



# WORKSHOP TEACHER'S NOTES

## SIMPLE DEFINITION: The Doctrine of the Incarnation

*God is the object of humiliation, disregard and ridicule.*

That statement alone sounds like blasphemy. Yet, this is part of what the incarnation meant - that the God of the Universe, the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth, subjected himself to humiliation and shame, and chose to be born in a relatively unknown way to an unimportant family with not much fanfare. In fact, were it not for the biblical writings, we wouldn't know anything about his birth in the hick backcountry town of Bethlehem. The One who made His dwelling in the high heavens, and who the entire universe itself cannot contain, who makes the earth his footstool - this One chose to make His dwelling in the womb of a poor virgin, to be born in obscurity. The transcendent God comes near - He is Emmanuel: God with us.

When it is stated in these terms, we see the scandal and unbelievable humility that the incarnation means.

The word comes from the latin, *incarnatio*, which means "being or taking flesh" derived from the Latin version of John 1:14.

The word **incarnation** simply means that in Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh - being miraculously conceived and born of a virgin.

The incarnation refers to the affirmation that God, in one of the Persons of the Trinity and without in any way ceasing to be the one God, has revealed Himself to humanity for its salvation by becoming a human - Jesus, the Man from Nazareth.

As the God-Man, He mediates God to humans;  
as the Man-God, He represents humans to God.

## SOME CLARIFICATIONS

Though this is not a class on the Trinity, to make any sense of the incarnation, we cannot avoid at least laying a basic definition of the Trinity and what we mean when we say that God is Trinity.

### A. The Doctrine of the Trinity:

God eternally exists as three distinct Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the one Being of God.

Being is different to Person. Being (or Substance) has to do with **WHAT** something is or its existence.  
Person has to do with **WHO** something is.

So then, another way to phrase the doctrine of the Trinity is that God is three WHOs, and one WHAT. For the purposes of this class, this simple definition of the Trinity will suffice, however, that topic is one deserving of its own study.

## **B. The Subject of the Incarnation**

The incarnation is the 'in-fleshing' of the Second Person of the Trinity - God the Son. It does **NOT** mean that God the Father or God the Holy Spirit became a man.

### **From The Westminster Catechism:**

A36. The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5), who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father (John 1:1, 14; 10:30; Phil. 2:6), in the fullness of time became man (Gal. 4:4), and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person, forever.

A37. Christ the Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul (Matt. 26:38), being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her (Luke 1:27-42), yet without sin (Heb. 4:15, 7:26).

So, with our terms clarified about what we're talking about when we say "incarnation," we can now move on to WONDER at what the Bible says about it and then learn how its proper understanding or misunderstanding leads to right or wrong WORSHIP.



# **1. WONDER: GOD'S STORY**

We're going to briefly consider how the incarnation fits into the Bible's big story and gaze in wonder at it as part of God's story of redemption.

## **1A. THE INCARNATION IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

### **i. FULFILLMENT: Old Testament Prophecy**

There are many Old Testament (OT) passages of prophecy that talk about Jesus's coming. In fact, this was the explicit aim of the birth narrative in Matthew's Gospel - to show how Jesus's birth fulfilled OT prophecy.

In Matthew 1:23, he quotes Isaiah 7:14 as being fulfilled in Jesus's birth and in Matthew 2:5-6, he connects Jesus's place of birth as foretold in Micah 5:2. Even the situation surrounding Jesus's birth with Herod's plot to kill the baby Jesus and their flight to Egypt are connected by Matthew as foretold in Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15.

### **3 Biblical themes Jesus fulfills in Matthew:**

- He brings Israel into the promised land: Jesus is the Greek for Joshua.
- As Immanuel, he embodies God's presence with his people.
- As the new David, he is the messiah born at Bethlehem.

### **Jesus interprets the OT in light of His coming:**

- Isaiah 'saw his glory and spoke of him' (John 12:41; Isa. 6).
- Jesus, not the manna, was the heavenly bread which fed Israel in the wilderness (John 6:31ff., 47ff.).
- Abraham 'saw his day' (John 8:56f.).

Consider how these serve as amazing examples of how Jesus fulfilled hundreds of years of longing and expectation for the prophesied Messiah who would save his people from their sins!

