

# Incarnation – God becomes Man

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our Father God, we thank you so much for your many gifts to us. We thank you, Father, for the gift of people.

And not least, we do thank you, Father, for our mothers, for those who have cared for us over many years, who provide for us, who sacrifice their lives, giving their time and energies.

Father, we thank you so much, and we pray that for every mother here today, that they would know your help and your grace to be instruments of your love and your kindness to their children and to their families.

Father, encourage them greatly. And Father, would you please encourage us all this morning that by your Holy Spirit's power, you would open up our minds to have the capacity to understand your word.

But we also want to experience it and feel it in our hearts. We want to meet God today. So Father, help us.

[ 1 : 22 ] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, when I was a single guy, many moons ago, in college, one of my housemates came back very, very excited.

Johnny, he says, I found the right woman for you. She's tall. She's got brown eyes. She's sporty. Don't know what happened there.

She wants to serve God. But after a week of doing absolutely nothing, he arranged for Kirsty to meet me. You see, the best way to get to know someone is to be introduced to them in person. That's the only way we will fully and completely know who they are. Well, in a sense, that's what God has been doing for us. Throughout the story, God has been gradually revealing and introducing who he is and what he is like.

In fact, God has been promising all the way along that one day he will come in person into the world. One of those promises is found in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14.

[ 2 : 43 ] Here's the promise. Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. What is the sign that God's coming? Here it is. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will be called Emmanuel.

Emmanuel. The promise continues. Chapter 9, verse 6. 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.

And so with great expectation, the people, as they heard the promises, looked forward to the coming of God. And as we turn the pages of the story, we are brought to a nervous teenager, a young, unknown girl called Mary.

And in Matthew's Gospel, God promises that she will have a child. Look at Matthew chapter 1, verse 21.

Matthew chapter 1, verse 21. God has come to Mary by the angel.

[ 4 : 16 ] And we read in verse 21, She, that's Mary, will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus.

Jesus means the Lord or God saves because he will save his people from their sins. This great saving God that we've seen throughout the story who intervenes time and time again in the lives of so many people and throughout history is going to come in person to save us, to save the nations.

Verse 22. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet, the prophet Isaiah that we've just read of. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

It's what theologians have come to call the incarnation. Jesus, the God-man. Not 50% God and 50% man.

No, Jesus is fully 100% God and 100% man. Listen to how the New Testament writers have understood it.

[ 5 : 41 ] Who, speaking of Jesus, being in very nature God, but being made in human likeness and being. He, that's Jesus, is the image of the invisible God.

For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. The Son, Jesus, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. One writer put it like this. Jesus is one person in two natures, God and man.

The two natures are united in Jesus without mixture, confusion, separation, or division. And each nature retains its own attributes.

All that is in us and all that is in God is and always will be truly and indistinguishably present in the one Christ.

[ 6 : 59 ] That's why we need to pray to ask God to help us comprehend. So why did Jesus, the God-man, come to us?

Well, first, Jesus comes to reveal God to us. Have a look at John's Gospel. John chapter 1.

John chapter 1, verse 1. Throughout the story and in the past, God's introduction to us has been partial and incomplete.

But now God has fully and completely introduced us to himself in Jesus. Verse 1. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Now, do you remember how the story of the Bible starts? It's very similar, isn't it? The very first sentence, the very first verse in the Bible is this.

[ 8 : 09 ] In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. How did God create?

By His Word. God spoke His words into the vast emptiness and He spoke the universe into existence.

There was nothing and He spoke and it came to be. By His Word He formed the planet and He began to fill each space.

He filled the universe with the sun and the moon and the stars and the planets. He filled this earth with the mountains and the rivers. He filled the seas with fish. He filled the skies with the birds and He filled the earth with people because God's Word is living.

It is powerful. It is active. But more than this, the Word is a person.

[ 9 : 11 ] Read again verse 1. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He, this person was with God in the beginning. This Word is a person but is also identified as God. You see, Jesus didn't suddenly exist as He was born from Mary. Jesus has existed from before time began. So just as God existed from eternity past, the Word existed from eternity past.

Just as God created the world, the Word created the world. Look at verse 3. through Him, through the Word, through the person of Jesus, all things were made.

Without Him nothing was made that has been made. Everything that God is, the Word is.

[ 10 : 19 ] And look what happens to this Word. Verse 14. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

The Word that created the universe takes on Himself flesh and bone, joint and sinew. God takes on human form.

He clothes Himself in humanity and He has given the name Jesus. Jesus. I love the way the author, Philip Yancey, puts it.

Unimaginably, the maker of all things shrank down and down and down so small as to become an ovum, a single fertilized egg, barely visible to the naked eye, an egg that would divide and re-divide until a fetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager.

All of God in His vastness and greatness is squeezed down into the person of Jesus. The all-powerful, almighty God cries and needs His nappy changed.

[ 11 : 45 ] The all-knowing, all-sustaining, all-providing God needs fed and cradled to sleep. Why would God do that?

