

The Incarnation — Fully God and Fully Man

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Body, Soul, and Spirit — What We Are

First Thessalonians 5:23 gives us a definition of the human being that is worth pausing over: the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are composed of three parts — body, soul, and spirit. The body is the physical frame. The spirit is the intelligent faculty, the inward knowing — the Lord said that no one knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him. The soul is the seat of the affections, what we want and what we love and what we feel — and feelings can run ahead of reason, which is why the soul needs to be governed by the spirit exercised toward God.

This matters enormously when we come to consider the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Was He body only — a human shell inhabited by the Son of God, with no human soul and no human spirit? Some have taught exactly that. But that would not be an incarnation. It would be another appearance of the same kind God made to Abraham in the plains of Mamre — God taking on the form of a man without becoming one. The Lord Jesus did not inhabit a shell. He became a man.

The Doctrine of the Incarnation — Why 2 John Makes It Non-Negotiable

Second John 7 and 9 set before us how vital this doctrine is: many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh — this is the deceiver and the antichrist. Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the

doctrine of Christ has not God. If anyone comes to you and brings not this doctrine, do not receive him into the house and greet him not.

The language is as strong as Scripture uses for any doctrinal matter. Do not greet him. Do not welcome him. To greet him is to share in his wicked works. When those who deny the Lord's deity or the Lord's full humanity come to the door, the right response is not a polite conversation. This is not a peripheral question about prophecy or church practice. It strikes at the person of the Lord Jesus himself, and God measures our response to it accordingly.

Matthew 11:27 shows why: all things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father, nor does anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal Him. The Son and the Father know each other in a way that no creature can penetrate. The incarnation did not dissolve that relationship. It did not change who the Son was. It added perfect humanity to the eternal Son of God — an addition that can never be undone.

I Am — The Lord's Own Declaration

Exodus 3:14 gives God's name: I am that I am. Not I was, not I will be — I am. The self-existing one, the ever-present one, the one who has no beginning and no end. That is what God's name declares to Moses from the burning bush.

In John 18:5–6, when the crowd came to Gethsemane to seize Jesus, He asked: whom seek ye? They said, Jesus the Nazarene. He said: I am. And they went backward and fell to the ground. The same one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush was standing before them in human form. He did not say, I am Jesus of Nazareth. He said I am — the word of God's eternal self-existence — and they fell. There is no more direct claim in all of Scripture to the deity of Christ than this moment.

And this was the man who grew up in Nazareth, who was called the carpenter's son, who was thirsty at Jacob's well and tired in a storm-tossed boat. The humanity was real. The deity was real. Both were there, inseparably, in one person.

Jesus says to them, I am. And Judas also, who delivered him up, stood with them. When therefore he said to them, I am, they went away backward and fell to the ground. — John 18:5–6

Mary's Question and the Mystery of the Incarnation

Luke 1:34–35 records the most important biological question ever asked: how shall this be, since I know not a man? And the answer: the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and power of the Highest overshadow thee, therefore the holy thing also which shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God. There is no scientific explanation offered. There is no mechanism described. What is stated is the result: the one growing inside Mary was already holy, already Son of God, before birth. He received His humanity from His mother — nine months of human gestation, a fully human birth, a fully human childhood.

Some, like Nestorius in the early centuries, taught that the Lord Jesus was merely a human being inhabited by the divine — that the Son of God took residence in a human shell but that shell had no human soul or spirit of its own. The effect of this is to make the incarnation merely another appearance, like the pre-incarnate appearances of Genesis. But if the Lord Jesus had no human soul, who was praying in Gethsemane? Not my will, but thine be done — whose will was that? If He had no personal human identity, there is no human will, and then that prayer becomes a claim of two wills within the Godhead, Father and Son in disagreement. But God has one will. The prayer was the prayer of a perfect human will — holy, sinless, fully surrendered — saying to the Father: I do not want this cup, but not my will, yours.

The incarnation was not a chemical reaction that could be reversed. It was an indissoluble union. The Lord Jesus is in the glory now as the risen man — and John saw in Revelation a Lamb as it had been slain. The humanity and the deity are both there, inseparable, forever. He who died for our sins is the same one who said I am in the garden. He who wept at the tomb of Lazarus is the same one who is sitting at the right hand of God. These are not two people. They are one — the unique person of the eternal Son incarnate.

The Incarnation and Our Worship

Hebrews 2:9–14 draws out the significance: He was made a little lower than angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor so that by the grace of God He should taste death for everything. He who sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one — for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And: since the children partake of blood and flesh, He also in like manner took part in the same, that through death He might annul him who has the might of death, that is the devil.

He had to become what we are so that He could die in our place. Angels cannot die. The eternal Son, as such, cannot die. But the Son become man — taking blood and flesh — can die, and did. And when He died, He did not merely cease to breathe. He said, finished, and dismissed His spirit. He gave up His life of His own will, because no one could take it from Him. The cross was not something that happened to Him. It was something He chose, and for which He had come.

Philippians 2:5–11 sets before us the most condensed statement of all of this: who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. He did not give up what He was. He never ceased to be the Son of God. But He emptied Himself of His glory —

that visible expression of what He was — and took the lowest place. And God has highly exalted Him. He who humbled Himself has the name above every name. The more we look at these beauties, the more we are occupied with Him in worship — and the more those things in life that otherwise discourage and weigh us down will become small beside His glory.

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