## **ii. FORESHADOWING: The OT in the NT**

### **Connection with the OT Feasts**

The Jewish Rabbis taught that the prophet Elijah would appear at Passover to declare who the Messiah would be. That is why they had the tradition of leaving an empty seat for Elijah at the Passover meal. A child was to go to the front door during the Passover celebration and check to see if Elijah had come to declare the Messiah. John the Baptist is born around the time of Passover, and Jesus calls John the 'Elijah who was to come' in **Matthew 11:13-15**. A clear connection to this Jewish expectation.

There is some debate as to the exact date of Jesus's birth.

Jesus was probably born around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles and John starts his Gospel by saying that the Word became flesh and, literally 'tabernacled' among us (**John 1:14**).

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the fact that God came to dwell with the Israelites in the wilderness. **Now, in Jesus, God comes to dwell with us.**

This is significant since it fulfills what was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the fact that God came to dwell with the Israelites in the wilderness. Now, in Jesus, God comes to dwell with us.

### **Born to Die**

The practice around the first century, and even in some Middle Eastern cultures today, is that if you were going on a lengthy journey - like Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem - you would bring with you special cloths for wrapping a dead body in case anything happened along the way. Some speculate that perhaps the 'swaddling cloths' used in Luke 2:7 & 12 may have been these cloths, if they didn't have any other cloth with them - however, it is not necessarily the same cloth.

In **Matthew 2:11**, one of the gifts the Magi bring is myrrh, which was a spice and was used in embalming. It was also sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Savior when He was about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion (Mark 15:23). Matthew 27:34 refers to it as "gall." Myrrh symbolizes bitterness, suffering, and affliction.

Consider the powerful imagery: Jesus is born, the Lamb of God who would die for the sins of the world, as a baby wrapped in burial cloths and gifted with an embalming spice - myrrh. The foreshadows of his redemptive death are seen even at his birth!

### iii. FULLNESS: John and the NT Letters

The apostle John's doctrine of incarnation is more explicit than any of the others, teaching not only Jesus' God-man status but also his preexistent "glory" (Jn 1:1-18). Central in this presentation is the oneness between Jesus and God the Father (10:29, 30; 14:8-11; 1 Jn 2:23). The "I Am" statements (found only in John) that Jesus uses as His title is taken from the OT title for the one true God and probably signifying God's personal name "Yahweh".

#### JOHN 1 - Greek verbs

We can see more in the Greek of John 1 where two different verbs for 'to be' are used. There, the Word then was (using ἦν - imperfect form of the verb eimi), meaning He did not begin to be but already was. The ἦν of verse 1 stands opposed to ἐγένετο of verse 14. "He was the Word, and became flesh." (see Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol. 1 (1997), 505)

The distinct uses of 2 different Greek verbs, eimi and egeneto tell us this, that Jesus - the Word (logos) eternally was (eimi), but became (egeneto) flesh in time.

#### Paul's Letters:

In **Galatians 4:4**, the incarnation ("born of woman") came "in the fullness of time" or at the apex of salvation-history, to "redeem those who were under the law."

In **Philippians 2:6-11**, the incarnation is seen in terms of preexistence ("though he was in the form of God"), humiliation ("emptied ... humbled"), obedience ("became obedient to the point of death"), with the goal of the cross ("even death on the cross"), and its end result was Christ's exaltation ("that every knee bow").

In **Colossians 1**, Paul says that the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ.

Paul described Christ as a **second Adam** (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:45-47), who brought humanity a new possibility to attain what Adam had forsaken.

#### Hebrews & Revelation:

The opening hymn (**1:2b-4**) accents Christ's exalted status as "the very stamp" of God's image. Christ is superior to the angels (**1:4-9**), yet he became a man in order to suffer for human salvation (**2:9; 5:7-9**). Hebrews shows His real temptation (**2:18; 4:15**) combined with his sinlessness (**4:15; 5:9; 7:26**).

The book of Revelation has imagery of Jesus's birth in Revelation 12, and throughout the rest of the book it shows us His coming in the fullness of His glory.

In many ways, the Gospel narratives show Jesus's glory veiled. We see him walking around, hungering and thirsting and experiencing the human condition. Though there are some glimpses of His deity in the narratives, the majority of the time it is veiled. However, in the New Testament Letters we see His glory more fully unveiled. John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 speak powerfully to the divinity of Jesus and the book of Revelation shows us His coming in the fullness of His glory.

