

The Incarnational Journey Of God



Experiencing God The Son
In The World Of His Creation

DICKSON

The Incarnational Journey Of God

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Prologue

Our faith needs strengthening when we are afraid to wonder into those areas where there is little revelation, but just enough to tease our thinking concerning those things that are beyond our empirical realm of dwelling. But for those who have a faith that is based solidly on the foundation of Jesus Christ, they find comfort knowing that though they do not know all those things that are in store for the faithful, enough has been revealed to excite us concerning what is coming. When the Holy Spirit revealed through Paul a few sweet gems concerning events that will surround the final coming of King Jesus, He concluded His narrative of the matter with the words, “*Comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th 4:18). We may not understand all that about which Paul wrote concerning the final coming. Nevertheless, we find comfort in the greater picture that Jesus is coming again, which coming brings encouragement because of the few things about the event that are revealed.

The same is true in reference to things in the past. Those areas of our faith that call on us to believe in that which is incomprehensible are opportunities for the validation of our faith. Simply because we do not understand

everything about the incarnation of God into the flesh of man does not encourage doubt. We need not fear that someone will poke holes in our faith, or mock us for believing in that which cannot be understood by those minds that are confined to this world. On the contrary, our argument to the unbeliever is that if there were a God who was revealed in the flesh of man sometime in history, then certainly we would expect that we could never fully comprehend the incarnation of this God. If we understood everything about the incarnational journey of God into the flesh of man, then we would be gods ourselves. Therefore, we conclude that we are not in the bondage of a childish faith that is naive to reality. Our faith is not based on shallow realities of this world, but on a God who is beyond this world.

For the preceding reasons, it is often common for many to be apprehensive about preaching all the gospel. An abbreviated message of the gospel is often preached that appeals to those who walk by a shallow faith that is void of imagination. The focus of the teaching of some, therefore, is primarily on the atoning death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection, with some mention on the side of His final coming. But we forget

that the gospel (good news) is more than these central events that explain the reason for the coming of God the Son into this world. The full gospel message we must preach is the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, coronation and consummation of all things when King Jesus comes again.

We must keep in mind that the gospel was first revealed to man on earth with the incarnation of God the Son in the small country village of Bethlehem. This fact brings us into a realm of thought wherein we often do not go in our typical studies of this subject. We would ask, when was the last time you heard a lesson on the incarnation of God the Son?

We will be the first to confess that we have in the past taught little on the incarnation. Other than reading the proof-text scriptures on the matter, we often did not allow ourselves to reason beyond the statements of scripture. And with our focus centered primarily on the cross and resurrection, the incarnation of the Word into the flesh of man was a common oversight.

We must not forget that the first time the good news was announced on earth, it was to some shepherds in the middle of the night in reference to a babe lying in a manger. The angel announced to a surprised group of

shepherds that a Savior had been born into the world. He was Christ the Lord. However, neither the parents nor the shepherds understood fully what had transpired. Nevertheless, thirty years later they would all realize that it was not just a baby who had been born in a barn in Bethlehem. It was God in the flesh of man. They did not understand that He was a Savior until they witnessed three decades later blood dripping from His hands and side on a cross.

Once we connect all the dots of the gospel from incarnation to consummation, the light comes on in our minds. Our lives begin to transform and the focus of our teaching morphs into proclaiming the full gospel of the incarnate God. We are sure that this has also been the case with many other Bible students who were teaching only an abridged version of the gospel. Our focus was previously only on the cross and resurrection, with little emphasis placed on the gospel of the incarnation. But that has all changed. The more we appreciate what He did for us, the more we are moved into action to do for Him.

Preaching an abbreviated gospel produced a great number of people who came to the Lord in order to have their sins washed away in obedience to the death, burial and resurrection. But because we have often focused

so little on the gospel of the incarnation of the Son of God, folks came out on the other side of the watery grave with little appreciation for what it cost God to get us to the cross, and then to the grave of water. We were often disciples to the water, but we were not taught the gospel journey of God the Son from heaven to the flesh of man in order to go to the cross. Subsequently, our walk in gratitude for how far He came for us has often been weak in our response to His sacrifice. Our minds were not consumed in the thought that the sacrifice of the cross was only a momentary offering on the part of the Son of God for our sins.

Our salvation entails far more than a cross outside Jerusalem. The incarnation reveals eternal implications that reach right into the heart of God. The incarnation proclaims that the few hours on the cross were only a brief moment in time in reference to the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God that will carry on without end. More was paid in sacrifice for us on the cross than the sacrificial death of Jesus.

As you study through this subject of the incarnational God who visited this world in order to take us out of this world, it is our prayer that the subject of His coming in the flesh humbles you as it has humbled us and

the early believers. If one is not brought to his or her knees concerning what transpired before the first announcement was made to some shepherds in a field, then he or she does not truly understand the price that was paid. Though we cannot fully comprehend the incarnational appearance of God in the flesh of man, we can understand enough to respond with awe and gratitude. We are brought to our knees even by the slightest understanding that our Creator became flesh on earth and for our behalf. It is all quite incomprehensible, but indeed quite marvelous as to what He did for us.

