

**MESSAGES FROM THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

Passages from 1 John and Philipians

Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:1-10

**Intro:** The word incarnation is a word which actually belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Lit. it means in the flesh. In theology it is used to describe the uniting of Deity and humanity in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. When our Lord was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, it meant that the Son of God was to become a man. His birth in Bethlehem was the most unique birth ever. It was a long-awaited birth because it had been predicted many places in the OT. It had been planned from eternity past. The Lord Jesus was a real human being, but He was also the Son of God. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said in his work on Christology in his Systematic Theology that “this Person [referring to our Lord] retained His Deity undiminished and untarnished” (Vol. V, p. 48). It is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith that Jesus of Nazareth was both God and man. In this way He was able to die for sinners. He came to provide salvation for those whom the Father had given to Him. And the only way that could be done was for the Lord to become a man.

Isaiah the prophet had predicted hundreds of years before Christ was born that a virgin would conceive and bear a son, and that His Name would be Immanuel, which means God with us. Cf. Isa. 7:14. When the angel Gabriel explained to Mary how it would be possible for her to have a child without having a relationship with a man, she was told what we read in Luke 1:35,

And the angel answered and said unto her, 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.**

When Joseph, to whom Mary was engaged to be married, found out about her pregnancy, he felt that he could not go ahead with the marriage. But he loved Mary too much to disgrace her, and so he sought to break the engagement as quietly as he could. And while he was still considering what to do, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said,

20b Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.  
21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:20b-21).

Joseph knew the meaning of the name, Jesus. He knew that it meant

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (2)

Jehovah is salvation, or simply Jehovah saves. And so Joseph was greatly relieved, and he went ahead with the marriage although they did not live together as husband and wife until the baby Jesus was born.

We all are familiar with the message given to the shepherds when the angel of the Lord came to them as they were surrounded with the glory of the Lord. And this is what the angel said:

10b Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10b, 11).

A baby was to be born Who was “Christ,” meaning the Anointed One, or Messiah; “the Lord,” which indicates His Deity. There can be no denial about the incarnation when we read these passages.

At our Lord’s baptism, and again on the mount of Transfiguration, the Father spoke from heaven and said, “This is my beloved Son...” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Following our Lord’s baptism, in the light of what had been told him before about the Holy Spirit descending upon the Lord, John said this: “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

John 1, Romans 1, Colossians 1 and 2, and Hebrews 1 testify to the Deity of the Lord Jesus. In John 1:1 John said,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And then using the same Name for our Lord and to show that in His birth His Deity was unchanged from what it had been forever before, John the Apostle said later in the same chapter,

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

In Rom. 1:3, 4 we have this clear statement of both the Deity and humanity of our Lord. Paul was speaking of the Gospel and said that it was concerned with God’s Son

3 ... Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4).

Nothing could be clearer than that Jesus Christ was both God and man.

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (3)

In Col. 1:19 the Apostle Paul said this:

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

What “fulness”? The answer is found in Col. 2:9,

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

This means that all Deity was in Him, our Lord, as a Man. This is what we mean by the incarnation.

Heb. 1:1-3 tells us that God in these last days has spoken unto us by his Son...Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person [one of the strongest statements of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ to be found anywhere in the Bible], ...when he had by himself purged our sins [for which He had to be a Man], sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

These are all passages with which we are familiar, Scriptures which we love because they declare so plainly that our Lord Jesus Christ was both God and Man -- absolutely God in every sense of the word, and perfect Man. He was the only perfect Man Who has ever lived, and His perfection qualified Him to be able to die as our Substitute, which He did on the Cross. As I said in the beginning, this is a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. No one can rightly claim to be a Christian if he, or she, denies this clear teaching of Scripture.

Today, however, I want to go beyond what we usually do when we think of the incarnation of our Lord. I want us to notice from Scripture itself some of the ways the incarnation and all that it led to, is to be applied to our lives. Every truth of Scripture should have some practical effects upon our lives, and that is true when we say that we believe in the incarnation of the Son of God. What does this truth tell us about the way we should live. I am going to limit myself to two books of the Bible: 1 John and Philippians. We could go into others, but our time is limited and so I am going to limit my sources. Let us begin with 1 John. Please turn to 1 John 4, and let us look together at the first three verses.