Well, first, so that we could know God. Look at verse 18. No one, throughout the whole story that we've been looking at, no one has ever seen God.

But God, the one and only, the Son who is at the Father's side, has made Him known. That's the primary reason Jesus came, so that we can know God intimately and personally.

In Jesus, the invisible God is made visible. So, in Jesus, we see all of God's greatness and His power and His beauty and His authority is all on display. As Jesus goes about His life and His ministry, God is tangibly present. Well, you say, that's great. [13:03] That was great for the people then. What about now? How do I get to see Jesus? how can I see God myself?

Well, keep your finger in John chapter one and go to the very end of the book because he tells us how we can know God and see God.

Throughout John's gospel, Jesus has been performing all his signs, his wonders. And this is after his resurrection, after his death, and Thomas verse 28 said to him, when he sees the risen Jesus, he says, my Lord and my God.

Then Jesus told him, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed.

And Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but these are written that you, people like us, may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[14:30] You see, the disciples were the first eyewitnesses of Jesus. They heard him, they saw him, they touched him, they ate with him. And all that they saw and heard, they wrote down so that we too can know God.

You see, everything that God has to say about himself has been revealed in the person of Jesus. And everything that we need to know about Jesus has been recorded for us in scripture.

In other words, there's nothing more to know about God than what we see in Jesus. Jesus. And there is nothing more that we can ever know about Jesus than what we read in the Bible.

So it's as we engage with God's word, as we read it, the Holy Spirit of God takes that word and he gives us that experience of God himself in Christ.

If you want to know God, if you want to see him and understand him, it's as we read his word that we encounter the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:39] So Jesus came so that we might know him for ourselves. But he came second so that we can experience God's love and grace.

Go back to the beginning of John's Gospel, chapter 1 and verse 14. the word Jesus became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

It's like God has come and he's moved into our neighbourhood. God is not far and distant and removed and uncaring and uninvolved.

God loves us so much that he came to live among people like you and me. he moves into the mess of our world and into the brokenness of our lives.

He's not immune from the sufferings and the struggles that each one of us face. And because God took on flesh, he understands us.

[16:46] He identifies with us. And as we follow the story of Jesus, we see that he experienced the same kind of things that we experience in life.

He felt the frustrations and the limitations of a human being. Jesus got tired and he needed sleep. He was hungry and he was thirsty.

He felt alone and he was isolated, homeless and ignored. He was misunderstood by people, abandoned by his friends, considered mad by his family.

body. He wept at the grave of his friends and he grieved over those who rejected God his father. He faced opposition and persecution.

He suffered physically and mentally and emotionally. He faced physical suffering to a degree we will never have to and he experienced the pain of death itself.

[17:46] God is not distant and unremoved from your life and what you go through yourself right now.

And because he is God, he understands us better than we understand or know ourselves. He loves us so much that he enters into our sin cursed world to walk with us so that we can experience his grace in our lives.

Look at verse 16, it's just a snippet but it tells us something of him from the fullness of his grace. We have all received one blessing after another.

The grace of God ministers to us as he identifies with us in our life. And Hebrews tells us that we can now go through Jesus to the Father and receive the grace and mercy that we need in our time

of help.

And God himself, because he knows what we need, will pour out his grace into your life and into my life. So, Jesus reveals God to us.

[ 19 : 06 ] Second, Jesus came to represent us before God. In the beginning, when God created the world, the pinnacle of his creation was to create mankind.

And the first man that God created was Adam. And from Adam comes the whole human race. if we go back far enough in our own family history and follow the line, we discover, well, we're actually all related to Adam.

Whoever we are, no matter the colour of our skin, our nationality, we go back to Adam. He is the father of the nations. But there's a huge problem with that.

There's a huge problem being related to Adam. Have a look at Romans chapter 5 verse 12.

Romans chapter 5 verse 12.

We trace our line back far enough, we come to Adam. We're related to him. But there's a problem verse 12. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, Adam, and death through sin.

[ 20 : 39 ] And in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned. You remember how the story started at the beginning?

The beautiful garden, Adam living in relationship with God, and then Adam rebelled against God. Adam wanted to get rid of God and say, I want to be like him.

I want to be the one who has authority. I want to be the one who has the rules. And they get rid of God by saying no to God. But the problem was, as we have seen, as we've gone through the story, it didn't stop with Adam.

His children followed suit. They said no to God. And what has happened is Adam has produced a family of rebels. The whole human race over the history and the course of time has rejected God. Adam's first sin in the garden was like the first rumble in the deep that causes a tsunami. And throughout history and with every new generation, this tsunami has gained momentum, bringing with it devastation and destruction as people live sinful lives, ruining this world and ruining their lives and ruining everything that God has given to them.

[ 22 : 00 ] And this wave of human rebellion, it seems, is just unstoppable. You see, we are all just like Adam because, look at verse 12, the very end, because we have all sinned.

And so Adam was removed from the garden, separated from the very presence of God. And likewise, we too have been separated from God.