## 1B. THE NECESSITY OF THE INCARNATION

Anselm of Canterbury (died 1109) in his theological masterpiece, *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why Did God Become Man?") deals with the question of the Incarnation. Anselm determined that God became man in Christ because only one who was both God and man could achieve our salvation.

*"The Incarnation, coming in the midst of a history of human sin, indicates that God has not abandoned us but loves us and values us even in our fallen state."*

*(James M. Boice, Foundations of the Christian Faith (1986), 287)*

### i. RENEWAL: a perfect example of true humanity

Because Jesus Christ is the divine, perfect, second Person of the Trinity - in human nature, he serves as an example of what the perfect life lived out in human form would be. Scripture says that the boy Jesus grew in wisdom and stature... (Luke 2:52) - therefore, the perfect model for us as humans is to seek to grow also in wisdom. This has tremendous implications for what we think of the Christian life of the mind! The NT repeatedly calls us to imitate Christ (**1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1**).

Athanasius (296-373 AD) drew the example:

For as, when a portrait painted on a panel has disappeared in consequence of external stains, there is need again for him to come whose the portrait is, that the likeness may be renewed on the same material; because for the sake of his picture the material itself on which it has been painted is not thrown away, but the likeness is retraced upon it: so, similarly, the All-holy Son of the Father, being the Image of the Father, came into our sphere to renew man made after Himself, and to find him as one lost, through the remission of sins; the which He Himself says in the Gospels: 'I came to seek and to save that which was lost.' (Luke 19:10)  
*(Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word of God (London: 1903), 67)*

***Have you lost your faith in humanity?*** Have you seen all the ways in which our race has been marred and distorted by the effects of sin? The incarnation shows us God's plan of renewal for us - for we are united with Christ in His death, and also in his resurrection to newness of life!

### ii. RELATIONSHIP: The incarnation helps us know God

Without the incarnation, the invisible and transcendent God would remain largely unknown to us. In fact, the incarnation shows to us something that has always been true about His character, that He stoops low to be known by His creation. In the OT, it was through theophanies such as the burning bush, the Angel of the Lord, and the fourth figure in the fire with the 3 Hebrew boys. In the NT, it is through His Son incarnate.

Jesus perfectly images to us what God is like (**Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3**).

The word exegesis means to interpret or explain a text. When preachers open the Bible and 'exegete' scripture - they are explaining it and making its true meaning plain to us. In John 1:18, in the Greek it literally says, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has 'exegeted'".

him.” Jesus exegetes the Father - He explains Him and makes Him known more fully and plainly to us. Jesus says to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (**John 14:9**). The incarnation makes God relatable to us.

In fact, in John 14:9, this is exactly what Jesus explains to Philip when he asks Jesus to show him the Father. He replies to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” Paul in Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus “the image of the invisible God” and Hebrews 1:3 says that he is “the exact imprint of His (God’s) nature” and Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He is our High Priest that can sympathize with us because he was truly human. Everything that Jesus is and does reflects what God is like and His works. In John 5:19, Jesus tells us that “whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise” and in John 10:30 he says “I and the Father are one.”

This phrase is important to understand. Greek nouns have genders - just like other languages (eg. Latin based languages like Spanish and French). However, it also has a neuter gender which is neither male nor female that is used to refer to things or abstract concepts. When Jesus says, “I and the Father are one” - one is in the neuter. He’s saying, “I (Person) and the Father (Person) are one (thing/what). They are 2 separate and distinct persons, but one in being and divine nature.

***We are created for relationship*** - with each other and ultimately with our Creator. The incarnation shows that God has provided the way to reconcile that vertical relationship so that all our other relationships can be made right as well!

### iii. REDEMPTION: God pays the price we couldn’t

Paul says, “For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Cor. 15:21) and “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Rom. 5:19)

Only one who is truly God could redeem us from the wages of sin - which is death. Only God, who is life in himself could conquer death. Only one who is truly human could represent us - feel our sorrows, bear our sins, and be an appropriate substitute. See **1 Corinthians 15:21; Romans 5:19**.

