

# Christmas 2025: The Incarnation

The heart of Christmas is not a feeling or a tradition but a Person. At the center of our carols and candles stands this confession: “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). Christmas proclaims that the eternal Son of God truly became man, without ceasing to be God. In this lesson we’ll ask three big questions:

1. Why did Christ have to become a man?
2. How did He become a man?
3. What does this mean for our salvation and for our life as Faithful Israel in Fallen Babylon?



## The Wonder of the Incarnation at Christmas

“Incarnation” simply means “taking on flesh”. The eternal Son, who was “*in the beginning*”, “*with God*”, and “*was God*” (John 1:1-2), did not stay distant. He entered our history, our weakness, our world.

At Christmas He did this in the most surprising way: as a real baby. Not appearing full-grown, not visiting temporarily like Old Testament theophanies (Christophanies), but conceived, carried, and born into a real family under Roman rule. Luke draws our attention to concrete details: a decree from Caesar, a journey to Bethlehem, a baby laid in a manger (Luke 2:1-7). Heaven shouts in praise because God the Son has stepped into our story to save us (Luke 2:13-14).

Jesus did not just look human; He became human: body, soul, mind, will, emotions. Yet He never ceased to be truly God. The crib already casts the shadow of the cross. If we lose the real, historical Incarnation, we lose the Gospel itself.

So we begin here: Christmas is not sentimental decoration on Christianity. It is the beginning of the saving work of the Incarnate Son, which runs from the manger to the cross to the empty tomb.

## Why Did Christ Have to Become Man?

Scripture gives several reasons why the Son had to become man. Together they show that the incarnation is not optional; it is the only way sinners can be saved.

### 1. To Reveal God Fully and Finally

God has always revealed Himself: in creation, providence, and Scripture. But in Jesus, that revelation comes to its climax. “*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*” (John 1:18) This verb, ἐξηγήσατο (exēgēsato) literally means “he exegeted”.

As true God, Jesus shows us the Father perfectly. As true man, He shows the Father in a way we can see and hear and imitate. If He were not truly man, we could not watch Him obey, suffer, pray, and love as a human Lord. If He were not truly God, He would be just another prophet, not the final and decisive revelation.

### 2. To Be Our Second Adam and Covenant Head

The Bible explains what’s wrong with the world in terms of Adam’s sin. Through one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners (Romans 5:12,19). Adam was our federal head, our covenant representative. When he fell, we fell with him.

We therefore need a new Adam, a new representative human head, who will obey where Adam failed. For that to be true, that representative must actually be human. He must stand under God’s law as we do, tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

If Christ were only God and not man, He could not stand in Adam’s place as the head of a renewed humanity. He had to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh to be our covenant representative. (Come back for the lesson on Catechism Question 30 to hear more about this!)

### 3. To Offer a Perfect, Substitutionary Sacrifice

*“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Hebrews 9:22)* Sin deserves death, body and soul under God’s wrath. A substitute must be truly human in order to die in place of humans. Old Testament animal sacrifices were temporary pictures; they could not truly remove sin (*Hebrews 10:4*).

At the same time, the One who bears the infinite weight of God’s wrath must have infinite worth. A mere human could *maybe* die for one other person (*Romans 5:7*); only a divine Person could bear the guilt of a multitude *“from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9; cf. 7:9)*.

So our Mediator must be both:

- *Truly man*, to obey and die in our place.
- *Truly God*, so that His obedience and sacrifice have infinite value and cannot fail.

This is why Scripture says, *“There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5)*.

### 4. To Destroy the Works of the Devil and Sympathize with Us

*Hebrews 2* tells us why Jesus took on flesh: *“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)*. Christ invades the enemy-occupied world as a real human, fights as one of us, and wins the decisive victory at the cross and empty tomb.

Because He became man, He not only *saves* us; He *understands* us. We have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses, *“one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)* He knows hunger, fatigue, injustice, betrayal, grief, and fear. The One who intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father knows from the inside what it feels like to trust God in the dark.

