

# Lifeworld.org

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world,” John 6:33.

## Jesus Speaks on His Incarnation

**Lesson Aim:** To enlarge our understanding of the incarnation of Jesus.

**L90. Date:** December 1970. **Text:** Luke 1:30-35; John 6:32-35, 49-51.

**Topic:** Christ: Birth of; Christmas.

### INTRODUCTION

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved,”** John 3:16-17.

These words from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ is the heart and summary of all He said about His incarnation. It speaks of the Initiator of the incarnation—“God.” It tells of the motive behind the incarnation—“loved.” It tells of the benefactor of the incarnation— “the world” of mankind. It tells of the nature of the incarnation—“He gave.” It tells of the Person of the incarnation—“His only begotten Son.” It tells of the scope of the incarnation —“whosoever,” It tells of the response to the incarnation—“believe.” It tells of the benefit of the incarnation—“should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This is what Christmas is all about! Don't get so carried away with gifts, tinsel, music and parties that you forget. Don't forget that the Baby in the manger is the Christ of the cross. Bethlehem was but the prelude to Calvary. Keep all the ministry of Jesus tied together and His birth takes on a new glory.

Today's study aims “to enlarge our understanding of the incarnation of Jesus.” What is meant by this word “incarnation”? The English term “incarnation” is derived from the Latin term “incarnatio”. This word is

formed from two Latin terms “en” and “carne.” Since “carne” is the common word for “flesh,” “encarne” means “in flesh.” So “incarnation” means “in flesh.” It is used in this lesson to mean “the taking on of human form and nature by Jesus, the Son of God.” The time He lived on earth in a body of flesh is called the time of His incarnation. It began at His birth to Mary. So at Christmastime we often speak of His incarnation—coming in a body of flesh.

## EXPOSITION

### I. INCARNATION ANNOUNCED BY ANGELS

Luke 1 records the announcement made before hand that the Messiah was about to be born. Verses. 26-38 records in detail the visit of an angel named Gabriel to a young woman named Mary. He announced to her in plain language the coming birth of the Saviour of whom she would be the mother. What the angel announced was later confirmed by Jesus.

1. An angel told His name. “. . . **Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS,**” verse 31. “Jesus” is the Greek form of an honored Hebrew name commonly pronounced “Joshua.” It means “Saviour.” It is somewhat strange that the Messiah of the Jews should be given a Gentile (Greek) name. But He was not to be Messiah to the Jews only; He was to be Saviour of the world.

Jesus agreed with the name which was given Him. He recognized that God gave His only begotten Son “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” He confessed that “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (See John 3:16-17.)

The angels announced that His name would be called “Jesus” because “**he shall save his people from their sins,**” Matthew 1:21. And Jesus agreed that this was the single purpose of His coming into the human flesh, John 3:17.

2. An angel told His nature: “. . . **the Son of the Highest,**” verse 32. When Mary could not understand the angel further explained, “. . . **that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,**” verse 35. His father was God, not man. His nature was divine, not merely human. He was the eternal Son of God, second person of the divine trinity.

Again, Jesus agreed with the words of the angels. He spoke of God as His Father. He referred to Himself as God's Son. He talked of having come down from heaven to do the Father's will. He clearly stated, “**I and my Father are one,**” John 10:30. He so claimed a divine nature and equality

with God that some wanted to accuse Him of blasphemy, John 5:18. His entire ministry was exercised in the light of this understanding: He shared the very nature of deity in all its perfection.

3. An angel told of the result of His ministry. **“And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end,”** verses 32-33. As before, Jesus recognized that He was “the Son of God, the King of Israel,” John 1:49. And He taught that His disciples would one day share in His kingdom. He told them, **“... in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones. . .”** Matthew 19:28.

He related the time of the full revelation of His kingdom as being “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him,” Matthew 25:31. Then He will judge all nations, institute His worldwide kingdom in its visible form, and rule in perfect righteousness. But this is because of His incarnate ministry while He was upon earth the first time.

4. An angel told of His mystery. Mary was engaged to be married, but not yet married, when the angel announced she would be the mother of Jesus. She asked how that would be since she was yet a virgin. The angel replied, **“... The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,”** verse 5. Thus the mystery of virgin conception was set forth. And it happened just that way.

Surprisingly, Jesus made no reference to the manner by which His mother conceived Him. He knew Himself to have come from God. His words and works bore witness that He was the Son of God. That was enough, it seemed. He never spoke of the virgin-conception miracle which God wrought in Mary.

## II. INCARNATION EXPLAINED BY JESUS

1. Jesus declared that He was with the Father in heaven before His incarnation on earth. He was living before Abraham was born, John 8:58. He shared the glory of the Father before the world was created, John 17:5. The Father loved Him before the foundation of the world, John 17:24.

Therefore, Jesus existed as the Son of God before He was born to Mary. It was not His birth to Mary which made Him God's Son. Mary simply provided the human body in which the eternal Son of God lived while on earth. His incarnation was simply a change of form for Him, not the beginning of His existence. He was God's Son before the incarnation, and

now that He is ascended back to heaven following His incarnation.

