

Sunday, December 13, 2020
Multiple Passages (God the Son Incarnate)
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Intro

This advent season we'll examine the person and roles of Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus come? Why is salvation only through Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

People say a lot of things about Jesus. The average person might say Jesus was a moral teacher who had some good ideas, like the Golden Rule: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them (Matt 7:12)." Maybe they'll say Jesus is one of many valid religious contacts and paths to God. Like a revered guru on the level of Buddha. A man who tapped into the divine consciousness.

Some say he was an insane and unstable madman with poor mental health.

World religions differ on their understanding of Jesus. In Islam he's a prophet. In Mormonism, Jesus is the spirit brother of Lucifer, and the offspring of God the Father and a heavenly mother, both of whom started out as humans and progressed to godhood. And the Jehovah's Witnesses think he's Michael the Archangel, a created being, who later became man.

All these have one thing in common: they don't believe Jesus was God the Son from eternity. And they don't believe the eternal God became man. So who is Jesus? And what makes him unique?

Today we ask this question:

BIG QUESTION: Who is Jesus Christ?

PRAY

Body

Summary of the issue/Sermon purpose

Focus = the person of Christ, not the work of Christ...we'll get to that in upcoming messages

We'll demonstrate and clarify the doctrine of the incarnation

Incarnation stems from Latin *in + carnes* = in the flesh

Defined: "the taking on of a fully human nature by the fully divine Son of God" – Gregg Allison

We've dedicated our lives to following Jesus, so let's know him well!

Best use of this sermon = record the main points and the Scripture references and then meditate on them at a later time...get the big picture this morning...ponder the details in your personal devotions

After presenting the doctrine, we'll consider some applications that directly flow from the doctrine

Point 1: Jesus existed before he was conceived in Mary's womb

Explanation

John 8:58-59 Jesus said to them [an unbelieving Jewish audience likely including Pharisees], "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

- Jesus existed before Abraham = he existed before conception.
- "I am" = an explicit claim that he was God. When Moses asked about God's name, God replied:

Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

His audience understood. That's why they attempted to stone him for blasphemy.

Point 2: The Bible identifies Jesus as God

Explanation

Romans 9:5 To them [the Israelites] belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

- The context is Paul's grief over the fact that Israel has rejected Christ for the most part, despite the blessings given to them. In addition to covenants, promises, and the law, Jesus the Messiah descends from their race, at least in terms of his human flesh.

Hebrews 1:8 But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

The Hebrews author is explaining how Jesus is superior to the angels. One reason is because the Son is God.

Point 3: The Bible presents Jesus performing God's works

In another passage that equates Jesus with God, it is said that all things were made through Jesus:

John 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Later in the chapter John says:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The one through whom all things were made became a man and dwelt among his creation. Became a man = he wasn't a man previously. The Word, God who became flesh, was Jesus.

Point 4: Jesus eternally existed as God the Son prior to the incarnation

Explanation

This summarizes everything we've seen so far. Jesus existed before he became a man. Jesus is identified as God. And Jesus did what only God can do, like participating in the creation of all things. Let's look at another passage that details Jesus' deity and preexistence.

Colossians 1:15-20 He [the Father's "beloved Son" per 1:13] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- 1) Image of the invisible God = Jesus is the invisible God made visible...Jesus revealed who God is by becoming a man
- 2) Firstborn = in terms of Christ's supremacy or rank = status, not first created being
- 3) By him all things were created = the Father created the cosmos through the Son's activity
- 4) All things were created for him = creation exists for Jesus (explains his status as firstborn)
- 5) Before all things = preexistence
- 6) In him all things hold together = the universe's continuous existence depends upon Jesus' sustaining activity...apart from Jesus' unceasing activity gravity would cease and planets wouldn't stay in their orbits
- 7) In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell = the divine essence dwelt in Christ in full measure (= fullness of divine nature not just part of it), thus asserting the full deity of Jesus
- 8) Created all, before all, possesses full deity = eternally God and not a created being

Shortly before the cross Jesus prayed:

John 17:24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, [all those who would ever believe = you and me] may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Before creation, in eternity past, the Father and the Son existed in loving relationship. Jesus has eternally existed as God the Son.