### Summary

So Christ had to become man to reveal God, to stand as our second Adam, to offer a perfect sacrifice, to break Satan’s power, and to be our sympathetic priest.

*Without the Incarnation, there is no truly Christian gospel.*

## How Did Christ Become Man? (The Hypostatic Union)

If we stop with “why” and don’t ask “how”, we can drift into serious errors. The church has learned, over centuries, to guard two truths side by side:

### Jesus is *truly* God

He is *“the Word”* who *“was God” (John 1:1)*.

In Him *“the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9)*.

### Jesus is *truly* man

He was born (*Matthew 1:18,25; Luke 2:7*), grew (*Luke 2:41-52*), got tired and hungry (*Matthew 4:2; Mark 4:38; John 4:6*), learned (*Hebrews 5:8*), suffered (*Hebrews 2:18*), and died (*Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30,33*). He calls Himself *“a man who has told you the truth” (John 8:40)*.

Early on, false explanations tried to protect one truth by denying the other:

- *Arianism* made the Son an exalted creature (*denying* He was truly God).
- *Apollinarianism* said Christ lacked a human mind and soul (*denying* truly man).
- *Nestorianism* said Christ was two persons, not one (*denying* one Person).
- *Eutychianism* said Christ’s natures mixed into one (*denying* two distinct natures).

In response, the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) summarized the Bible’s teaching. It confessed “one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten”, to be acknowledged: in two natures, divine and human, *without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.*

This is what we call the *hypostatic union*. As the Baptist Catechism puts it:

**Question 24:** Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

**Answer:** The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ; who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever.

**Question 25:** How did Christ, being the Son of God become man?

**Answer:** Christ the Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul; being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

Notice three key points.

### **1. One Person, Two Natures**

There are not two "Jesuses", one divine and one human. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, who now exists in two natures. Each nature keeps its own proper properties. His deity isn't weakened or lessened by His humanity. His humanity isn't swallowed up by His deity.

So sometimes Scripture speaks of Him in ways that highlight His human nature (He was tired at the well in [John 4:6](#)). Sometimes it highlights His divine nature (He stills the storm with a word in [Mark 4:39-41](#)). But both natures belong to the same person. *(It's hard to describe something unique.)*

### **2. Real, Miraculous Human Birth**

"How" Christ became man also involves the virgin conception. Question 25 follows Matthew and Luke to stress that Jesus was "conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary" ([Matthew 1:18-25](#); [Luke 1:26-35](#)), showing both God's initiative and Christ's real humanity.

- He is a real descendant of Adam and David through Mary ([Matthew 1](#)).
- Yet His conception is holy and unique, set apart from Adam's guilt ([Luke 1:35](#)).

He did not merely appear human (this is the Docetic Gnostic heresy); He took a true body and a reasonable soul, growing in wisdom and stature ([Luke 2:52](#)). The eternal Son remained what He was (truly God) and became what He previously was not (truly man).

### **3. The Incarnation Is Permanent**

The Son did not "put on" humanity like a coat and take it off after the resurrection. The same true human nature that died is the nature that rose and now sits at the Father's right hand. There is a man, our Brother, on the throne of the universe ([Hebrews 2:11-12,17](#)).

This means the incarnation is not just a Christmas event; it is an everlasting reality. The hypostatic union continues forever as the basis of our salvation, our worship, and our hope.

## What the Incarnation Means for Us and Our Salvation

The incarnation is not an abstract idea for theologians only. It reshapes how we understand salvation, the Christian life, and our calling to live as Faithful Israel in Fallen Babylon.

### *What Christ Has Done For Us*

Because Christ became man, lived, died, and rose, He accomplished a complete salvation for us, outside of us, in history.

- **Perfect obedience:** As our second Adam, He perfectly kept God's law. His righteousness is counted to us by faith ([Romans 5:19](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).
- **Substitutionary death:** As true man, He could truly stand in our place; as true God, His sacrifice is of infinite worth. At the cross He bore God's wrath for our sins once for all ([Hebrews 10:10-14](#)).
- **Resurrection and exaltation:** The incarnate Christ rose bodily and now reigns as our Mediator and King ([Hebrews 1:3](#); [7:25](#)).