2. Jesus came down from the Father in heaven in the incarnation. He is “the bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world,” John 6:33. His coming was not merely of His own will but according to the will of the Father who sent Him, John 6:38. Having come down from the Father in heaven, He is superior to all men: **“He that cometh from heaven is above all,”** John 3:31.

Mortal men are never said to have “come down from heaven” when they are born. They are of the earth, earthy. But the Son of God, who is not “of the earth,” came down from heaven for His birth in human flesh. He is superior to us all.

3. Jesus was sent forth by the Father in heaven. It is not expedient to quote or even list all the references Jesus made to having been sent by the Father. He often refers to God simply as “Him that sent me,” John 4:34; 5:24; 5:30; 5:36-37; 9:4; 14:24. He sometimes referred to Himself as the One whom the Father had sent, John 17:3; 20:21.

This does not indicate that the Son of God did not want to come into the world but was sent by the Father against His will. No, it indicates the harmony of the Divine Trinity in redemption: the Father sending, the Son coming, the Holy Spirit bearing witness. And it also indicates the authority by which Jesus ministered: the unanimous authority of the Godhead.

4. Jesus was one with the Father in heaven during His incarnate ministry. He plainly declared, **“I and my father are one,”** John 10:30. The fact that He was in human flesh did not lessen His relationship of unity with the Father. The Jews who heard His statements on this subject understood Him to be saying that He was equal with God, John 5:18. That was exactly what He was saying.

The Apostle Paul explains this in Philippians 2:5-8. Jesus was in the “form” of God but took upon Himself the “fashion” and “likeness” of men. “Form” means essential nature—deity. “Fashion” and “likeness” means external appearance. So, even in His appearance as a man Jesus did not give up His essential nature of deity. On the contrary, in Him all the fullness of deity dwelt bodily, Colossians 2:9.

5. Jesus was the revelation of God the Father during His incarnate ministry. Through the generations of men, God had revealed Himself through nature, visions, dreams, by written law, and in many other ways. But in these last days He spoke to men in the person of a Son—His only begotten Son. When the Apostle Philip said to Jesus, “Show us the Father,” Jesus replied, **“... He that hath seen me hath seen the Father...”** John 14:7-11. God was in Jesus Christ revealing Himself for the redemption of

those who believe.

6. Jesus is the divine provision for men offered by the Father in heaven. He is the fulfillment of the type pictured in the serpent of brass lifted up in the wilderness, Numbers 21:5-9. **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up,”** John 3:14.

He is the fulfillment of the type pictured in the manna which Israel received in the wilderness, Exodus 16. The true bread from heaven was not given by Moses in the wilderness. Jesus said, **“... I am the bread of life ... This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die,”** John 6:35, 50.

Every type and shadow set forth in the Old Testament, telling of the coming Saviour, is fulfilled in Jesus. There is no room to doubt but that He is the divine provision offered by the Father.

7. Jesus predicted that He would return to the Father in heaven at the end of His incarnate ministry. He told His disciples that “after a little while” with them He would “go unto him that sent me,” John 7:33. They would wonder about His absence and would seek Him but would not find Him, John 13:33. The disciples could not understand this teaching and were distressed by it. Jesus said, **“... If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father. . .”** John 14:28.

It was His going to the Father which secured redemption for us. He said the Holy Spirit, who would be sent when He returned to the Father, would convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, John 16:7-11. The reason He would convict of righteousness, Jesus said, was, **“... because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more,”** verse 10. His acceptance before God was evidence that the Jesus type of righteousness was acceptable there. No other righteousness will be. This is why one must have the imputed righteousness of Christ to be saved and go to heaven.

His return to the Father brought all principality and power subject to Him. One day His prediction will be revealed as true that; **“Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God,”** Luke 22:69.

## CONCLUSION

Look back over the outline which these comments have followed. The outline is brief but the truth is tremendous. **“God sent his only begotten Son in the world, that we might live through him,”** I John 4:9.

This is what Christmas is all about. The Son of God, eternally equal with other members of the divine trinity, came down from the Father in heaven to be the Saviour of men. He was born in normal human flesh, to a

normal human mother, who was in the strictest sense a chaste virgin until after His birth. (She was afterwards a normal wife to Joseph and bore several other children by him.) Though He was born in human flesh, in no wise did He surrender the divine nature which was eternally at home in him.

During His earthy ministry He perfectly represented the Father and revealed to men what God is like. He died on the cross to make atonement for the sins of men. He arose from death to provide justification and new life for men. He ascended back to the Father from whom He will return one day with great glory.

It began with God in the counsels of eternity before the creation. It was realized among men with the birth of the baby Jesus in Bethlehem at Christmas time. No one can “celebrate” Christmas aright unless the spirit of Christ lives in his heart. No one can understand the Christmas message unless the babe of Bethlehem is recognized as the Christ of Calvary.

God sent forth His Son to be the Saviour of the world. And that is what Christmas is all about!

## QUESTIONS

1. How does John 3:16-17 relate to Christmas?
2. What does “incarnation” mean?
3. How was the incarnation announced to Mary?
4. How was it announced to Joseph?
5. Why is virgin birth an important doctrine?
6. When did Jesus become the Son of God: in time or in eternity?
7. What did Jesus mean, “I and the Father are one”?
8. How is the Second Coming related to Christmas?
9. How has this study profited you personally?