

# THE INCARNATION

## God's Greatest Miracle

**D**aniel Webster was dining with a group of literary men in Boston. The conversation turned to Christianity, and Webster confessed his faith in the deity and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the group asked him, “Mr. Webster, can you comprehend how Christ could be both God and man?” The great scholar replied, “No, sir, I cannot comprehend it. If I could comprehend Him, He would be no greater than myself. I feel I need a supernatural Saviour.”

The apostle Paul felt exactly the same way. He never tired of showing that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and man, *true* man but not *mere* man.

This is Paul’s great subject in Hebrews 2:10–18:

“It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

In this passage Paul piles one glorious statement on top of another as he expounds the wonder of the greatest miracle God ever performed, the incarnation of His own blessed Son. The apostle’s point is simply sublime and yet sublimely simple: *The Lord Jesus Christ accomplished the work of saving men by becoming a man to suffer and die for them.*

*Our salvation depends on the incarnation of God’s Son.* “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11). The Saviour and the sinners He saves must be “all of one,” that is, of one nature, race, and humanity. Because the fall came by man, salvation from the fall must also come by man; “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:21). Only a real man could reverse the curse of God on Adam’s fallen race. Thus the incarnation was a necessity if we were ever to be saved.

Paul adds another reason the incarnation was necessary: God’s purpose in creating man was to make him head of the world to come, a privilege even greater than that of angels (Hebrews 2:5–8). Adam’s sin robbed man of that glory. Only “the Lord from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47) could recover it for him. But to do so He must become a man. Nothing less would do. No angel could save us. No mere creature could redeem us. For us to be saved the Son of God must become a true man.

*The eternal Son of God did just that: He became a true man.* Hebrews 2:14–18 gives a full statement of Christ’s humanity. First,





it is *true humanity*: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (v. 14). *Flesh and blood* means human nature. By a sovereign and loving choice the eternal Son of God took a real and full human nature by being conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary and made of her substance (see Galatians 4:4). What condescension! He who is “the brightness of his [Father’s] glory, and the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3), who is eternally “in the form of God” and “thought it not robbery to be

equal with God” (Philippians 2:6) took our nature, both body and soul. He is our brother, not by creation, but by love. He did not take human nature in its primitive glory, surrounded by the perfections of Eden. No, though He was impeccably sinless, He “was made in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3). He took part with us in our weakness, hunger, sorrow, and suffering.

Second, it was a *tempted humanity*. “He himself hath suffered being tempted” (v. 18). Nothing proved Christ’s fitness to save like His sinless endurance of trial and temptation. Tested by suffering and tempted by Satan, He overcame both. Nothing could turn Him from his purpose of grace.

Third, it was a *tender humanity*: “He is a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God” (Hebrews 2:17). The Lord Jesus can truly sympathize with us. “We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, . . . not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:14-15).

**“If I could  
comprehend  
Him, He would  
be no greater  
than myself.  
I feel I need a  
supernatural  
Saviour.”**

— Daniel Webster

Fourth, it is a *triumphant humanity*, for “he is able to succour them that are tempted” (verse 18). The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the office of a priest for His people, dying as a sacrifice for their sins and living as an intercessor for them before His Father. But we must never forget that before He could ever do these things He had to become a man. It was because He was truly man that he could live, die, rise again, and enter into heaven for us (Hebrews 9:12). There is now a *man* on the throne of glory, “the man Christ Jesus,” our mediator with God (1 Timothy 2:5).

*Oh, joy! there sitteth in our flesh  
Upon the throne of light,  
One of a virgin mother born,  
In perfect Godhood bright.*

That is the mystery of the incarnation. The eternal God, the Creator of the universe, took our nature to save us from our sins. Like Daniel Webster, though we cannot comprehend it, we rejoice that we have a supernatural Saviour, “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). God incarnate, God partaking of our flesh and blood to save us from our sin—that is the greatest miracle the Almighty ever performed. ■

Dr. Alan Cairns is the minister of Faith Free Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, and General Director of Let the Bible Speak.