Your acceptance before God does not rest on your *feelings* or your *performance*. It rests on *Christ*, a real, risen God-Man who stands in your place. When the accuser points to *your guilt*, you can point to *your Redeemer*, Christ, who still bears in His glorified body the marks of His finished work.

### *What Christ Does In Us by His Spirit*

The incarnate Christ now pours out the Holy Spirit to apply His work in us.

- The Spirit unites us to Christ, so that what is His becomes ours: His life, His righteousness, His inheritance (**Romans 8:9-17**).
- The Spirit gives us new birth, a new heart that loves God and hates sin (**John 3:3-6**).
- The Spirit conforms us to Christ's image: *"And we all, with unveiled face, are beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."* (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).
- The Spirit builds the church as Christ's body, with Christ as the Head (**Ephesians 4:15-16**).

***Christmas, then, is not only about what Christ did long ago; it is about what He is doing right now in His people by His Spirit.***

### *Living as Faithful Israel in Fallen Babylon*

We live in a world that looks like Babylon: idolatrous, proud, and hostile to Christ. The incarnation gives us a pattern and a promise for life in such a place.

- **Presence without compromise**: Jesus entered our world fully, working, eating, walking its streets, yet without sin. Likewise, we are called to live fully present in our families, communities, and workplaces without adopting Babylon's idols.
- **Honoring embodied life**: Because the Son took on flesh, our bodies, our time, and our ordinary tasks matter. We reject both the idolizing of bodily pleasure and the despising of physical life. We offer our bodies as *"a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God"* (**Romans 12:1**).
- **Humble, self-giving love**: **Philippians 2** uses the incarnation as our pattern: we are to have the mind of Christ, who humbled Himself to serve and to die (**Philippians 2:5-8**). In Babylon, greatness is *grabbing*; in the kingdom, greatness is *giving*.
- **Hope in a coming embodied kingdom**: Our Savior remains the incarnate God-Man, and He will return *bodily* to make all things new. Our future is not *escape from* creation but the *renewal of* creation, where *"the dwelling place of God is with man"* (**Revelation 21:3**).

## Conclusion: Christmas as Worship, Trust, and Hope

We have seen that Christ had to become man to reveal God, to stand as our second Adam, to offer a perfect sacrifice, to destroy the works of the devil, and to be our sympathetic High Priest. We have seen that He became man by assuming a complete human nature through the virgin conception, so that in the one Person of the Son there are two natures, divine and human, united forever. And we have seen that this means we have a complete salvation accomplished for us and applied in us, and a pattern for **living as Faithful Israel in Fallen Babylon**.

So how should we respond this Christmas?

- **Worship**: bowing before the Child of Bethlehem who is the Lord of glory.
- **Trust**: resting in the incarnate Mediator who will never cast out those who come to Him.
- **Surrender**: offering our whole selves to the One who gave Himself for us.
- **Hope**: remembering that our Brother and Savior sits on the throne and will come again.

*"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* (**John 1:14**).

***Let this shape your Christmas, your discipleship, and your endurance in a fallen world, until the day when faith becomes sight and we dwell with Him forever.***



## *The Chalcedonian Definition*

*Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the Self-same Perfect in Godhead, the Self-same Perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly Man; the Self-same of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, the Self-same co-essential with us according to the Manhood; like us in all things, sin apart; before the ages begotten of the Father as to the Godhead, but in the last days, the Self-same, for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin Theotokos as to the Manhood; One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged in Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis; not as though He was parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as from the beginning the prophets have taught concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Symbol of the Fathers hath handed down to us.*

## *Athanasian Creed (selection)*

*Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance [Essence]; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell; rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the living and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.*

## *London Baptist Confession of Faith — Chapter 8, Paragraphs 2 and 3*

*The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with Him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things He has made, did, when the fullness of time was complete, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities of it, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.*

*The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of mediator and surety; which office He took not upon himself, but was thereunto called by His Father; who also put all power and judgement in His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same.*