Calvin said:

For the same reason it was also imperative that he who was to become our Redeemer be true God and true man. It was his task to swallow up death. Who but the Life could do this? It was his task to conquer sin. Who but very Righteousness could do this? It was his task to rout the powers of world and air. Who but a power higher than world and air could do this? Now where does life or righteousness, or lordship and authority of heaven lie but with God alone? Therefore our most merciful God, when he willed that we be redeemed, made himself our Redeemer in the person of his only-begotten Son.

*(John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (Knox Press, 2011), 466)*

Jesus Christ - the Man-God - perfectly represents us as the Second Adam, fulfilling the righteous requirements of the Law through a perfectly lived life, and as the God-Man accomplishes the payment of our infinite sin debt and conquers death through his atoning death.

***Do you need redemption?*** Do you feel the weight of your moral failure and the punishment you rightly deserve as a transgressor of God's perfect Law? Jesus shows us God's costly redemption for us!

#### iv. RESCUE: We're hopeless unless God came down to us

The incarnation exposes to us our helplessness to help our hopeless estate. All of humanity had fallen in Adam. We're born sinners with a sinful nature - we are by nature children of wrath (***Ephesians 2:3-5***), unable to keep the commands of God perfectly. We're enslaved to sin (***John 8:34***). So, in love and mercy, God sends His Son to rescue us and set us free (***Romans 6:18***).

The image is not of God throwing us a rope or life preserver or some thing by which we can pull ourselves out of our depravity, but rather it is one of rescue - we've already drowned in our sin - we're dead in trespasses - and God jumps in, drags us out and brings us back to life.

***Do you need rescue?*** Are you weighed down by the weight of your sins or brokenness? The incarnation shows us God is the God who rescues us!



## 2. WORSHIP: ORTHODOXY & HERESY

What we believe about Jesus as the God-Man is tremendously important because if we get the wrong Christ, we're worshipping the wrong God.

### 2A. THE INCARNATION IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

#### i. The Hypostatic Union

We must first define a few terms before we talk about the Hypostatic Union.

##### NATURE

The term "nature" denotes the sum-total of all the essential qualities of a thing, that which makes it what it is. Nature refers to the sum of all of what makes a thing that type of thing. It is the qualities possessed in common for a given substance.

For example, what makes a cup a cup? It has a handle, it is made of some sort of material that can contain liquid, it has a shape that can hold liquid, it has a flat bottom so it can be rested on a flat surface, etc... that's the "nature" of what makes a cup a cup. When we refer to the 'nature' of God - it is in reference to what qualities are proper to God. Similarly when we talk of human nature - it is in reference to the qualities that make humans, human.





## PERSON

The term “person” denotes a complete substance/thing endowed with reason/consciousness, and, consequently, a responsible subject of its own actions. Person refers to the “who” of a thing. Personhood can be a part of the nature of a thing, but is not necessarily part of the nature of all things. For example, a rock has no personhood, but it does have a ‘nature’.

“Personality is not an essential and integral part of a nature... A person is a nature with something added, namely... individuality.”

(L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1938), 321–322)

When we talk about the Hypostatic Union, we mean that Jesus Christ has 2 Natures: a human and a divine nature that are distinct and unmixed, and One Person - who is, the Second Person of the Trinity - God the Son.

## THE VIRGIN BIRTH

If Christ had been generated by man, He would have been a human person, included in the covenant of works, and as such would have shared the common guilt of mankind. But now that His subject, His ego, His person, is not out of Adam, He is not in the covenant of works and is free from the guilt of sin. And being free from the guilt of sin, His human nature could also be kept free, both before and after His birth, from the pollution of sin.

(L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1938), 336)

### ii. The Humanity of Jesus

- Jesus referred to Himself as a man (John 8:40).
- The genealogies show His natural human descent (Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–37).
- Jesus attributed to Himself human elements as body and soul (Matt. 26:26, 28, 38).
- He grew and developed in normal human development (Luke 2:40).
- He experienced fatigue (John 4:6); His body required sleep (Matt. 8:24), food (Matt. 4:2; 21:18), and water (John 19:28).
- Human emotional characteristics: Jesus expressed joy (John 15:11) and sorrow (Matt. 26:37); He showed compassion (Matt. 9:36) and love (John 11:5); and He was moved to righteous indignation (Mark 3:5).
- He prayed for emotional and physical strength. He perspired under great physical strain (Luke 22:43–44).
- He died a real death (Mark 15:37; John 19:30).
- When a spear was thrust into His side, blood and water poured out (John 19:34).

