

BASIC BIBLE THEMES

SESSION 4: INCARNATION

STUDENT

Background Scripture: John 1:1-18; 3:16; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 2:5-18; 4:14-16; 1 John 1:1-4; 4:1-3

1. Engage Interest

- Who is this Jesus that we hear so much about at Christmas time?

2. Explore the Word

- John 1:1-18
 - 1 John 1:1-4
 - 1 John 4:1-3
 - Philippians 2:5-11
 - Hebrews 2:5-18
 - Hebrews 4:14-16
 - Colossians 1:15-20
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- According to each passage, why did God come to us in the person of Jesus?
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- Examine in detail the phrases in John 3:16 to show why Jesus came into our world.

3. Examine Life

- What do we mean when we talk about the Incarnation?
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- Did the Son exist before His birth to Mary that first Christmas?
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- Did God change His divine nature into that of human nature?
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- Does the Bible explain the how of the Incarnation?

4. Exercise Your Faith

LESSON SUMMARY

I was in eighth grade when I heard someone challenge the Incarnation for the first time. Nancy was a real livewire who usually played the class clown. However, on this Sunday before Christmas, she fired a sarcastic, penetrating shot right into the heart of the Christmas story. “What’s the big deal about God sending His ‘only’ Son into the world to die on a cross, anyway? He could always snap His fingers and make another one!”

The rest of us simpletons, including our poor teacher, sat there in stunned silence. No one knew what to say.

Oddly enough, Nancy’s cutting question has stuck with me all these years. Provocative encounters have that effect. It was my first serious experience with doubt and led to sincere questions about God and God’s way of doing things: Why did God have to send His Son? Could Nancy have a point, did it really cost God anything to send Jesus?

After all, if He is all-powerful, doesn’t that imply He could have devised any number of ways to save us from sin? Surely He could have simply made a sweeping declaration that would have saved us all: “I hereby pronounce you all to be absolved of your sins!” That would have been easier. Why go to all the bother and fuss of coming to us in the form of a baby—of all things? Indeed, these questions go to the heart of one of the most important doctrines of Christianity—the Incarnation, God coming to us in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. So, why did God come to us in human form? Why did the Incarnation have to take place?

What Is the Incarnation?

The word “incarnation” means “enfleshment” or becoming flesh. In Christianity, it is the doctrine that in the one person of Jesus, there is the union of human nature with the divine nature.

The doctrine of the Incarnation carries with it the belief that God the Son assumed human nature, but without in any way ceasing to be God, and without sin (see John 1:17). God the Son was made human (became incarnate) by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. Thus, the entire Godhead is involved: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Why Did God Choose Incarnation?

First, God desired to communicate with us so much that He spoke in body language—He wanted us to see what He was like and not just hear about Him. Second, the Scriptures boldly state that in the person of Jesus, God has come to us to redeem us from our sins. Third, in the person of Jesus, we see what God originally intended for us, as humans, to be.