



Mysteries of the Incarnation

John 1:1-3, 14, 18
Colossians 1:15-19; 2:9

There is astounding majesty and dignity surrounding the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The apostle John begins his gospel with eternity and informs us that Christ was called the Word, "the Word of Life and the Word of God. The LORD God has revealed Himself fully in the coming of His Son. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him* " (John 1:18). Verse fourteen tells us about the beginning of the incarnation of the *Logos*.

John does not tell us about the beginning of the Son of God because He has existed continuous through eternity. He had no beginning. If the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (vv. 1-2). This personal pre-existence of Christ is also taught by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6f; Colossians 1:17, and in Hebrews 1:2f. and in John 17:5.

John takes us back before Genesis 1:1, If the beginning God . . . to the time before time. He takes us into eternity past and tells us, If the beginning was the Word. He is not referring to the origin of God because God had no origin. He has eternally existed. Jesus spoke of His own timeless existence in John 8:58, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am. "

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being (v. 3).

THE MYSTERY OF GOD WITH US

This great truth of God coming to be with man was something that God held secret until the time when He chose to reveal it. It is not a mystery like a mystery novel that you try to out think the author of the book or script. God kept this mystery a secret down through the centuries until in His perfect timing He has chosen to reveal Himself.

Sign of Immanuel

I am sure the Hebrew prophet Isaiah must have pondered the words God told him to speak to faithless king Ahaz. He gave Ahaz a sign that shocked the daylight out of him. Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:

John 1:1-3, 14, 18 Mysteries of the Incarnation of Christ Jesus
daylights out of him. Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:
Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name
Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). That same message attacks the faithless in our day
as it did Ahaz.

I still marvel at the mystery of that sign and its fulfillment. It is nothing short
of a miracle. Gabriel said to Mary, Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have
found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear
a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the
Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His
father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His
kingdom will have no end. Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I
am a virgin? The angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will
come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and
for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God (Luke 2:30-
35).

My wife had a guest lecturer in one of her postgraduate courses recently. The
guest speaker was explaining her beliefs and made the statement, We don't
believe in dogma; we believe in doing. She went on to explain that their
emphasis is on doing, not teaching or doctrine. The emphasis is on what they
can do to preserve their heritage and culture. If there really is a god when
we are through with our life on this earth fine, but we are not really planning
on meeting one in heaven, was her emphasis. We do not believe in miracles
and things like that because we don't believe in a personal God. "

That kind of thinking is very comfortable in our modern post Christian
society. If He really does not exist then I can feel comfortable because I no
longer have any responsibility. Since there are no miracles then God with us
is impossible. If God with us is non-existent then there is no virgin
conception, no resurrection, no redemption, no eternity and no hope. We
have eliminated God and all personal responsibility, or so we think.

Miracle of the Incarnation

Mystery and miracles surrounded the coming of the Son of God into this earthly realm. Yes, there was the
mystery of heavenly messengers. There was the miracle of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary with the
power of the Most High and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God (Luke
1:35).

The only answer Gabriel could give Mary was, For nothing will be impossible with God (v. 37). God
did it.

The miraculous element was in the manner of the begetting or conception of Christ in Mary. Clearly, the
literal message is that Jesus was to be born of Mary without a human father (cf. Matthew 1:18-25). Since
Jesus was a very special person –Immanuel God with us, then He would have a very special entry into this
world. A natural savior provides no supernatural help. He is useless in times of our gravest emergencies
unless He is God. A human savior offers no divine hope. Deep within my soul, there would be a hunger for
that which will last for eternity. I want something beyond today. A sinful savior is no savior from my sin and
depravity. God the Father solved the problem of our deepest needs by providing a virgin conception as well

depravity. God the Father solved the problem of our deepest needs by providing a virgin conception as well as a virgin birth. The virgin birth provides a sin free nature. The virgin birth is God's answer for the God-man. The Son of God is fully God and He is fully man. He is a perfect representative of heaven and an ideal representative of man. He alone can save because He alone is God. He is the God of salvation.

I think Mary's response to God was just as big a miracle. Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word (v. 38). Not many in our day would respond with that attitude toward any major assignment from God.

Angels appeared to some temple shepherds nine months later in an open field at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (2:9-11).

All of a sudden the whole heaven was filled with these heavenly messengers singing praise to God. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased. "

Just think of this tiny baby, God in the flesh, is the same person John speaks of when He says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. It all makes good sense when you simply change the word Word to Christ. "In the beginning was the Christ, and the Christ was with God, and the Christ was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Christ; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Christ was life; and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4).