### iii. The Deity of Jesus

- “All the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him” (Col. 1:19; John 20:28; Titus 2:13).
- Jesus was aware of His divine status (John 10:30; 12:44–45; 14:9).
- Jesus was God (John 6:51; 8:58; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1).
- His preexistence (John 1:1–2; 1:15; 8:58; 17:5; Phil. 2:5–11).
- Jesus did things and claimed authority ascribed God: He forgave sins (Matt. 9:6) and has all authority (Matt. 28:18–20).
- He is worthy of worship due only to God (John 5:23; Heb. 1:6; Phil. 2:10–11; Rev. 5:12).
- He is the Agent of creation (John 1:3) and sustains it (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).
- He raised the dead (John 11:43–44), healed the sick (John 9:6–7), and vanquished demons (Mark 5:13).
- He will resurrect all humanity to judgment or to life (Matt. 25:31–32; John 5:27–29).
- The titles ascribed to Jesus: “LORD” (Phil 2:11), “LORD of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15), “the LORD of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8), “the mediator” (Heb. 12:24), and “who is God over all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5).
- The name “God” is coupled with Jesus (John 1:18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 2 Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20).



## 2B. THE INCARNATION IN HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

We've looked at how the Bible presents the incarnation in our first part of this workshop, and then we just looked at it in terms of a systematic definition of the union of the human and divine natures in Jesus Christ. However, many people and groups have gotten these things wrong and fallen into heresies from since the earliest times. These early heresies are still around today, so it is profitable to look at them and learn how the church responded to them so that we would be equipped to give an answer today.

### i. Heresies and Councils

#### **GNOSTICISM & MARCIONISM: denying the true humanity of Jesus**

The first group to challenge the traditional doctrine of the incarnation was the Gnostics, who in the 2nd century denied that Jesus was truly human. Their Greek belief that the physical creation was evil led them to deny the incarnation. They believed Christ to be a quasi-spiritual being who merely appeared human. Marcionism, based on Gnostic thought, also accepted a docetic interpretation of Christ (his humanity was only apparent). There is an old legend that rises out of the Gnostic heresy of Jesus walking on a sandy shore but leaving no footprints. This idea has found its way into some sentimental posters even today.

However, contrary to Gnostic belief, God's word says that his physical creation is 'good'. Furthermore, if Christ only appeared to be human, but was not truly human, he could not represent us truly. Also, as Calvin points out from 1 Corinthians 14:12-20), unless Christ had one bodily nature with us, Paul's reasoning that "if Christ arose, we also shall rise from the dead..." would be meaningless. (John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (2011), 477)

#### **ARIANISM AND KENOSIS: denying the true deity of Jesus**

Arianism held that Christ the "Logos" was no longer fully God. It taught, like modern cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, that Jesus was a created being or creature—it denied the Son's eternal divinity. Kenosis heresy asserts that the eternal Son of God 'emptied' himself of his divine attributes.

Against Arianism, **The Council of Nicaea (325 AD)** asserted that the Son was homoousios of one substance with the Father. Jesus was fully divine. Against Kenosis heresy, a careful reading of Philippians 2 shows that what Christ 'empties' or lays aside is his pre-incarnate glory by taking the form of a servant in human form, becoming obedient to death.

There is a funny story in church history that at the council of Nicea, Saint Nicholas, the saint that Santa Claus is often connected with, became so enraged at the heresy of Arius that he got up and punched Arius in the face. Not so jolly-ole Saint Nick! You better watch out, you better not be a heretic... Santa Claus is coming to town, and he's got a mean right hook!

#### **KENOSIS HERESY**

View asserting that the eternal Son of God by virtue of the incarnation gave up some or all of the divine attributes which were incommensurate with a fully human existence. This view is primarily based on Phil. 2:5-11, especially verse 7, which states that Christ "emptied Himself." The idea of self-emptying is taken from the Greek verb kenoo which means "make empty."  
(Doros Zachariades, "Kenosis," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2003), 979)

This heretical view of Christ is even taught today by some popular and well-known churches and pastors

## OBJECTIONS TO THE KENOSIS HERESY

If Jesus, the divine Son empties himself of His divine attributes, it means a virtual destruction of the Trinity, and therefore takes away our very God.