### **I. THE INCARNATION TEACHES US TO BE DISCERNING (1 John 4:1-3).**

(Read 1 John 4:1-3).

When we talk about practical matters relating to our lives as Christians, we don't normally think of discernment. But the ability to discern be-

## Passages from 1 John and Philipians (4)

tween right and wrong, between truth and error, is a gift which we have from God, and we need to be exercising it all of the time. And there is one truth concerning which we need to be especially discerning. It is the truth of the incarnation.

From the time that the Devil appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden, there has been false teaching in the world. The Devil is a liar, and the father of lies, and there is nothing that he enjoys more than to tell lies about God. That is what he did with Eve in the Garden. He lied about God.

When the Lord Jesus came into the world, the Devil started telling lies about Him. He did everything, and used every means and every human being he could to get people to believe that Jesus Christ was an impostor, and that He was not really the Son of God after all. He knew that if he could get people even to question our Lord's Deity, that was the first step in dragging them with himself down into hell. This was the big issue all during our Lord's ministry here on earth, wasn't it? And from those days until now he has had his servants who have denied this basic truth about our Lord. There are people who say many good things about Him -- that He was a great humanitarian because of the way He helped people, or that He was a great teacher because He talked about things no one had ever talked about before. But if you suggest to these same people that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God in human form, then the trouble starts. None of us has the time to study all of the things that are being taught, or not taught, about God and about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, but the key to any system of teaching can be spotted immediately by answering one question: What are they teaching about Jesus Christ? If they teach that He is the Son of God Who has come in the flesh, the Apostle John said that they are of God. If they deny that great truth, they are of the spirit of the Antichrist.

The incarnation demands that we be discerning. It demands that we know how to "try the spirits." If people deny this, you can be sure that you are going to disagree with them about other things that they have to say about Christ. If they deny that He is the incarnate Son of God, they have already started on the path that is going to lead them farther and farther from God. The test of any person's faith is, What do you believe about Jesus Christ?

I have asked people to tell me what a Christian is, and have them give their complete answer without saying anything about Christ -- and many of these have been people who go to church every Sunday. You can't be

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (5)

a Christian without Christ, and you can't believe in the Christ of the Bible unless you believe that He is the incarnate Son of God. If He is anything less than that, He is only a man, and therefore He, too, is a sinner, and is disqualified from ever being our Savior.

We live in a day when people, church people, have grown very careless about doctrine, especially the doctrine of Christ. I hope you can see from the Scriptures that I have read to you how basic this is to our faith. And we need to be constantly on our guard against any attempt to make the doctrine of Christ less than what it is in the Word of God.

So let us remember at this Christmas season and throughout the year that we must not be gullible and accept any religious teaching that comes along -- even though it might come from the old line denominations. The incarnation demands that we be discerning. Find out what people believe about Christ. If they deny either His perfect humanity or His absolute Deity, or both, you tell them the truth, but don't spend any time listening to what they have to say.

In the Apostle John's third epistle he had this to say in verses 9 through 11:

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Don't agree to have a Bible study with any such teacher. And don't receive his literature. If they reject what the Bible says about Christ, then you must not have anything to do with them. If they want to listen to you, then give them the truth. But most false teachers are not concerned with learning; they want to do the teaching.

Let me give you a second practical lesson to be learned from the incarnation of Christ.

## **II. THE INCARNATION SHOWS US HOW WE ARE TO LIVE (1 John 4:7-11).**

The incarnation teaches us how we are to "live through him," that is,

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (6)

through Christ. You have the incarnation is in verse 9, isn't it? Verse 9 is simply another version of John 3:16, but it emphasizes a truth which we often overlook in John 3:16: that it is through the incarnation of Christ which led to His death that we have "eternal life" -- a new way of life which we need to live now.

