to pay for sin. As we studied in Romans, only God's Son is sufficient to substitute for the sins of humanity. The incarnation helps explain how Jesus could live a sinless life. The cross where Christ shed His blood, is the symbol for Christianity. It's a testament to how far God will go to rescue us to join His family in glory.

There's a third aspect to the incarnation that touches the heart in a different way. It answers a question. Why save people in such a risky and humbling way?

By the Holy Spirit, God inseminated Mary's womb to fertilize her egg. God did not start with the sin affect seed of

Adam but of the Holy Spirit. Now that's a mystery. Creator and sustainer of the universe sent into enemy territory as a cell that develops into a helpless dependant human baby. Young Mary is a godly, brave girl. But still, the Son of God, beloved second person of the Trinity...spends nine months in a womb. He did not cease to be God but voluntarily limited Himself (Phil 2).

The incarnation seems like the messiest way for God to appear. Consider the difficulties it created from the human side of things. God chose a girl of humble circumstances - a nobody from a tiny town in a lesser province. Jesus is not going to have it easy. Mary will have to bare community shaming for unplanned pregnancy with no plausible explanation for a biological father. "God did it. The angel Gabriel showed up and told me." Sure....

Then there's the shame of the parents. Marriages were arranged by the parents. [Today, I believe parents need to be more proactive and plan ahead. Be the first to explain the delicacies of God's plan for staying pure and saving sex for marriage. Plan how potential mates for your children will be interviewed and how to prepare your children to make wise, godly choices – seeking the Lord's approval #1.]

In ancient Israel, when family's agreed to a match, there was a year of betrothal (engagement) which was a test to the couple's fidelity. There was no physical contact (girl stayed at home) yet they were committed for life. And who shares most of the burden for making sure there's no compromise before God and man? The parents. Even though Joseph accepted Mary into his home as his wife, (already showing pregnant) the families would have to learn to live with the stigma of a scandal...even though they were obeying God.

Imagine the life of God's Son as Jesus of Nazareth. Writers have attempted to recreate how Jesus would have grown up, the son of a carpenter (handyman). A human family is complicated and messy at times. Imagine the misunderstandings about Jesus' loyalty to His heavenly Father (Lk 2:41-51). We know He grew in wisdom and stature with God and people. You don't gain that kind of respect in this world without earning it.

Were His brothers frustrated or thankful for having a sinless big brother around? During His ministry, Jesus' brothers and Mary thought Jesus had lost His mind and attempted to take Him away (Mk 3:21).

At about age 30 (Lk 3:23), Jesus broke the custom of the firstborn son by leaving the family business and beginning His

Gospel ministry. That would have caused great heartache. The ministry of Jesus tells us what God expects of His people and how Jesus went about training His disciples. But the ministry of Jesus is also His journey to live and relate as a human. He related to crowds, dedicated disciples, enemies and children. He experienced this planet as Immanuel: God with us.

If the cross focuses us on the 'how' of God's rescue plan, the manger helps us focus on the 'why'. The incarnation proves God wants us to know Him personally. It's a testament to how far God will go to be with us. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John 1:14

Here's a story for incarnation skeptics (adapted from Paul Harvey).

Now the man to whom I'm going to introduce you was not a scrooge. He was a kind, decent, mostly good man, generous to his family and upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn't believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas time. It just didn't make sense, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn't swallow the Jesus story, about God coming to earth as a man. And so he

stayed, and they went to the church service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another, and then another. At first he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window. Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.

Quickly he put on a coat and boots and tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs and sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-lighted, wide-open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds

ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them. He tried shooping them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms. Instead, they scattered in every direction, but not into the warm, lighted barn. And then, he realized, that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me – that I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? “If only I could be a bird,” he thought to himself, “and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe, warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see, and hear and understand.” At that moment, the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells – listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. And he sank to his knees in the snow. Our loving Father sent His Son to enter our messy lives ...right where we’re at.

3. God Understands and is Near

(Mediator)

We can come to God with anything.
Jesus understands every weakness of

ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help. (Heb 4:15-16)

As Son of God and Son of Man, The Lord Jesus represents us in heaven. *For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.* (1 Tim 2:5-6a) Any accusation against us is useless. God sees His children as cloaked with the robe of Christ – righteous (2 Cor 5:21, Is 59:17, Rom 13:14).

Our Advent theme today is Jesus: Prince of Peace. Want peace? Turn to Phil 4.

Read Phil 4:6-7

Why can we rest in the peace of God? Back up just a little bit.

Read Phil 4:4-5

The reason we can rejoice when times are difficult and rest in God’s provision is the Lord Jesus is near. *I will be with you always* (Matt 28:20). Jesus rose from the grave and ascended to heaven and sent us the Helper. The Spirit of Christ dwells in us (Rom 8:9, Jn 17:26).

The Incarnation: 1. Fulfills God’s Promises 2. Fulfills God’s Rescue Plan 3. Proves the LORD is understanding and near...all the time.