

<sup>14</sup> **Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—** <sup>15</sup> **and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.** <sup>16</sup> **For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.** <sup>17</sup> **For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.** <sup>18</sup> **Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus, the God-man,

You’ve heard that word in sermons, Bible studies, maybe in the lyrics of hymns we sing at church. Do you know what it means? Do you know how important that word is? I’m talking about the word *incarnation*. The adjective form of that word is *incarnate*. This English word comes from the Latin verb *incarnare* which means *to make flesh*. My dictionary defines the noun theologically in this way, “*the embodiment of God of in the human form of Jesus.*” This’s what happened when “*the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her.*” The baby conceived in Mary’s womb was **holy!** The angel told Mary, “*Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, his kingdom will never end.*” (Luke 1: 31-33) The baby in Mary’s womb was God, God’s Son. God took on flesh. At the moment that the eternal Son of God entered into the womb of the virgin Mary he took on a human nature, that is, a human body and soul.” (Daniel Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds*, page 264).

This is what Paul told us also in Galatians 4:4. “*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*” Our text also teaches the incarnation when the writer says, “**Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.**” (v. 14) John described the birth of Jesus in this way, “**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**” (John 1:14)

What you believe about Jesus’ person is very important. God teaches us that through the words of Simeon. “*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.*” (Luke 1:34) John’s words are a commentary on Simeon’s words, “**Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**” (John 20:30,31) Ultimately every person, you and me included, must answer the same question Jesus asked his disciples, “*Who do you say that I am?*” Those who answer as Peter did, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,*” and trust in Jesus alone for forgiveness, eternal life and salvation will rise to eternal life in heaven. Those who do not believe will fall to eternal damnation in hell. Jesus himself said, “*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*” (Mark 16:16)

The incarnation is a profound mystery and a glorious miracle. In fulfillment of the promise made at the time of the fall (Genesis 3:15), a woman gave birth to the only One who could crush the head of the serpent; she gave birth to the man who is God! The child Jesus was, as promised, from the seed of the woman alone, not the man. He was born as promised, to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). He had no human father (Matthew 1:18-25; Galatians 4:4).

Thus Jesus does not merely *become* God as a result of an especially holy life (the Adoptionist heresy of the second and third centuries). He *is* God from eternity. In his divine nature; and he is God who takes on a human nature from the moment of his conception in the womb of the virgin Mary. As the angel Gabriel promised, he is miraculously conceived and he is called the Son of God because that’s who he is. Thus, shortly after his conception in Mary’s womb, when Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, “*Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit... ‘Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to*

me?” (Luke 1:41,43) Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, acknowledged that Mary was already carrying within her the *Lord*; that was not something merely potential but something already real.

Accordingly, the ancient church and we in union with it call Mary the mother of God, or literally, “the God-bearer” (theotokos). We do so in order to defend this truth that already from the moment of his conception the divine nature was joined to and took to itself a human nature. The title is not intended to make Mary some sort of co-redeemer along with Jesus her Son, as many in the Roman Catholic church teach. Rather, the title is intended to defend against the error that Christ only *became* the Son of God at some time after his birth. (Deutschlander)

The doctrine of the incarnation and the virgin birth of Christ is rightly called one of the great pillars of the Christian faith. If one could remove it, the Christian religion would collapse. For if Jesus were not born of a virgin, without a human father, then he would not really be the Son of God. Then he would have been conceived and born with original sin, just like the rest of us. He would have needed a Savior himself. He could not have saved even himself, much less the rest of us. Yes, were he not born of a virgin, then all of the Scriptures would be a lie and Jesus would be the greatest fraud ever perpetuated on the human race.

But because God alone is his Father, he was not born sinful and a sinner like the rest of us. Original sin was not passed on to him in the course of a natural conception. For though natural and lawful conception in and of itself is not sinful, it is the means by which all human attributes are passed on to the parents’ offspring, including original sin. Without a human father, Jesus received a human nature and all that is *essential* to a human nature (i.e., a human body and soul from his virgin mother). But by virtue of his miraculous conception and the union of the divine nature with the human nature, he did not receive the *accidental attribute* (as opposed to essential or substantial attributes. An accidental attribute is an attribute that can be lost without the destruction of the thing they describe. See Deutschlander, page 108) of original sin and the other attributes that flow from or are the consequence of original sin. He is the Holy One of God, promised by the angel Gabriel, the Savior promised throughout the Old Testament and proclaimed throughout the New.

Thus with a human body and soul from his mother he was not, as the ancient Gnostic heresy taught, merely a phantom that looked like a human being. Nor was he God with a body but not a true human nature, as the Eutychian and Monophysite heretics of the fifth century claimed. No, Jesus, the virgin born Son of God, had a human nature, with a human body and a human soul.

Just as we know of his divine nature from the divine names, attributes, and works that the Bible ascribes to him, so also do we know of his human nature from the same infallible source. The Bible calls him by *human names*, ascribes to him *human attributes* and *human works*. Jesus commonly referred to himself as “the Son of Man” (See Matthew 16:13; Mark 2:10,28; Luke 9:58). Jesus speaks of himself as having both body and soul (Luke 24:39; Matthew 26:38). The rest of the New Testament leaves us in no doubt—Jesus was true man; he had a human nature consisting of a human body and a human soul. It is not as though his body was his human nature but his soul was his divine nature; no, that’s not it. For then he would not be a real human being. A real human being has to have all that is essential to being a human being: a body and a soul. And that’s what Jesus’ human nature was, a human body and a human soul. (Deutschlander)

Who Jesus is (The Person of Christ), the God-Man, is what made it possible for him to do what God sent him to do (the Work of Christ). Next time we will take a look at Jesus’ purpose here on earth, his work as we continue studying this text from Hebrews chapter 2. It is only because of who he is, that is the Person of Christ, the God/Man that he is able to accomplish the Work of Christ. He shared in the humanity we have in order to carry out God’s plan of salvation. May God continue to bless your holiday as you contemplate the mystery of the incarnation. Amen.

The Christian Church’s confession concerning the Person of Christ: **“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human.”** (Nicene Creed)