But what is to be the outstanding characteristic of the life that we have in Christ. The whole tone of this passage has to do with LOVE. (Read verses 7 through 11.)

The incarnation of Jesus Christ speaks of God's love for us. If we had not been loved by all three Members of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus would never have come. But because His love for unlovely and unworthy and defiled and ugly sinners was shown in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, all that resulted from His coming, then we who know Him should be characterized by the same kind of love that caused Him to come to us. It is not human love. Human love is very imperfect, often very selfish. We love those who love us, but if people don't love us, we don't care to have anything to do with them. That often is human love. We love people for what they can do for us. If that had been descriptive of the love of God, Christ would never have come. And so we need to live out the life that we have in Christ, a life which is identified because it displays God's love, not mere human love.

One thing we learned from Titus about our lives before we were saved was that we were "hateful, and hating one another" (Tit. 3:3b). Our world is full of hate. The basic problem is Bosnia and Serbia and Croatia is that they hate each other. That is the problem in Haiti -- hatred. We are torn apart with hatred here in our own country. We have the racial problems. We have a campaign against the rich which is fostered by many in our government -- many at the top of our government. Child abuse, divorce, jealousy, envy, and on and on have some connection with hatred.

We as Christians are to be different. We are to love God, and we are to love each other, and we are to be loving toward the people of the world. Sinning people are never loveable. It is hard to accept what they do. Their language is offensive. If we loved people just because of what they can do for us, or what we see in them that is loveable, we are not going to love people. God loved people not because of any good He saw in them, nor because of anything that they could do for Him. He loved them because of what He desired to do for them, in setting them free from sin's penalty, and from sin's power, making them new creature through

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (7)

Christ, His Son.

The incarnation of Christ teaches us that we should love one another. We need to learn this in a deeper way in our churches if we expect to have any influence at all in the world.

But let me give you a third message, practical message, that comes out of the incarnation of our Savior. And for this let us turn to 1 John 3:5.

### **III. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST TEACHES US THAT WE NEED TO BE HOLY (1 John 3:1-10).**

Last Sunday night I spoke on 1 John 3:5. This is the verse in this passage which speaks of the incarnation. “He was manifested.” It began and His birth and extended for the full period of time that He was on earth. But it all began with His birth. If the Lord had not been born of the virgin Mary, this verse could not have been written.

But I want to concentrate on a point that I did not take up on Sunday night. I did point out that our Lord was manifested to take away our sins, and that there is no sin in Him. But from verse 6 on we see that a part of what the Apostle John meant when he spoke of the Lord taking away our sins, was that Christ became a Man and eventually suffered and died on the Cross, not just to deliver us from the penalty of our sins, but He came to deliver us from sinning! Thus the incarnation of Christ teaches us that God wants us to be holy. He wants us to stop our sinning. He wants us to pursue righteousness. He wants us to be holy. In our Lord there was not sin before He came, nor after He came, nor when He died, nor after He rose from the dead. John was speaking in the present tense: “In Him **IS** no sin.” And, as I tried to bring out on Sunday night, when the Lord’s work in us is complete, and we are like Him, then the Lord Himself will be able to say of us, “In **THEM** is no sin.”

But the point in all of this for the present is that if Christ came to take away our sins, then we can’t live in sin like we did before; we can’t continue on sinning. But we need to see that we have the responsibility by the grace of God to see that we keep as far away from sin and sinning as we can get. The incarnation of Christ ought to convict us of our carelessness with regard to sin, but it also should cause us to pursue righteousness. Christ came to make us like He is. Sin slows down the work of salvation in our hearts. We must not love the world. We must not be conformed to the world. But our delight every day should be in

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (8)

doing the will of our Father. Obedience leads to holiness; disobedience is sin and leads always to more sin.

