

The Incomprehensible Incarnation

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Matthew 1:18-25

It is always a great, great joy to enter into the Christmas season, an opportunity to reflect upon the glories of our incarnate Savior. And, once again, we will do that this morning by looking in Matthew's gospel, Matthew chapter one. This morning I would like to speak to you about the incomprehensible incarnation. We will try to comprehend the incomprehensible for a few minutes this morning.

I want to look at verses 18 through 25 along with some other passages, so if you will turn there, Matthew one beginning in verse 18.

Before I read this let me remind you that ignorance is always the soil in which the seeds of heresy grow best. And, perhaps, like no other time of the year, the Christmas season is the best season for growing weeds of error and thistles of blasphemy. This time of year myths surrounding the Lord Jesus Christ seem to compete with the myths of Santa Claus. And, frankly, I think many people believe more in Santa Claus than they do Jesus. So my purpose this morning is to use this occasion, this occasion of Christmas as an opportunity to perhaps uproot some weeds of error that may have grown up in your Christological garden.

Moreover, it is my prayer that you grasp some amazing truths this morning about Jesus, maybe some truths that you have never known before, truths that emerge from the Bible that not only confirm the veracity of the inspired record of the Word of God, but also that exalt the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let me read this passage to you, Matthew chapter one beginning in verse 18.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.¹

¹ Matthew 1:18-25.

As we examine Matthew's inspired account, I wish to focus on four themes that tend to emerge from this text which will also require us to look at some other passages this morning. We are going to see, first, his royal lineage; secondly, his physical lineage; thirdly, his virgin birth; and, finally, his eternal sonship.

Now, first, bear in mind that the four gospels depict Christ in his humiliation with the final book of the New Testament, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, portraying him in his glorification. Each of the four gospel writers have a distinct, yet overlapping emphasis in their depiction of the Lord Jesus. Matthew will portray him primarily as the sovereign king. Mark will see him more as the suffering servant. Luke will see him as the Son of man and John as the Son of God. Now these truths, all of these truths are essential to the gospel message. In fact, you must remember that the entire super structure of the Christian faith rests upon the foundation that the incarnate Christ was fully man and fully God.

So here in Matthew chapter one verses 18 through 25 we have this detailed announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ and here God emphasizes through the angel that Mary has been betrothed to Joseph, yet she is pregnant not because of any immoral union with Joseph or anyone else, but by the Holy Spirit. We also see that Joseph is called the Son of David which is a curious thing and that the son that will be born will be called Jesus and he will save his people from their sins.

We also are told that this son Jesus was to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, a prophecy of a virgin birth, the birth of a son whose name would also be called Emmanuel, meaning God with us. The detailed information that we have before us was very, very important to the Jewish people of that day because they would later need to verify his claim to be the Son of David, the Messiah king.

It is interesting that later on in Matthew's gospel, in chapter 22, Jesus will ask the Pharisees, the leaders of Israel in verse 42 of that chapter, "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?"² In other words, what is his genealogy? What is his record, his ancestry? From what Jewish line has he descended? And the text says that they said to him, "The Son of David,"³ which, by the way, was the most common messianic title used in that day.

Now, Jesus, when he asked that, knew the answer and he knew that they knew. But keep in mind that Jews of that day kept meticulous genealogical records. It was very, very important. No one could hold any position of authority unless they were of the proper, verifiable lineage.

Jesus then went on in that passage to demonstrate that not only must Christ be the physical descendant of David, but also as the Messiah, he would be the Son of God, something that the Jews really didn't understand. So Jesus was, therefore, not only

² Matthew 22:42.

³ Ibid.

underscoring his royal lineage in that text, but also asserting his deity. And it is interesting that if you went on to read that passage you would see that that interchange was so disconcerting to the Pharisees and the scribes, the leaders of Israel that it says in verse 46, “No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.”⁴

Now, here is what is fascinating. As we come to our text in Matthew one, notice what precedes Matthew’s account of the birth of Christ in verses 18 and following. What precedes that? The genealogy of Christ. So this brings me to the first incomprehensible truth about the incarnation, about the person of the Lord Jesus. First I want us to examine for a moment, his royal lineage.