Conviction of the early church

This was the conviction of the early church. The apostle Paul affirmed, And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation (Colossians 1:15). If you looked into the face of Jesus Christ, you looked into the face of God. If you want to know what God is thinking listen to Jesus. If you want to know what He is feeling feel to the pulse beat of Christ. He came to reveal the Godhead and to redeem lost mankind.

Though He was born into the world in time, He existed from all eternity in His divine nature. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, He was the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

The apostle Paul tells us: For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him (Colossians 1:16-19).

In the very next verse the apostle Paul tells us why Jesus came. And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven (v. 20). Mystery of mystery, miracle of miracles. He was born to die in order to bring reconciliation between sinful man and a holy God.

Mystery of Reconciliation with God

Therefore, we encounter another mystery. God became flesh to deal with our sin problem. The God-man came to die and suffer for us on this earth.

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I have had a running battle with fire ants all year long. Front yard, backyard, all around our house we have fire ants. I really don't hate fire ants. I just wish they would go somewhere else and live. I have tried to reconcile things with them so we can live together. Let's suppose I came up to them and tried to reason with them that I am not really their enemy. There is no need for them to bite into my flesh and leave fiery whelps on my feet and legs. Therefore, I try to communicate with them. I pick them up and talk to a few of them. Ridiculous, you say. It is no more ridiculous than the LORD God calling down to sinful, depraved, spiritually dead sinners and trying to reason with us. We were the ones who were dead in trespasses and sin. We were the ones who needed to be reconciled to God. God took the initiative to reach down to us and deal with our sin problem. God became flesh, pitched His tent right here in our midst, and dwelt with sinful man in order to reconcile him to Himself.

Mystery of Imputed righteousness

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). What Christ suffered and accomplished in His saving work on the cross was put to our account. What the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ suffered was equivalent to the eternal sufferings of sinful man. Because He was God-man, Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

God imputes His righteousness as a gift to the believer.

Imputed righteousness is God's kind of righteousness and is fully compatible with His holy character. It is "a righteousness of God" —not man. God originates it; God provides it.

"Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe . . . being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus" (vv. 22, 24).

The apostle Paul teaches us that through justification by faith we acquire the very righteousness of God, which is credited to us on the basis of faith alone (Romans 3:21, 22). It is through regeneration or the new birth that we acquire the very life of God, which is imparted to us likewise on the basis of faith alone. Therefore, in a moment of time the believer obtains both perfect acceptance before the bar of God's justice as well as full membership in His family.

The only righteousness that satisfies God's holy demands is imputed righteousness. It is "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe." It is "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (v. 24).

How would you fill in the blank? Christ plus _____ = eternal life. Christ plus good works? Christ plus my virtue? Christ plus my church membership? Christ plus my faithfulness to the church? Christ plus my trying to live a good Christian life? Christ plus what? Christ plus my baptism by immersion? Christ plus speaking in tongues?

God is the offended person who propitiates Himself by the sacrifice of Christ. The very God whom we have offended has Himself provided the only way in which the offence could have been dealt. Everything God does in relationship to the sinner is based upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His anger, His wrath against sin and the sinner, has been satisfied, appeased by the finished work of Christ. Therefore, He can now thus reconcile man unto Himself.

Paul declared that it was a mystery. 1 Timothy 3:16 records a common confession in the early church. It is the mystery of godliness. What is this mystery?

He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.

How great is the mystery of our salvation. God condescended to become man, made Himself our substitute, and died in our place. He is God and therefore can do it. He acted like Himself. He is God. The eternal One was born in time, though eternally with God, He tabernacled Himself with sinful man, and died on the cross to reconcile man to Himself. Only the blood of God can wash away sin (Acts 20:28). The union of Christ's two natures is so complete that His blood becomes the blood of God, writes L. S. Chafer. Phillips translates, Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God. The apostle Paul writes, For in Him [Jesus Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority (Colossians 2:9-10). Jesus Christ has in Himself all the fullness of the Godhead.

We are introduced to another mystery in the incarnation. It involves you and me. For that was the reason for His becoming flesh. Note carefully, He did not do it as some cults teach, so we could become gods, go, and populate other planets off out in the universe. As our Mediator Jesus Christ presents us with everything we as His redeemed people need. For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace (John 1:16). It is as A. T. Robertson says, Here the picture is grace taking the place of grace like the manna fresh each morning, new grace for the new day and the new service. "

He came to save us. He did not come to insure us. He did not come to give us fire protection. He came to redeem us, Paul says. Our salvation is so complete in Christ that in God's eyes we lack nothing. In His sight we who have been justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone are absolutely perfect. He sees us whole and complete in Christ. It is an act of declaration of the believing sinner just in the sight of God.

