

**Text:** Various

**Title:** What Did the Incarnation Do?

**Truth:** The incarnation was the miracle by which the second person of the Trinity took upon Himself humanity to become the God-man.

**Date/Location:** Sunday December 24, 2023 at FBC (rev. 12/21/2003)

## Introduction

What did the incarnation accomplish, exactly? What was the virgin conception and birth able to *do*?

In short, in the incarnation, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). God became a man, the God-man.

This concept should not floor us. The world's religions and fantasy stories have had stories of gods and demigods and heroes coming in the form of humans for thousands of years. Super-human, super-natural powers still captivate the human imagination today. People were easily able to think of such an idea, and God had already planned from before time that such a thing would in fact, in truth, in reality, happen. In fact, the origin of the idea of gods-among-men is probably sourced in the events of Genesis 1-3 where God had fellowship with his human creation in the Garden of Eden, and Satan interrupted the purity of that place—both in some kind of visible appearance to Adam and Eve. Since that time, it only took imagination to think of the deity or other power supernatural creature interacting with men.

Although Christians say that God became a man, we do not fully grasp what it means. There is no one to compare the God-man to. He, in His whole divine and human person together, does not belong to a class or a species or a group: He is the only one. Like Tigger of cartoon fame, who said, "But the most wonderful thing about Tiggers is, I'm the only one." And because of that uniqueness, people struggle to believe or understand the truth of it.

To be accurate, Jesus is not the only human, and He is not the only person in the Godhead, but He is the only God-man who puts his hands on both God and man and can bring them together (Job 9:33).

The word “incarnation” means to “embody in flesh” and its Christian meaning is that the second person of the Trinity was embodied permanently in flesh and took on a human nature – for eternity.

The Lord did not unite himself with a human *person* but with a human *nature*. Why? Because He was already a divine *person* from eternity past—the second person of the Trinity.

## Descriptions of the Incarnation

The Biblical authors used many different phrases to convey this idea.

Verse	Phrase
Matt 20:28	He came
John 1:14	He was made flesh
John 3:13, 6:51	He came down from heaven
John 3:17	He was sent
Rom 1:3	He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh
Rom 8:3	He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh
1 Cor 15:47	He is the second man, the Lord from heaven
2 Cor 8:9	He became poor
Gal 4:4	He was made of a woman
Php 2:7	He made himself of no reputation
	He took upon him the form of a servant
	He was made in the likeness of men
Php 2:8	He was found in fashion as a man
	He humbled himself
1 Tim 1:15	He came into the world
1 Tim 3:16	He was God manifest in the flesh
Heb 2:9	He was made a little lower than the angels
Heb 2:17	He was made like unto His brethren
Heb 10:5	A body was prepared for Him
1 John 3:5	He was manifested
Heb 2:14	He partook of flesh and blood

# The Incarnation

Proper understanding of the incarnation protects against falling into the trap of false teaching. Here is how.

**The meaning of Son.** Do not confuse son of God with son of Mary. From Mary, Jesus was born as an offspring. From God, Jesus was *not* born as an offspring. Jesus is Son to God in the sense that He is of the same nature, the same “stuff” as the Father. He is totally equal in deity, in worthiness of worship, in attributes. **“Son” means deity and equality with God, not birth or offspring or beginning or subordination.**

**God is one, not two or three.** God exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. One God, three persons. We believe that too.

Variations from this doctrine place someone into the category of heresy or false teaching because opposing beliefs do not line up with what Scripture teaches or implies.

We further affirm:

**Jesus is truly and completely human.** He did not merely “seem” to be human or “appear” as a phantom human (Docetists). He was not merely “mostly” human (Apollinarians teach that Jesus lacked a human spirit because that function was taken over by the divine spirit; also Eutychians).

By the way, sin is not an original design “feature” of humanity. That is, Jesus is truly human, but one feature of humanity that is universal today is not included in that—sin is excepted. But that is not a problem, as if it makes Jesus less than fully human. Remember, Adam and Eve were 100% human in the garden, and without sin! And God’s people in the far future, in eternity will also be fully human yet without sin. Sin is a “condition” we might say, a damage to human nature, and it does not make one “more human.” If anything, sin makes us *less* human, because we are less like God designed us to be.

**Jesus is truly and completely God.** He was not created (Arians, JW’s). He was not merely a good man, or good teacher (Ebionites). He

was not adopted or made into the Son of God during His earthly life (adoptionists or Dynamic Monarchians, Mormons today).

**The Son of God is not the same person as the Father.** There is a difference. The Trinity is not three “modes” (modalistic monarchians or Sabellians) or “masks” or “offices” of one singular strictly monotheistic God.

**Jesus is one person, not two.** Cerinthians believed in split personality where Christ came upon a man and left the man at a later time, say at the cross. Nestorians suppose two persons in one body.

**Jesus has two natures, not one**—the divine and the human.

Monophysites suppose one (mono) single, merged nature which is neither human nor divine, or so divine as to be essentially unhuman. Jesus had a will that arose from each of these natures, so that we cannot say He had only a single will (Monothelitism).

**All of this is what the incarnation accomplished.** It “implemented” this kind of situation in the person of Jesus Christ. What a miracle.

## **The Chalcedon Definition of Faith – 451 A.D.**

Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all with one voice teach that it should be confessed that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same God, the Same perfect in Godhead, the Same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the Same [consisting] of a rational soul and a body; homoousios with the Father as to his Godhead, and the Same homoousios with us as to his manhood; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of the Father before ages as to his Godhead, and in the last days, the Same, for us and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin Theotokos as to his manhood;

One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, made known in two natures [which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures having been in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each being preserved, and [both] concurring into one Person (pros-opon) and one hypostasis—not parted or divided into two persons (prosopa), but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, the divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from of old [have spoken] concerning

him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and as the Symbol of the Fathers has delivered to us.

## **Conclusion**

We cannot come to a doctrine like this and expect to “bend” it into something that we can easily understand without effort. Just because it is difficult does not mean it is untrue. And furthermore, how is it that we expect the singular God of the Universe, and the unique God-man, to be something just like us? We are complex beings comprised of body and spirit; emotion and will; affections and desires; heart and mind. Our body alone is a machine of unparalleled complexity—a marvel of design mechanically and chemically.

God is so much more than we are, so much higher, so infinite, so marvelous, that we cannot but expect His constitution to reach way beyond the limit of our understanding. Yet the blessed thing is that we can know Him through Jesus, and that knowing is eternal life (John 17:3)!

MAP

## **References**

I reviewed this material in an article from 2007 by Kevin Bauder, entitled “Word of the Father, Now in Flesh Appearing.”