Look at chapter one and verse one. There we read, “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”⁵ And then it continues in great detail.

This is amazing. Here we learn that Jesus was by birth the one promised to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, the Abrahamic covenant, verses one through three and following, a covenant that was made with Abraham 2000 years before Jesus was born. And he was also, therefore, the descendant of King David. That is why he is called the Son of David. He was the Messiah King who would therefore fulfill the covenant that God made with David in 2 Samuel seven, a covenant that promised him a future Son who would establish David’s kingdom forever. Now, we will not take time to go through the record here in detail, but I might add that it was never, ever disputed by the Jews.

Matthew’s genealogy moves forward from Abraham to Joseph who was Jesus’ legal, not physical, father. You see, this was crucial because the royal line must be passed through the legal father and Joseph was his legal father. But since Jesus had no human father his royal lineage had to come through a father that the Jews would consider to be his legal father, one that would, shall we say, adopt him and grant to him all of the rights and all of the privileges of a son. So Joseph was his legal, or what we might call his foster father. And, again, this was never in dispute. In fact, later in Luke chapter four and verse 22 you will recall Jesus was teaching in the synagogue there in Nazareth and the people were speaking well of him and they were saying, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”⁶

Now, I might add that there may well have been other reasons for Matthew’s record to underscore the claim of a virgin birth here in this genealogical record as well as in what follows. You see, there was an attempt in that day to make claims of many other virgin births of other famous people. So these myths were floating around. The ancient Babylonians had a virgin birth. So, too, did the ancient Summerian and Akkadians; even the Buddhists and the Hindus that were beginning in those days as well as the Greeks. They all had their version of a virgin birth.

⁴ Matthew 22:46.

⁵ Matthew 1:1.

⁶ Luke 4:22.

Why? Because Satan is the master counterfeiter and he is behind all of these false religions. In fact, the Greeks believed that Zeus empowered a snake to impregnate the virgin goddess Olympias who bore a son and that son's name supposedly was Alexander the Great. So these types of things had been floating around and so, perhaps, the Spirit of God is using this genealogy to also refute some of those things. But, furthermore, Matthew's account along with Luke's genealogy (that we will read later on) also serve to refute some of the wild claims that were floating around that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier or that he was the son of Mary and Joseph having been conceived prior to wedlock and so forth.

Now, allow me one digression here, but I believe it is one that is worthwhile to our discussion. As we look briefly at this royal lineage, there is a fascinating footnote that is deserving of our attention. Notice in verse 11 we read:

Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel...⁷

Now what is fascinating about this is that in Jeremiah chapter 22 and verse 30 God pronounced a curse on Jeconiah who is also called Jehoiachin or Coniah. He only ruled for three months before being taken into captivity, a wicked king. But in that curse God stated that he would never have a son that would sit on the throne of David.

Well, this would pose a huge problem if Jesus is going to claim to be the King of Israel, the Messiah. And here in the lineage, right here in print, as well as other copies that they would have had, it says that Jeconiah is in the lineage. So how could Jesus possibly be the King of Israel. He would be eliminated if he had been, indeed, in Joseph's blood line. But God had a remedy. You see, Jesus' blood right to the throne came through Mary from Nathan, Solomon's brother, not Solomon who was in Jechoniah's line to which Joseph belonged.

Don't you know that the Jews would have spotted this and used this to their advantage if, in fact, Jesus had one cell of Jeconiah's blood in his veins. You see, he could not be in the line descending from David through Jeconiah so God bypassed that curse through the virgin birth. Yet, at the same time, he gives Jesus the royal right to reign as the legal heir of his father Joseph and the blood heir of his mother who descended from David through Nathan.

Notice also in verse 16 it says, "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah."⁸ In the original language, which is so much more precise than the English language, "by whom" is in the feminine, not the masculine gender. Therefore it clearly indicates that Jesus was not born by Joseph, but by Mary. So, once again, we witness the miracle of the inspiration of Scripture where the

⁷ Matthew 1:11-12.

⁸ Matthew 1:16.

Holy Spirit of God superintended human authors to precisely record this stunning miracle of divine providence.

