

What Does the Incarnation of Jesus Mean?

We are preparing to celebrate, once again, the Incarnation of Jesus ... or Christmas, the birth of the Christ. The incarnation of Jesus is a powerful Christian doctrine and so, a reality taught in Scripture. The word 'incarnation' is based on a Latin word which means to become flesh. One can describe it as the 'enfleshment' of Jesus, His becoming human. Jesus, truly God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, becoming a human being.

So that's what the word incarnation literally means, but its significance is where we find the power of the term. The significance of the incarnation is huge. It can be summed up by John 3:16, that beautiful and concise summary of the Gospel, or as it has been called: 'The Gospel in a Nutshell': ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"*** (John 3:16 ESV). God loved us so much, He sent Jesus to become human in order to save us.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians, chapter two: ***"Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped ... He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross"*** (Philippians 2:5-9 ESV). Paul goes deeper with that significance of Jesus' humanity in 2 Corinthians 5. He says, ***"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"*** (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV). So, we see that Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a human being--but even more than that--He also willingly became sin itself for us. Jesus became human like us, but He lived a perfect life. And upon Him was placed all our sin and imperfection, our faults and failures. Jesus was punished by God the Father in our place for our sin to save us from the consequences of our guilt, our disobedience, and our brokenness. He was that Sacrifice that saved us when He died on the cross.

The writer of the book of Hebrews summed that up, that sacrifice, when he wrote: ***"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin"*** (Hebrews 4:15-16 ESV). Hebrews 10 goes on to say that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. It says, ***"We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"*** (Hebrews 10:10 NIV). Those are great verses. They tell the significance of the incarnation of Jesus. It says, ***"We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus once for all."***

You see, Jesus became our Substitute. Where we failed, He succeeded. He became like us, but instead of sinning, He lived a perfect life in our place. And, amazingly as the sinless Son of God, all our sin was still placed upon Him and He took the punishment for it. Even

more amazingly He rose from the dead and His sacrifice was confirmed as acceptable before God the Father. Now God looks at each one of us, through faith in Jesus Christ, and He sees us perfect because all our sins have been paid for in Him.

The reality is that the incarnation of Jesus changes everything. Without it, we would still be lost eternally. Only God Himself could save us. Only Jesus in the flesh, God in the flesh, could do that. Here we think of St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15: ***"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"*** (1 Corinthians 15:21-23 ESV). That's why Jesus is sometimes called the "Second Adam." He fixed, repaired and restored what the first Adam broke, so that incarnation shows us the remarkable love of God. He is inviting everyone personally to have faith in the Savior who paid for your sins, who rose from the dead. One day we will even see Him face to face. We will see the wounds that earned our grace, and receive His physical embrace. But in the meantime, He is with us always even to the end of the age. And that's the comfort, isn't it, of which Isaiah wrote: ***"Comfort, comfort ye my people"***? He is with us always, even to the end of the age.

God's blessings to you and yours in this holy time and always!

That's the View from Here.

Pastor Bill Winter