Point 5: Jesus took on human flesh, he didn't subtract deity

Explanation

Philippians 2:5-8 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

1) Form of God = as God the Son, Jesus existed from all eternity with the divine nature

John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

- Jesus preexisted with divine glory. The incarnation entailed a temporary hiddenness of this divine glory while retaining the divine nature.

2) Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped ≠ gave up his deity. It means that although he was divine, Jesus didn't hold tightly to his exalted status and his divine rights. Like when he refused to command stone to turn into bread (Matt 4:3-4). Or when he refused to call for angelic help when he was being seized by a mob (Matt 26:53).

3) Emptied himself = took the form of a servant = born in human flesh

He emptied himself by addition (taking on human flesh), not subtraction (giving up the divine nature). By becoming a suffering servant: he gave up his divine rights and became a human subject to fatigue, sickness, hunger, pain, and death. Jesus didn't give up his divine attributes (e.g., omnipotence, eternity).

Point 6: Jesus took on a sinless human nature

Explanation

Luke 1:31-35 And behold, you [Mary] will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God.

In the incarnation, God the Son added a human nature to his divine nature through the virgin birth. How did a virgin conceive? By the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. Since conception was achieved by the Spirit, Jesus' human flesh was not tainted by the sinful nature common to all born in Adam. This reveals something: sin is not essential to humanity. For example, Adam was not formed with a sinful nature (Gen 1:26-27, 31; 2:7). And in the new

heavens and new earth glorified human bodies that can eat and drink will remain, but sin won't (Rev 21:4; 22:3).

Point 7: Jesus became one person with two distinct natures

Explanation

He was omnipotent (all-powerful) yet growing in size (Luke 2:40), omniscient (all-knowing) yet growing in wisdom and lacking in knowledge (Mark 13:32; Luke 2:52), eternal (without beginning or end) yet breathed his last (John 19:30), omnipresent (present everywhere) yet limited by a human body, preserving the universe while lying in a manger. He took on flesh while remaining God the Son.

- Two distinct natures (divine and human) united in one person
- Each nature maintains its own integrity and attributes while Jesus acts through both natures (e.g., divine nature doesn't become perishable and human nature doesn't become imperishable)
- His deity doesn't become human nor does his humanity become divine
- Not limited by human nature = divine nature doesn't cease to act

What about the two natures after the resurrection?

He is presently upholding the universe while possessing a human body. His humanity isn't omnipresent, but his deity is. His human nature is altered in that post-resurrection his body isn't subject to death and decay.

Application Points

How does Scripture apply the incarnation?

1) Incarnation inspires giving up our rights

Philippians 2:3-7 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Self-seeking (rivalry) and vanity (conceit) are the opposite of humility, because humility gives importance to the interests of others. And this is precisely what Jesus did in the incarnation: he set aside his divine glory and rights to take on human flesh for our good. We follow Jesus when we give up our rights for the good of another. When you think incarnation, think giving up my rights to do what's beneficial for others.

2) Incarnation inspires generosity

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Jesus' riches were his preexistent divine glory and his divine rights. Jesus set these aside to become poor = taking on human flesh. In the incarnation, Jesus gave up his status to benefit us. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, the context is contributing financially to the needs of believers in another region (2 Cor 8:13-14). Paul calls on the Corinthian believers to give up their rights: as Jesus loved us by taking on human flesh, use your abundance to help others believers who are in need. When you think incarnation, think giving up my rights to be generous and alleviate needs.

3) Incarnation inspires confidence to approach God for empowering grace

Hebrews 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

As our great high priest, Jesus offered himself as a one-time, once for all sacrifice for our sins (past, present, future). Through faith, trusting in Jesus' finished work not ourselves, we can approach a holy God with full assurance. And because Jesus has experienced human weaknesses (hunger, sickness, exhaustion, lack of ability) and temptations, he has sympathy on us who share these same struggles. Since he has compassion through experience, we should have confidence to approach God today for mercy and grace in the present. When you think incarnation, think of a sympathetic Savior who knows what you're going through and wants to help you when you struggle with human limitations and temptation.

4) Other religions

Having this understanding of the incarnation also guards you from false teachers and "spiritual" gurus that deny the deity of Christ.

Conclusion

Who is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is God the Son incarnate.

Know Christ. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. As such, he's entitled to our worship.

Follow Christ. Jesus set aside his divine glory and divine rights for our good. Having experienced the same limitations we have, he sympathizes with us. Follow the one who came for you and cares for you today.