

During these past few Bible studies, we have looked briefly at Jesus being God, the Son of God, and the Lord. As we have seen, even when Jesus is called the Son and the Lord, it points to his divinity. Now in our study, we will begin to look at the titles of Jesus that relate to his other nature, his humanity.

Especially at Christmas time, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, recognizing that miracle of God taking on human form. You may hear the word “incarnation” around that time of year, but you may not know what it means. Incarnation refers to the Word becoming flesh. ‘In-’ means to be in or to become; and ‘-carn-’ refers to the body, or flesh and blood. So the Incarnation refers to the act of God putting on humanity. Do not get confused with the popular notion of reincarnation, which is a Hindu notion. Reincarnation refers to the extremely long, repetitive process of becoming a new being after one’s death, and one’s new state is based on how good one lived in the previous life. Reincarnation is the process being put into a different body over and over again; the Incarnation is the Christian doctrine of the fullness of God in bodily form.

Philippians 2:6-11 is a classic text that teaches the Incarnation: “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This section of Scripture begins by stating that Jesus was in the form of God. One’s form is one’s nature, or structure, or being. You and I are in human form, which makes us human. Hummingbirds have the form of a bird, which is the reason we call them birds. So, Jesus being in the form of God means that he is God, which we also know from other parts of the New Testament. Then, the passage continues saying that Jesus “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.” He did not count his position as being the Son of God something to hold on to with a squeezed fist. Rather, he freely laid it aside in all humility and took on the form of a servant, a human form.

Jesus had the form of man, he was born in the likeness of men. He had hair, skin, muscles, tendons, blood, bones, and organs. He did not just have a body, but also had a soul, just

like every human being does. He had thoughts, desires, and a full range of emotions, which we see in the Gospels were quite strong. He needed and enjoyed food, drink, shelter, relationships, and so forth. He was human, like every other human is generally. However, he was also a unique, specific person, not just a type of general humanity. Read Mark 6:1-3, and you will see the people of Nazareth pointing this out. Jesus had a real family: his mother Mary, his father Joseph, and plenty of brothers and sisters. He had cousins, one being John the Baptist, aunts, uncles, and so forth. He had a hometown, Nazareth, where he grew up with his neighborhood peers as people saw him become a man. Nazareth and that region of Galilee had a special place in his heart like your neighborhood does in your heart. Jesus enjoyed the food prepared by his loved ones, had friendship with his disciples, worked hard and skillfully in Middle Eastern heat as a carpenter, and lived as a Jew in a Jewish culture with all the Jewish customs. Jesus was not just a human, but was a man; he lived as a masculine person.

As such a man, Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience. His righteousness was complete and flawless as he lived in his life in this way. Back in Philippians 2:8, it says that he was obedient to the point of death. He held on to obedience even through death. Jesus preferred obedience than his very life. He loved the LORD his God exceedingly, kept himself pure by the word, and loved people with selfless and warm kindness. Jesus submitted to the Father's will to die on the cross to take away our sin. His act of obedience is the way that we are made righteous and pleasing in God's sight. It is only by Jesus obedient death that our sins can be forgiven. If Jesus would have sinned, then his death would have been a just punishment from God for his own sin. However, since he was innocent, he could bear our sins and die in our place. Your sins and my sins can be forgiven in Jesus Christ. Your bitterness towards other people, your carelessness about how you live, your rebellious behavior, and your cold heart towards God—all great evils—can be forgiven by God, not counted against you, washed away, and forgotten.

It was for this reason that God took on human form, in order to save us. He became a man because man was the one who sinned and ruined the world by sin. So, man needed to be the one to pay for it and make it right. God became flesh in order to have the possibility to die, because death was necessary for our forgiveness. Finally, since Jesus is fully man, he can sympathize with you and I best. He was tempted just like us, but he did not sin. Because he suffered and was tempted, he knows how to care for those who suffer and are tempted. Since he is fully man, Jesus is the one who cares the most about us and can care for us the best.