So Matthew establishes these crucial truths from the outset of his gospel. But we must bear in mind that Jesus had to be more than the legal heir to the throne of David. He had to be more than the royal king. He had to also be fully God in order for his sacrifice on the cross to be of infinite value necessary to atone for sin. Moreover, he had to be fully human in order to die in our stead and take upon himself the penalty of our sins as our substitute and in order to conquer death through his resurrection and, thus, guarantee our resurrection. So Jesus had to also be the physical descendant of King David. The human blood of Abraham and David must flow through his veins. The very DNA of those great men of the covenant had to be a part of his physical body.

So, to demonstrate this, the Holy Spirit did two things. First of all, he follows this genealogical record with a detailed account of his divine conception and his virgin mother Mary. And we will look at that a little bit more here in a moment, in verses 18 through 25. But, secondly, the Spirit of God carefully detailed a second genealogy through his inspired author Luke and we find that in Luke chapter three if you will turn there for a moment, Luke chapter three.

In Matthew we have his royal lineage through Joseph's genealogy. In Luke we have his physical lineage in verses 23 through 38 which is technically Mary's genealogy. Now stick with me here. This is exciting if you understand it. Unlike Matthew's genealogy that starts with Abraham and moves forward in time to Joseph—again, making it more Joseph's genealogy—Luke's genealogy begins with Jesus and then moves backward in time all the way to Adam making this Mary's genealogy. And this demonstrates Jesus' actual bloodline. Again, Matthew traces Jesus' ancestry beginning with Abraham whereas Luke stresses his identification even with the entirety of the human race. Jesus is a son of Adam. Yet unlike the disobedient Adam, Jesus is the obedient second Adam while at the same time he is the true Son of God.

Now, bear in mind Joseph and Mary have to explain what is going on. Can you imagine that? You know, to say, "We have remained sexually pure during our time of betrothal and the child that is within my womb is the Messiah. It has been conceived by the Holy Ghost." Can you imagine the look on people's faces? Imagine Mary trying to explain what the angel said to her in Luke one verse 32.

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.⁹

"People, please understand. That is what the angel told me. This is the child that I am bearing."

⁹ Luke 1:32-33.

“Yeah, right.”

And immediately what would the rulers do? They would go to the genealogical records, first of all, to refute even the possibility of these nobodies from Nazareth, these teenagers, to refute the possibility that they might be telling the truth. But, instead, what they would find is that the records actually corroborated their statement.

Again, Matthew immediately establishes Jesus’ ancestry connecting it with the Old Testament and with Israel. But Luke, interestingly enough, waits until Jesus is into his ministry. And somewhere in his 30s when his claim to be the Son of God would have absolutely shaken the Jews to the core we have this account. But it is also interesting that Luke makes it clear in chapter one of his gospel that, indeed, this was a virgin birth. May I remind you of that in verse 34 we read, “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’”¹⁰ And then in verse 35, “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.’”¹¹

We then see this emphasis even in the genealogy that Luke gives us. Notice in verse 23. It says “when he began his ministry,” this is Luke 3:23, “And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being supposedly the son of Joseph.”¹² “Supposedly,” could be translated, “As was supposed,” or “So it was thought, but was not the case.” Again, what a marvelous thing God did in these accounts. Not only does he prove that Jesus’ royal and physical lineage was as they were supposed to be, but he also vindicates and protects young Mary and Joseph from the certain scorn of the Jewish people.

So, after considering the marvels of both his royal as well as his physical lineage, I would like for us to contemplate yet a third incomprehensible truth about the incarnation, and that is his virgin birth. Let me go back now to Matthew chapter one. And my purpose here is not to exposit precisely every word of this text, as I would normally endeavor to do, but rather to focus on the aspect of the virgin birth in a larger, more general way.

Notice, again, in verse 18, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.”¹³

Now, some background would be helpful here for us to understand this text. A Hebrew marriage was always an arranged contract between the parents of the bride and the groom, and this contract was sealed by a dowry, called a *mohar*. And it was paid by the groom’s family to the father of the bride and was to be used to pay for the wedding expenses. Usually the weddings lasted around seven days so it could be rather expensive. And it was also used, or a portion of the bride’s dowry was used to be put in trust for the

¹⁰ Luke 1:34.