His aim in bestowing on us such abundance of grace and righteousness is that He may transform us into His own likeness. Let's examine for a moment an astounding mystery that God accomplished through Christ in us.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD IN US

The apostle Paul told the Colossians about the mystery hidden from the ages but now manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the grace of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27).

Miracle of Christ in you

I think that converted Pharisee must have thought about this truth for a long time. He told the Gnostic know it alls in Corinth let me show you an even greater miracle. The God of the Jewish people, Immanuel, God with us, through His grace has chosen to dwell in you -Gentiles. No Jewish person living in the first century would have thought it strange that the Messiah should come and dwell among His people. However, this great truth the apostle Paul is stating Colossians 1:27 is an entirely new revelation of the eternal purposes of

great truth the apostle Paul is stating Colossians 1:27 is an entirely new revelation of the eternal purposes of God. Christ living in you Gentiles is the hope of glory! That caught them off guard.

This is where God receives His highest glory. Christ in you, the hope of glory. When you put your faith and trust in Christ the Spirit of Jesus Christ came and tabernacled Himself in you. It is Christ in all His glorious riches actually dwelling through His Spirit in the hearts and lives of His people (Eph. 3:16-21). The idea of the Greek word *en* here is *in*, *not* among. Paul is stressing a personal experience and the presence of Christ in the individual. The indwelling Christ is in the heart of the believer. As members of His body, you now have His life within you.

Paul is writing of a personal experience of the work of Christ in you as prophet, priest and king. It is the Christocentric man, the Christocentric woman, the Christocentric teen. It is Christ enthroned in the center of your personality. When He needs hands, you become His hands. When He needs feet, you become His feet. When He needs eyes of compassion to see a hurting world, you become His eyes. When He needs a heart in which to feel the agony of a lost humanity, you become that heart. When He needs a body to manifest the glory of God, your broken, aching body of suffering becomes that body. Christ in you, the hope of glory. ”

Moreover, Paul says, the best is yet to come. He is our hope of glory. We have confident, joyful expectation of being with Him in glory. His eternal purposes will be completely and perfectly fulfilled in your life. One day He will present every man complete in Christ (v. 28). All that Jesus began in your life the day you believed on Him will have reached its end, finished, complete, perfect. We will be presented before the heavenly Father just as He fully intended us to become. Imperfect, no. Incomplete, no. We will be fully-grown, mature, complete, perfect in Christ.

Take a few moments, survey all the fullness there is in Christ, and claim it all as your own. All that Christ possesses in Himself, all that He can do in your life, all that He can bestow in heaven, is your portion. You say, I am weary and weak. It is still yours. According to the measure of grace that is in Him, it is all yours. He constantly gives more and more grace if we will but receive it by faith. Out of His fullness, we receive more grace upon grace.

Every believer received out of the fullness that is in Christ blessing after blessing. We receive our spiritual strength from Him, administered in copious and successive portions. Christ came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

These blessings from Christ in us flow, like waves of the sea, in constant succession and in the richest abundance. Whatever we have received in the past it is still true that He gives more grace, and He gives again and again. His store of abundance never runs out. His waters of life never become stagnated. He never experiences a drought. His purpose in giving such abundance of grace with more grace is that He may transform us into His own likeness. The Lord Jesus Christ communicates to us the very graces that are in Him until we are changed into His image from glory to glory. ”

Miracle of salvation

No individual can know the Father unless Jesus Christ reveals Him inwardly by His Spirit. He extends this grace, not because we can merit it, but of His own free will. He does it out of His good pleasure. He is gracious because it is His will to be gracious. It is His nature to be gracious.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good

result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We are dependent upon Him for a constant supply of grace and peace. No one can stand in his own goodness. We are all cleansed by the blood of Christ, and clothed in His spotless robe of righteousness. The merit that justifies, and the grace that sanctifies all come from Him alone.

How can we receive anything from Christ except by faith? The riches of God's grace are not automatic. It did not take place when you were born physically. It did not take place automatically if you were born into a Christian home or to godly parents. God in His grace and tender mercy reaches down to lost sinful men and draws them unto Himself. He creates within our hearts a desire to respond to that love. He even gives us the faith to trust Him and turn from our sins.

Right now, you may be feeling a strong sense of guilt, or a sense of need to turn to God by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He wants you to turn from your sins, place your faith in Christ, and receive the greatest gift you can ever receive. It is the gift of eternal life. It is God's gift. All you can do is receive it. Open your heart and put your faith in Christ to save you right now.

This is one present you cannot purchase. It is absolutely free. All you can do is open your heart and receive it.

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