Finally I am going to ask you to turn to Philippians, chapter 2. Verses 5-8 give us a classic passage on the incarnation of our Lord. Here we see that:

### **IV. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST TEACHES US TO BE HUMBLE (Phil. 2:5-11).**

We can't look at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and remain objective. We have another practical lesson growing out of the fact that He came to earth as a Man. If we are to gain even a basic idea of what it meant to the Lord Jesus Christ to become a Man, we need to dwell on His place in glory, and His infinite majesty, before He became a Man. There never has been a person on earth who could fully comprehend this because we are "of the earth, earthy." But meditating on a passage like the one we have here in Phil. 2 can be of great help to us. Notice I said, "meditating," not just reading. One of the greatest failings among believers today is that we know so little about quiet meditation on the words of Scripture. It is good to be reading the Word, but it is better to be reading and meditating on the Word. It is as we meditate on the Word that we are feeding on the Word. It is meditation that strengthens and blesses us as we consider what God has told us in His Word.

Jesus Christ was God before He became Man. His Deity was no different from the Deity of the Father, or the Deity of the Holy Spirit. He was the Creator of the universe. And Hebrews 1 tells us that He is the One Who is moving human history along according to the eternal purposes of God. Angels adored our Lord. His fellowship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit had never known any interruption. In the glory of heaven all is absolute perfection.

But the Lord did not feel that He had to hang on to His exalted position, and so He emptied Himself by becoming a Man. This does not mean that He ceased in any way to be God, but it does mean that He willingly refused to use many of His attributes in order that He might become like one of His creatures. But more than that, He not only became a man, becoming lower than the angels who worshiped Him, but He obeyed the Father to the extent that He died the most humiliating of all deaths, the death of the Cross. And it was all that He might be perfectly obedient to the Father. He humbled Himself by becoming a Man, but He humbled



## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (9)

Himself even more by His death on the Cross. He died as a criminal. He died as the crowd was jeering at Him and doing all that they could to intensify His sufferings. But remember that a part of His sufferings, a major part, which men could not see, was when the Father made the soul of His Son “an offering for sin.” No one has ever come from such great heights, nor gone to such great depths, as our Lord Jesus Christ did.

The point that I want to make from the incarnation of Christ is that Paul prefaced all of this by saying, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” That is, you and I are to walk the path of humility, following the example of our blessed Lord. This doesn’t sound like self-love, or self-worth, or self-esteem. It was not the Lord’s purpose in life to feel good about Himself. He had every right to feel that way, but that was not His objective. His objective was to do the Father’s will, and this purpose overshadowed every other purpose that the Lord had in coming into the world. He came to save us from our sins, but before that, His purpose was to do the will of His Father Who had sent Him.

So this fourth and final lesson which I bring to you today which the incarnation teaches us is that just as the Lord humbled Himself, so we need to humble ourselves. In the kingdom of God, the greatest is the lowest. We have no reason to be proud. We need to be humbled when we think of not only what our Lord went through to save us, but it should humble us into the dust that He had to do everything He did or we would still be in our sins, lost, and without God. Anyone who truly understands the meaning of the incarnation will know that it is a message which behooves us to be humble, and to avoid anything that speaks of personal pride. Our Lord humbled Himself, and it is unbelievable that we would even think of doing anything else.

**Concl:** I have no doubt at all but that there are more messages in the incarnation of Christ than I have given you, but if we can learn these three, and then look for others, God will be glorified and we will experience the blessing which we so desperately need. Let us be discerning about the religious teaching that we hear, listening to see if the teacher believes in the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ, and that He became a real Man without ceasing to be God. Let us remember that the incarnation teaches us that because Christ came and died, we have life, eternal life, a life to be lived, and that the great characteristic of our new life is seen in our love for each other, in the fellowship that we enjoy together in the Lord. Let us also remember that the incarnation teaches us that God wants us to be holy, and that if we really know Christ as our Savior, it is

## Passages from 1 John and Philippians (10)

impossible for us to continue living a life of sin. Finally, the incarnation teaches us that we need to be humble, humble following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do what we can to humble ourselves, trusting the Lord, and Him alone, to raise us up and to use us as He sees fit for the glory of His Name, not ours.

May our prayer be that the messages of the incarnation will be seen increasingly in our lives as we await that glorious day when we will be forever with the Lord.