

**The Essentials of ECO:
“The Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ”**

Today we come to the message of Christmas a couple months early and that message is that God has not left the world without revelation!

To the contrary, God has come down to us, as one of us, through the incarnation of Himself in the God/man Jesus Christ. Most certainly God has revealed Himself to us in the glorious and beautiful work of His creation and He has also done so through the formation of a nation from the seed of Abraham for the purpose of blessing all the nations of the earth through His mighty acts of salvation in their lives.

God took this special people, the Jews, and freed them from slavery in Egypt and gave them the law of God that would lead them into the Promised Land. God blessed them with deliverers such as Moses, kings such as David, and prophets such as Isaiah, and through His dealings with these people He was showing the world who He was all along. He was one God, not thousands upon thousands of gods, and He was a holy God who did not trifle with sin. Yet He was also a gracious God because He established a sacrificial system to atone for the sins of His people and it was His ultimate desire to redeem an even wider people from the Gentile nations through His dealings with Israel. Not only that, but God also revealed Himself to the world through a book that records all of these stories, the Bible, the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God.

But the chief and the fullest way that God has revealed Himself to us- the way that all of this prior stuff was ultimately pointing us to- was through the miracle and mystery of the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Incarnation

What is the incarnation? The incarnation is God taking upon himself flesh and blood and coming down into the world as one of us so that we may know God and God may know us, and most importantly so that we might be reconciled unto God through the life death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The incarnation means that in the person of Jesus Christ we have one who is both fully God and fully man. Jesus is one person who contains within himself two distinct and different natures that are not mixed. A nature that is fully divine-100 percent God, and a second nature that is fully human, 100% human. This is a mystery but Scripture compels us to affirm this truth.

In John’s gospel, the Word, which refers to Jesus, is clearly God, and he is sent from the Father into our world as one who is also fully human in the birth of the Savior. John’s gospel says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (1:14)

And then in the beginning of Paul’s letter to the Romans he says concerning the gospel that God’s Son Jesus, “according to his human nature was a descendant of David,” and “who through the

Spirit of Holiness (his divine nature) was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.” (1:3-4)

Because Jesus is both fully God and fully man he can stand in the gap between a Holy God and unholy humans and bridge the great chasm that exists between us and God. So in the fullness of Jesus’ divinity he can bring God down to us on our level and in the fullness of his humanity he can lift us sinful creatures up into the presence of God so that we may know him.

T.F.Torrance, a great Scottish theologian who wrote and reflected deeply on the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation put it this way. “God has chosen to make himself known to us through a movement of love and infinite condescension in which He has drawn near to us by becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ, thereby bringing Himself within range of human knowing. Jesus Christ thus constitutes the bridge between God and man, between the invisible and the visible, the incomprehensible and the comprehensible, the immeasurable and the measurable.”

The Implications of the Incarnation for Our Lives

This has huge ramifications for our lives as Christians.

First, the incarnation means that we can know God, we really can know him intimately and personally, because God has invaded our human space in the incarnation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is not way out there somewhere, where we cannot know Him because God is hiding from us.

No, God has come down to us in our world in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is “the exact representation of God’s being” and he is “one with the Father” and he has revealed the love of the Father to us. We can know God because God has come to us in the person of Jesus. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, the glory of the One and only, full of grace and truth.”

Second, the incarnation means that God knows us. I think we all acknowledge this in the general sense because God is the One who created us and we know that God is all powerful, all present, and all knowing, so of course He knows us. God knows our thoughts before we think them, our actions before we take them, our words before we say them, and our last breath before we draw it.

God knows all of this but the incarnation says something far deeper than this kind of objective knowing where God is standing on the outside looking at how our lives will unfold before it even unfolds. No the kind of knowing I am talking about is an empathetic kind of knowing that stands in solidarity with our broken lives.

In our Scripture readings from Hebrews we are told that Jesus took upon himself flesh and blood so that through his death and temptations he might experience all the sufferings and difficulties of life that we suffer. In Christ God does not just understand our plight and difficulties but rather he has embraced them in the sufferings and death of his Son. This enables Jesus to be a merciful and faithful high priest to us in his service to the Father.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, but we have one who in every way has been tempted and tested as we are yet was without sin.”

This is so very different from the mediating work of the Levitical high priests in the Old Testament because those high priests were only human, scared sinful humans at that, but in Christ we have one who is not only human, but one who is fully human, and not only that, but one who is also fully God.

This means that in the mediating work of our great high priest Jesus, God really knows us because in Christ God has embraced everything we could ever experience in life. God knows our joys and sorrows, our great faith and times of doubt, our good health and our times of sickness, and death because in his humanity and in his divinity, Jesus Christ has experienced it all. God in Christ knows you- he really knows you.

Third, the incarnation means that our salvation is secure. As the one who is fully human Jesus is able to live the perfect life that we sinful human beings could never live but that God still requires.

God is holy and the Bible says that without holiness no one will see the Lord. As sinners this means that we are in trouble except that God in His mercy and grace entered this world and took upon Himself the flesh of humanity in Jesus and lived a perfect life of holiness on behalf of us sinners. Where we in our unholiness we failed, Jesus in his perfect humanity succeeded. His righteousness in the place of our unrighteousness means that we are declared to be righteous and holy by God when we trust in the perfect human life that Christ lived for us. His life saves.

But not only his life, but also his death. We not only need a substitute to step in our place and live the life that we cannot live so that we might be declared righteous, but we also need one to step in our place and die a sinner's death sentence so that our sins can receive their just wage. God is holy and He cannot be God and not give sin its just due, but the good news of the gospel is that someone has come down into our world to die this death so that we could be freed from sin's consequences and live again.

So Jesus, the one who is fully God and fully human, lived this life and died this death for us and God raised him from the dead on third day, thus vindicating the life he lived and the death he died, and God secured the blessings of his life and death in our lives by Christ's resurrection from the dead. Because he lives, so too will we if we trust in him for our salvation!

The Table

Today, the table has come to us with the good news of the incarnation. The bread, the material substance of food, signifies the material substance of the human body that God incarnated in Jesus, and the wine, the material substance of drink, signifies the material substance of human blood that Christ bled for us. The table proclaims to us that the Father has drawn near to us in the incarnation of his Son in order that he might save us by his broken body and shed blood.

The gospel of God, as signified in the table, is now before us, and now our response must be one of faith, where we draw near to God by coming to the table, if we are to be saved. Without a response of faith on your part the benefits of the gospel remain null and void in your life and you are dead in your sins. But if you will come to the table you will find life in the bread and waters of life.

So I invite you today to trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and if you will do that then this table of grace is for you. His body was broken for you and his blood shed for you so that you might be reconciled unto God and live in his kingdom forever.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.