Like Adam, we live now in a sin-cursed world. And now we face the judgment of God. And left to ourselves, we can do nothing about it.

Throughout the course of history and over the time, people have tried to make lives better. They've tried to make the world a better place, but still it continues in its mess.

But that's why Jesus came, to stop the tsunami of sin and its destruction. Jesus came into the world as the new Adam, the perfect Adam, the perfect man who comes to represent us before God.

[ 23 : 16 ] let's see how he does this. First, Jesus dies our death for us. Look at verse 18.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men.

You see, like Adam, we're all under God's just and fair judgment. We've all added to the mess and the brokenness of this world.

Our destiny, God tells us, is hell. But God has intervened into our lives through Jesus. Let's read verse 18.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

That one act of righteousness, that one great act, that one great event was the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins.

[ 24 : 31 ] Jesus comes into the world as the second Adam. He comes in to represent us. He comes in and he takes the place of Adam's children, people like you and me, and he takes on himself the judgment that we deserve so that we might receive life.

Jesus, who is perfect and without sin, becomes sin for us. And on the cross as we picture Jesus with his arms open wide, he absorbs the punishment that you and I deserve.

it's as if the tsunami of judgment crashes in upon Jesus at that moment in time. And he bears it all for you and for me.

Every rebellious thought and word and action has all been taken on by Jesus. He dies our death for us so that we might receive, as it says in verse 18, justification, that declaration from God to say, you are now right before God.

And you can enter into his presence without fear. No one in all of history could do that.

[ 25 : 54 ] God had sent many people, people like Moses, people like David, people like Joshua, all these great people all along, but they could never deal with it.

Only Jesus, the God man, can represent us before God and deal with all our sin. So he dies our death, but he comes to live the perfect life for us.

Look at verse 19. for just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners.

You see again, our likeness, just like Adam, disobedient. We don't live as God intends. We don't do what he wants. But Jesus comes as the perfect Adam for us.

Look at the rest of verse 19. for just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man.

[ 27 : 02 ] That's Jesus. The many will be made righteous. You see, Jesus comes as that great representative for us, the one who obeys God perfectly for us.

Where Adam's children have failed and fallen throughout history, Jesus has followed obediently. Where Adam failed in the garden to obey God as he should, Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane obeyed God and he says, not my will, but your will be done.

Here is the perfect Adam, the perfect man, who did everything right. And Jesus now takes his perfect obedience.

And just as he was clothed in humanity, so he clothes us with his perfect obedience, he wraps us in his obedience, so that we might be accepted and welcomed and treasured by God, that we might become his children, brothers and sisters with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How on earth is that possible? How could God do such a thing? Well, you see, just as we are related to Adam because of our sin, we can now be related to Jesus, the perfect Adam, through our faith.

[ 28 : 27 ] In Jesus is our hope, simply by trusting him. You see, through Jesus the curse is broken and the blessings continue to flow.

Look at verse 21, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through the whole story, it's just been this endless cycle of failure and disappointment and things going wrong and God coming to save and it going round and round and round and then Jesus comes because who him the curse is broken and the blessings now begin to flow.

Just as that single act of Adam caused death and destruction, so the single act of Jesus brings life and transformation. No one in the history of the world could do that.

Only Jesus, the God man, can represent us before God and live the perfect life for us. Jesus reveals God to us so that we can know him intimately and personally.

[ 29 : 49 ] Jesus comes and he represents us before God so we can get to know him. And where does that leave us? Well, we know God through him.

But there is a world out there that does not know God. And in a sense, we are to go, and to live incarnational lives in the world.

So where you go tomorrow, if you are with your children tomorrow, if you are in college tomorrow with your fellow students, where you are at work tomorrow, we are to live incarnational lives.

That is, just as Christ crossed over all those barriers and entered into our suffering and frustrations and difficulties, so we identify with the world and the people around us, we get close to them, so that we can bring the hope of Christ, so that people can get to know this God, man, Jesus Christ, and see their lives changed and transformed as we bring the hope of God with us.

Emmanuel, God with us. May God give us the grace that we might bring God to those who need to know him.

[ 31 : 16 ] Let's pray. our Father God, we are struggling at times to find words and pictures to see and describe all that has taken place and all that you have done.

And so we pray, Father, that by your Spirit you would breathe life into it and open up our minds to grasp and to know and to see you.

we pray and ask that as we read your word and as we listen to it that we would come and experience the living God, that we would experience Jesus, the God man who has come to give life. And we ask, Father, that you would help us as we go into the world, that you would help us to cross over those barriers, to enter into people's frustration and suffering, to show them a God who cares and a God who loves, a God who wants to know them and for them to know God, to show them that their wildest dreams are met fully and completely in Jesus, the one who deals with the brokenness and the sin and the heartache, the one who comes to give life to all who will trust him. Father, help us, go with us by the power of your spirit, we pray. Amen. We're going to sing a song that reminds us that in Christ is our only hope.

[ 33 : 34 ] If you look at the second verse of