



Christmas in July!

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

A SUMMER SERMON SERIES ON THE NICENE CREED

Psalm 40:4-10 Hebrews 10:1-10

Romans 8:1-4 John 1:1-14

July 21, 2024
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For us today,
it is truly Christmas in July ☺!

We have been studying the Nicene Creed this summer, and we are at the section that talks about the Christmas story. But the Nicene Creed doesn't talk about Shepherds and Angels, the manger nor the sheep. Rather the Nicene Creed focuses on the *theology* of the Christmas story, and specifically **Who** was born in Bethlehem. The theology of the Christmas story is called the *Incarnation*. *Incarnation* is a Latin word that means *in flesh*, and it's a Biblical way to describe **Who Jesus is** and **Who was born in Bethlehem**. Jesus is *incarnate*; that means, He is *God in flesh*. God was born in Bethlehem for us. God has a human nature and a human body in order to do the work of salvation for us and our children.

The key Bible verse for the *incarnation* of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in the first chapter of the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1,14

The Christmas story, or the *Incarnation of Christ*, is about God coming into the world for us and or salvation. It is teaching us that God became flesh in order to be our Savior.

Because of the false teachers of the 4th century, who were teaching that Jesus was not fully God; the One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church had to take a

strong stand and confess that Jesus was indeed fully and truly God, and that God did take on flesh for us and our salvation. Here is how the Nicene Creed echoes Holy Scripture about the [Incarnation of Christ](#):

I believe in One Lord Jesus Christ . . .
who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven
and was **incarnate**
by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was **made man**;

There is a 3-fold emphasis on the Incarnation: Jesus “**came down**,” He was “**incarnate**,” and He was “**made man**.” We believe that Jesus is both God and Man: fully human and fully divine. In theology we say that Jesus is “One Person, with Two Natures: a Divine nature and a Human nature.”¹

But why did God become flesh? Why did the Son of God humble Himself, leave Heaven, be born in Bethlehem, live a life here on earth, and then suffer and die on a cross in Jerusalem?

That's because we have two problems.

1) Somehow, **you have to be perfect and holy in God's eyes.**

How is that going to happen?

2) Somehow all of **your disobedience, rebellion, and immorality has to be paid for.**

How is that going to happen?

We can't do either of those things ourselves.

¹ In the [Lutheran Confessions](#), we confess that “. . . the Word, that is, the Son of God, did assume the human nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably enjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men. (Augsburg Confession 1-3).” And in the Formula of Concord we confess: “We regard our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Man in one person, neither confounding the natures nor dividing the person. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VIII.43).” The Christian Church has always been careful to distinguish the Natures of Christ, Human and Divine, with the “Chalcedon Definition” of 451 AD: the two natures are Unchanged, Unconfused, Unseparated, and Undivided.

Our sin prevents us from living a **perfect and holy life**, and we have **nothing whatsoever to offer God** to make up for our sins. On our own we are lost and full of guilt, death is approaching quickly, and final judgment awaits after that. All we can do is cry out to God for mercy; and ask Him to help us.

AND HE DOES.

That is what the **incarnation** is all about. God Himself helping us by doing the work of salvation for us and in our place. Christ Himself said it in Hebrews chapter 10; which is a quote from the messianic Psalm 40:

Consequently, when **Christ** came into the world, **He said**, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, **but a body have you prepared for me**; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" Hebrews 10:5-7

God's will was that His Son will do the work of salvation for you and in your place².

Jesus is given a body so that He can live on earth under the 10 Commandments, like all of us. He lived as a human being, experiencing everything we experience, even temptation. But He did not sin. As True God, He lived a perfect and holy life: always glorifying God and always loving His neighbor. He did that for you, and His holy life is **credited** to you **through faith**; **it's as if you have lived a perfect and holy life in God's eyes**.

Jesus was given a body so that He could also suffer and die on a cross for us and our salvation. His body was the sacrifice that paid for our sins. He was punished for us. He suffered for us. He was declared guilty for us. He died for us. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And in His resurrection from the dead on the Third Day, in His body, you are now declared "not guilty" of your sins. You are given eternal life, and forgiven all of your sins.

² This is the doctrine of the *Perfect Obedience Of Christ*. The next two paragraphs of this sermon will summarize the work of Christ for us and in our place in terms of His Life (active obedience) and His Death (passive obedience). This is the purpose of the Incarnation; This is why God assumed a human nature and a body. This is the most thorough way of thinking about the work of the Savior for you and your salvation.

**Because the Son of God *became flesh*,
you have eternal salvation.**

Saint Paul put it this way:

There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1

No Condemnation!

God is **not** going to treat you as your sins deserve. He is **not** going to pronounce you guilty on Judgment Day. He is **not** going to deal with you in wrath and anger because of your sins. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is **no** condemnation for you. You have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. You are perfect and holy in God's eyes; you are declared righteous and justified in His sight, and all of your sins have been paid for by the Son of God.

You are now free to live in God's love! You are free to glorify God in everything that you do! You are free to love and care about your neighbor! You are free to grow in grace and learn more and more about this God who loves you so much! *There is **no condemnation** for you through faith in Christ Jesus.*

The Shepherds and Angels, the manger and the sheep are important parts of the Christmas story; but the *theology* of Christmas gets right to the core of it all: the Son of God was **incarnate** for you and for your salvation!

**With the Nicene Creed,
We believe, teach and confess that . . .**

who for us men and for our salvation
the Lord Jesus Christ
came down from heaven
and was **incarnate**
by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was **made man**;

Amen!

Son of God, we thank you for becoming the flesh and doing the work of salvation for us and in our place. Give us faith to trust your perfect life and your sacrificial death for us. Send us the Holy Spirit so that we may live lives of freedom and joy glorifying our father in heaven, serving our neighbor, and growing in faith and knowledge. For your great love, care, and mercy for us, we rejoice and give you thanks and praise!
AMEN!

Psalm 40:4-10

4 Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust,
who does not turn to the proud, to those who go
astray after a lie!

5 You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous
deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare
with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are
more than can be told.

6 In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but
you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin
offering you have not required.

7 Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the
book it is written of me:

8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within
my heart."

9 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great
congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as
you know, O Lord.

10 I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I
have not concealed your steadfast love and your
faithfulness from the great congregation.

Hebrews 10:1-10

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

⁸When He said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then He added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Romans 8:1-4

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the *righteous requirement of the law* might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

John 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And **the word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known