¹¹ Luke 1:35.

¹² Luke 3:23.

¹³ Matthew 1:18.

daughter's life insurance, so to speak, in case her husband were to die, or, if he was a scoundrel and ran off and left her. You see, the husband would never realize any of that money until ultimately the father would die and it would be received through the inheritance.

Also, a Jewish wedding consisted of two stages and both of these stages were equally sacred. First, there was the *kiddushin* or the betrothal, engagement period. It included a contract and in this contract the couple not only agreed to be married, but also agreed to stay pure during that period of engagement which usually lasted 12 months before the actual wedding. So they were considered legally married in the betrothal period. This was a time for the bride to prove that she was not pregnant and also a time for the couple to prove that they were dedicated to sexual purity. And then, after the *kiddushin*, you would have the *huppah* which would be the marriage ceremony itself.

Now, obviously Mary's pregnancy required a great deal of explanation, so we see something interesting here in verse 18. It says, again, "Before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ Now, imagine if you are Joseph, if you find that your beloved bride to be is pregnant and you knew you weren't the father. That is tough. And so Joseph's reaction was to be expected in verse 19. "And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly."¹⁵

Now, he could have demanded public humiliation. He could have even demanded that she be stoned according to the Mosaic Law, Deuteronomy 22. But because he was a godly man, a man of compassion and obviously had an undying love for Mary, he chose, instead, to pursue a private divorce. But notice what happened in verse 20. "But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.'"¹⁶

Ah, now Joseph knew that what Mary had probably been trying to tell him about what the angel had told her, recorded in Luke one, was, in fact, true. Verse 21:

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."¹⁷

And then in verse 24 we read:

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Matthew 1:19.

¹⁶ Matthew 1:20.

¹⁷ Matthew 1:21-23.

And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.¹⁸

Now, beloved, please understand what is going on here. Had Jesus been an illegitimate son, his claim to deity would have been laughable. Moreover, without a virgin birth there is no incarnation.

Think about it. The work of redemption demanded a theanthropon. It demanded a God-man, one who could supernaturally fuse the human nature with the divine to form an indissoluble bond. A man had to suffer a punishment that only God could possibly endure, thus, requiring both. A man had to be our substitute to bear the punishment for man, for all who would believe. Yet only God could fully bear the full force of the Father's wrath. A perfect man had to die yet only God is perfect. Human flesh had to go to the grave, yet only God could overcome the grave.

You see, God had to make provision to become flesh that he might also make us partakers of the divine nature and grant us the indwelling of the Spirit. How could Christ be our faithful high priest that could sympathize with our infirmities unless he were both God and man? Neither man alone nor God alone could accomplish these things. But both the human and the divine natures had to be supernaturally woven together. And, indeed, this is an inscrutable mystery beyond our ability to even fathom.

It is staggering to think about the two natures of Christ. Even as a fetus in his mother's womb Jesus was upholding all things by the Word of his power. He required milk from his mother's breast and yet we are told in Colossians 1:17 that, "In him all things hold together."¹⁹ In his humanness we read that he would grow hungry and tired and thirsty and weak. Yet in his divinity he could multiply the bread and the fish and turn water into wine. While on the boat with the disciples, remember that great story? He is asleep. He is utterly exhausted. And yet at the same time he is still the omnipotent Lord of the universe who could arise from his slumber and calm the storm and the sea with a word, "Hush, be still."²⁰

His human nature has now ascended into heaven and yet because of His divine nature he continues to be omnipresent. Has he not promised, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age?"²¹ In his humanness, according to Hebrews 4:15, he was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin, meaning literally he could not sin. In fact, in his divinity he was not even tempted because, "God cannot be tempted with evil,"²² James 1:13. It is interesting Jesus had no sin nature. Therefore, he could have never sinned. In Hebrews 7:26 we read he was "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners."²³ 1 Peter 1:19,

¹⁸ Matthew 1:24-25.

¹⁹ Colossians 1:17.

²⁰ Mark 4:39.

²¹ Matthew 28:20.

²² James 1:13.

