

Small Group Study

Christ as Incarnate

From the sermon series, "Christ in You"



The first page of Colossians in a manuscript from the 12th century. It gives its title as **προς κολοσσαείς**, "to the Colossians".

SCRIPTURE

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

Colossians 1:17-19 (NIV)

17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. Who takes out the trash in your home?
Who cleans the toilets?

2. Tell the group about a time when someone came alongside you and helped you in a difficult situation.

3. What was the highlight of this past week for you?



Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

- 5 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*
- 6 *Who, being in very nature God,*
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
- 7 *but made himself nothing,*
 taking the very nature of a servant,
 being made in human likeness.
- 8 *And being found in appearance as a man,*
 he humbled himself
 and became obedient to death—
 even death on a cross!
- 9 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place*
 and gave him the name that is above every name,
- 10 *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,*
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,*
 to the glory of God the Father.
-

QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of everything Philippians 2:5-11 reveals about Christ. (Which phrases describe Him before the incarnation, and which describe after?)
 2. What do you think it was like for Jesus to leave heaven and become human? To take on himself all of the sin of mankind?
 3. Some mistake these verses to say Christ was created, or Christ was not fully human, or that Christ is not fully divine. The failure to hold both His humanity and His deity in tension has been the source of a number of heresies and cults, historically and in the present. What does each phrase mean?
 - “...being in the very nature God...” (Could you say He was in the form of God, but not actually God?)
 - “...taking on the form of a servant...” (Could you say He was created?)
 - “...being made in human likeness...” (Could you say He only appeared to be human?)
 4. Let's put these phrases together now. How would you defend both the deity and the humanity of Christ from the Bible? What is lost when one is emphasized over the other?
-

5. Take a stab: In your understanding, how would you explain the mystery of the incarnation (He “emptied himself”) to someone? Did He give up or lay aside any divine attributes, or the exercise of them? What, if any, clues does this passage or surrounding context give? What difference does it make?

6. Up for a challenge? Early church Christians wrestled with these questions long before us. These views were instrumental in helping the early church form sound beliefs about the deity and humanity of Christ. We not only gain insight from modern-day Christians who are different from us. We also have a lot to learn from the ways God’s Spirit revealed truth to the believers throughout history. Don’t be scared by these long names! What is the problem with each of these beliefs?

- **Apollinarianism (A)** - This view stated that the One person of Christ had a human body but a divine mind and spirit. What is the problem with this? The whole human person (material and immaterial) needs redeeming. It implied that being human is essentially sinful. This heresy was rejected at the council of Alexandria (362) and the Council of Constantinople (381).

- **Nestorianism (N)** - This view stated that there are two separate persons in Christ—a human person and a divine person. What is the problem with this? There is no indication of struggle in Christ between two persons; His person cannot be divided. There is ONE mediator between God and man: the God-man, Jesus Christ.

- **Eutychianism/Monophysitism (E/M)** - This view stated that Christ had only one nature. His human nature was ‘absorbed into’ a divine nature and thus morphed into a third nature. What is the problem with this? A third ‘mix’ of natures is neither human nor divine. He must be fully human and fully divine.

7. What value does Jesus’ incarnation reflect upon our lives? How does the humanity of Christ inform the way we consider and engage people who are different than us?

8. Is there someone God is calling you to show “incarnational love” to this week? What is your action step for this week? What conversation do you need to have? What do you need to pray? What needs to change in your thinking or what actions need to be taken? As a result of this lesson, how do you most desire to grow and reach out to others with the love of Christ?

God bless,

Roger Sodsod
Small Group Pastor, Vineyard Church
email: rsodsod@vineyardkcnorth.com