A careful reading of Philippians 2 rules out this heresy. Paul does not refer to Christ emptying himself of his deity, but rather, the already incarnate Christ (v.5) is said to empty himself - and Paul defines what that emptying is in what follows:

Paul is thinking in scriptural categories, having Isaiah's prophecies concerning the servant of Yahweh in (Phil. 2:10–11 with Isa. 45:23). The words "emptied Himself" suggest that the incarnate Christ is to pour out His life, having taken a position of a servant and (already) the likeness of humanity, as a fulfillment of Isaiah's conceptual parallel in Isa. 53:12: "poured out Himself to death" (NASB). To this Paul adds "even to death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8 HCSB).  
(Doros Zachariades, "Kenosis," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2003), 979)

## OTHER HERESIES: confusion over the natures and person of Jesus

Apollinarius (310?–390?) taught that only the body of Jesus was human; his soul was absorbed completely into the divine Logos. Nestorius (after 381–451) taught that the union of the human and divine in Jesus was like a marriage and equated to two persons in Christ. Eutyches (378–456) denied that Jesus had two natures.

In response to these heresies, there were 3 councils held:

**The Council of Constantinople** (381 AD) affirmed the full humanity of Christ.

**The Council of Ephesus** (431 AD) denied the Nestorian teaching that there were two separate persons in Christ.

**The Council of Chalcedon** (451 AD) was perhaps the most significant church council for Christianity. It expressed the incarnation of Jesus in terms of one person with two natures—human and divine. It's Creed still remains until today as the orthodox expression of the Hypostatic Union.

## ii. The Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD)

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood;

**Truly God and truly man**, of a *reasonable soul and body*; consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; **begotten before all ages** of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood;

One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in **two natures**, **inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably**; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved,

And concurring in **one Person** and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

*Note the intentional precision of the Creed in saying “truly God and truly man” not “fully God and fully man” nor “100% God and 100% man” as some popularly state today. To say that Jesus is fully or 100% both God and man is to assert nonsense. For if something is fully one thing, it cannot at the same time be fully another. Instead, it is more precise to say that Jesus was truly God and truly man - meaning that he truly had a real human nature and truly had a divine nature which were both joined to the person of Jesus Christ.*



## 3. WITNESS: GOD SENDS CHRIST, JESUS SENDS US

### 3A. HOW THE INCARNATION EQUIPS US FOR WITNESS

#### i. AN EXAMPLE

In **John 17:18** and **John 20:21** Jesus says that ‘as the Father has sent him, so he sends us.’

- The incarnation shows us that God stoops low, humbles himself and becomes one of us in order to bring salvation to us. Likewise, our outreach and evangelistic efforts must be ‘incarnational’.
- Paul says in **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**, he had ‘become all things to all people so that by all means I might save some.’ What does this mean when you’re reaching out to people who are different or marginalized?
- The incarnation meant that Jesus put aside what was rightfully his for the sake of others (**Philippians 2:5-8**). How does that challenge us to do nothing from selfish ambition but rather count others’ needs more significant than ourselves?
- The incarnation shows us that it was incredibly costly to God to show his love and bring salvation. How does that challenge us to be willing to extend sacrificial giving of ourselves in seeking to reach the lost?

#### ii. AN APOLOGETIC

We have studied the doctrine of the incarnation and saw how many various cults and groups get the doctrine of Christ wrong. If you have the wrong Christ, you have the wrong Saviour. A Jesus who is not truly God and truly man cannot be your substitute to save you from your sins. So, this doctrine equips us apologetically to help others understand the need for a Mediator between God and Man: Jesus represents us to God. May this doctrine help inform and deepen our evangelistic conversations!



### 3B. RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Here are a few resources you can check out for further study:

- **Knowing Christ** by Mark Jones
- **Who is Jesus?** (Crucial Questions Book 1) by R.C. Sproul
- **Who is Jesus?** by Greg Gilbert
- **An Even Better Christmas** by Matt Chandler
- **A Very Different Christmas** by Rico Tice
- **Love Came Down at Christmas (Advent Devotional)** by Sinclair Ferguson