²³ Hebrews 7:26.

he was, “a lamb unblemished and spotless.”²⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”²⁵

Yes, dear friends, the incarnation required a virgin birth in order to fuse the human and the divine. And this was not only prophesied by Isaiah, but also by Moses in Genesis 3:15. You will recall after cursing the physical serpent he turned to Satan, the spiritual serpent that had deceived Adam and Eve in the garden, and he promised that there would be a perpetual battle that would exist from that day on “between your seed”—referring to Satan’s offspring, unbelievers—“and her seed,” referring to her descendant, ultimately Christ and all who belong to him.

The term “seed” can be understood in a collective sense referring to all who will make up the progeny of Satan as well as Eve, but it can also be understood as a singular final and glorious product of a woman, one born without the seed of a male, but of the woman and the Holy Spirit. In fact, we read in Galatians four and verse four, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.”²⁶ No mention of a man, confirming again Jesus’ virgin birth as well as his humanity.

And this leads us to the final and fourth incomprehensible truth concerning the incarnation that I would like to share with you this morning and that is his eternal Sonship. Again, back to Matthew chapter one and verse 23 we read, “‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,’ which translated means, ‘GOD WITH US.’”²⁷ And the angel revealed more about this son when he appeared to Mary in Luke 1:32. There he says, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”²⁸

I want you to grasp this important truth. Not only was Jesus Christ the Messiah, the King of Israel fully God, yet fully man, born of a virgin, but, beloved, he was the eternal Son of God before he was conceived and born. He did not become the Son of God at the incarnation.

Scripture teaches that a Father-Son relationship has always existed in eternity past between God the Father and Christ the Son. Again, Galatians 4:4, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.”²⁹ Romans 1:3, it speaks of God promising his Son who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.

Now some will argue that Jesus assumed the role of the Son at his incarnation, a subordinate role that he did not have prior to the incarnation. And often people will use Hebrews 1:5 which is a quotation from Psalm 2:7 as a proof text. There it reads, “You

²⁴ 1 Peter 1:19.

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

²⁶ Galatians 4:4.

²⁷ Matthew 1:23.

²⁸ Luke 1:32.

²⁹ Galatians 4:4.

are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”³⁰ . . . “I shall be a Father to him and he shall be a Son to me.” Now, I can understand this since begetting normally speaks of a person’s origin and since sons are typically subordinate to their fathers. This would seem to support that view based on that verse. And, indeed, Christ, though equal with God, did voluntarily submit to his Father’s will and he willingly set aside his divine attributes in his incarnation, the great kenosis passage in Philippians two speaks of that. We also read of that in John 5:19 and other passages. But we must understand that the context of Psalm two, that is quoted in Hebrews one, must be understood figuratively, not literally. “This day I have begotten thee,” is a reference to the eternal decree of God, not some specific event in a point of time.

Now, since the term begotten can speak of the origin of one’s offspring and often we think of this when we think of that term, it is natural to assume that the begetting of a son speaks of conception, right, a point in time when a child comes into existence. And many will use this understanding to somehow explain the conception of Christ. But, there are several problems with this. First of all, it was the Holy Spirit not the Father who conceived the incarnate Christ. This alone eliminates the idea of the Father begetting or originating the Son in Psalm two as it is quoted in Hebrews one as well as in John 1:14, “He was the only begotten from the Father.” So it obviously must mean something more than mere conception. But also we know in John one verses one through three, as well as other passages, that Christ is not a created being. “He was in the beginning” that text tells us “with God.”

So what does begetting refer to if not to origin? Well, other passages speak of Christ as the only begotten of the Father, John 1:14, verse 18, John 3:16, John 3:18, Hebrews 11:17, and here is what you must keep in mind. The term “begotten” **MONOGENES** (mon-og-en-ace’) in the original language, can mean something far more than merely the origin of one’s offspring. It literally means “one of a kind.” Here it carries with it the idea of “the only beloved one,” or “of singular uniqueness” or “of exclusive character.” And, certainly, we see this in the created order, do we not? Every creature begets its own unique offspring after his kind as we read in Genesis one. That is, every offspring bears the exact likeness of its parent. Now when applied to Christ this would emphasize his utter uniqueness and his utter likeness to his Father. Hebrews 1:3. “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”³¹

So when the Holy Spirit uses the term begotten, he is not speaking of origin, but of the absolute uniqueness and oneness of essence between the Father and the Son all of which is consistent with the essential oneness found in the triune godhead. Moreover, Scripture’s primary use of the title “Son of God,” reveals that it speaks of his essential deity and his absolute equality with God, not his voluntary submission of subordination to the Father.

³⁰ Psalm 2:7.

³¹ Hebrews 1:3.

You see, Jesus did not *become* the Son of God at the incarnation. He did not all of the sudden at that point submit to the Father in some unique way. He was the submissive Son of God in eternity past, fully equal to the Father, to the Spirit. This was precisely the issue in John five that infuriated the Jewish leaders. Remember when they charged Jesus with blasphemy? According to verse 18 here is why, “because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was” his what? . . . “His Father, making himself equal with God. So, again, the title Son of God speaks of his deity and equality with God, not his submission to the Father.

MacArthur sums this up so well and I quote, “Human father, son relationships are merely earthly pictures of an infinitely greater heavenly reality. The one true archetypical father, son relationship exists eternally within the trinity. All others are merely earthly replicas, imperfect because they are bound up in our finiteness, yet illustrating a vital, eternal reality,” end quote.

So, beloved, when we consider Christ as the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, don't be confused by thinking in terms of procreation. But rather understand these concepts as conveying the transcendent truths pertaining to the essential oneness shared by the members of the triune godhead and the utter uniqueness of Christ and his perfect likeness and essence with the Father and with the Spirit.

What an unfathomable concept, to think that in his incarnation he remained the eternal Son of God. He remained fully divine yet he became what he previously had not been, namely, fully human. Theologians use a phrase. I am not sure that anyone knows who first wrote it, but I will quote it to you because it summarizes this concept. “Remaining what he was, he became what he was not.” Very succinct, very true.”

In fact, Jesus did not give up his human nature even after his death and resurrection. Do you realize that? Jesus did not temporarily become a man, but rather his divine nature was permanently joined to his human nature. He appeared to his disciples as a man, did he not, after his resurrection? He showed them the scars of the nail prints in his hands. He had flesh and bones. He ate food. Remember when he was taken up into heaven? What was he doing? He was talking with his disciples. And the angel promised in Acts 1:11, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”³²

Remember that great story in Acts seven, such a sad story, but powerful story. Stephen is gazing up into heaven as he is being stoned and he speaks about Jesus as “the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” And in that vision of Jesus' revelation to John, remember he sees Jesus in the resplendent glory of his ascended state and yet he describes him as “one like a son of man,” Revelation one verse 13.

Grudem summarizes this and he says, quote, “He lives forever, not just as the eternal Son of God, the second person of the trinity, but also as Jesus, the man who was born of

³² Acts 1:11.

Mary. And as Christ, the Messiah and Savior of his people, Jesus will remain fully God and fully man yet one person forever,” end quote.

Incomprehensible. Oh, dear Christian, may I challenge you to meditate on these incomprehensible truths this Christmas season. Think about his royal lineage, his physical lineage, his virgin birth and his eternal Sonship. May our hearts resonate with the hymnist who captured the essence of angelic praise when he wrote:

Christ by highest heaven adored.
Christ the everlasting Lord.
Late in time behold him come.
Offspring of the virgin’s womb.

Veiled in the flesh the godhead see.
Hail the incarnate deity.
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.

Hark the herald angels sing.
Glory to the newborn king.

Let’s pray together.

Oh, Father, these truths are beyond our ability to comprehend and yet you have communicated them to us that we might understand what we may and that by them we might give you even more glory in the context of our finiteness. Lord, we love you and we praise you. What more can be said. What can we possibly give back to you, but our praise and our life long devotion. To think of Christ our Savior, our Redeemer, our eternal King, the Son of Man, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of God who came to die in our stead, the one who knew no sin, that was made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Oh, Lord, thank you for these eternal truths. Cause them to bear much fruit in our lives. And, Lord, I pray that no one within the sound of my voice who has heard these truths will leave this place without having placed their faith in the incarnate Christ. I ask this in Jesus’ name and for his sake. Amen

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