Our lack of understanding on this matter does not minimize the extent to which the Son of God came into this world in order to take us out of this world. We believe because of only brief statements of the fact that our Creator invaded our world. Therefore, we are driven to go as deep as possible in study of these matters in order that our lives be transformed by the incarnational gospel journey of the Son of God into the flesh of man.

As we study together through this subject there will be some speculation on our part. But this is the reason why the Spirit revealed the incarnation in the manner that He did. There are certainly dots revealed by revelation, but not all the dots are there for us to

connect in order to complete the picture of what transpired behind the scenes of revelation. We can understand the physical birth of the flesh, but it is difficult to understand the incarnational impregnation of the seed of woman in order to produce the Savior who eventually walked down the pathways of Palestine, proclaiming, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

It is all quite incomprehensible,

and yet, very inspiring. Even when we connect just a few of the revelational dots concerning the gospel of the Son of God, we are inspired to live as He lived for us. And if necessary, we are willing to die for Him as He died for us in order that we might complete the reason for His thrilling adventure into this world of the flesh in order to assemble a host of believers with whom He will dwell for eternity.

Chapter 1

A CRY FOR CONTACT

All of us seek an example by which we can live a better life. The reason is that we live in a world where we have witnessed so many people who have ruined their lives. We want to do better because we assume that we will be happier. And we are right. We want to be better individuals in order to enjoy life. We want to be better husbands or wives. And if there are children involved, we want to give our children a heritage of behavior that will carry them throughout their lives. We simply want to be better because we have too often lived with the guilt of not living up to what we think we should be.

A. Live like a pagan:

If you are there with us in this quest, then you will know why we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to a better life. Now keep in mind that we are not talking about religion. We have three choices by which we can conduct our lives. We can live like a pagan, that is, without any faith whatsoever. We have the choice to ruin our lives as we have witnessed so many do. We can do what we want. Show up at the pub every night. Drink ourselves sense-

less, and then go on our way. We can lie, cheat, steal, and do all those things that we so desire without feeling any guilt at the end of the day.

B. Live like a religionist:

If one is weary of such living, then he or she can create some religion that can be performed in order to bring oneself some emotional relief at the end of the day. The world is filled with religions from which to choose. They are everywhere.

Almost all religions have some belief in a god, but most of the time this god is created after the imagination of those who still want to do their own thing. But then there are those religions that teach that we must find some peace of mind by making some sacrifices for what we do wrong. So a prescribed set of rules are established in these systems of religion. The rules, rites and rituals must be performed in order to find some means by which we can work ourselves back into the graces of the god that we have created after our own imagination.

Now here is an example of religion: In the world of Christendom, those who have adopted some concept

of Jesus and the Bible in their thinking, assemblies are the most common system, or performance, by which most of us try to work ourselves back religiously into the grace of the god that we have created after our own imagination. In many cases, assemblies of the adherents of the religion have become the identity of the religion. Attendance at the assembly also becomes the identity of one's faithfulness to the religion.

Here is how assembly religion often works: We have a bad week. We argued with our wife, or husband. We were unloving to our children, and then kicked the dog. By the end the week we are feeling pretty bad about ourselves. We thus seek for something by which we can relieve ourselves of so much guilt that has built up in our minds throughout the week.

Now here comes Sunday, and specifically the assembly of "our church" on Sunday morning. We are sure we can redeem ourselves from our bad week by performing certain religious rules on Sunday morning, or faithfully going through prescribed rites, rituals or ceremonies by which we can atone for our sins. We believe that we can cleanse ourselves of all our sins for the past week by taking ourselves through a Sunday morning religious system by which we can self-sanctify ourselves.

So we begin our Sunday morn-

ing self-sanctification with an "opening prayer," wherever that is in the Bible. It is not there, but it must be performed in order to begin the "hour of worship" and the appointed performance for the hour. Therefore, we must ask brother John to open our religious ceremonies with the opening prayer. We then proceed through a prearranged, or programmed system of assembly of ceremonies. If we are sanctimonious during the ceremonies, and they are correctly performed and in the correct order, then we pat ourselves on the back and call for the "closing prayer." We then walk away from the assembly with a sense of absolution, and if the sermon was too long, a sense of relief when it is over. We are now on our way to a new week. This is religious ceremonialism.

When the final "amen" of the "closing prayer" is uttered, a switch goes off in our minds. It is a convenient switch to close off God whom we have assumed is satisfied with our religious ceremony. Therefore, we have a sense of deliverance from our guilt. We go on our way with a temporary peace of mind that will sustain us until the next "appointed hour" the following Sunday. "See you next Sunday, God," we say in our minds as we have closed off God for the week. This is religion! We can check our own attitudes if this indeed is not

the case in our lives. If we feel a sense of relief when walking away from the assembly after the “closing prayer,” then we have slipped into the realm of religion.

Religion is simply a system by which we seek to cleanse ourselves of our own sins. The word that is used in the Bible in reference to the cleansing of sin is “sanctification.” And so in religion our Sunday morning meritorious ceremonies become self-sanctifying attempts to cleanse ourselves of our own sin. And just in case there might be some guilt left over, we throw into the collection plate a few coins in order to tell our created god that we have supplemented the sanctification of the incarnate Son of God on the cross.

Does this all sound familiar? If it does, then we are an active participant in a system of self-sanctifying religiosity. We are dedicated religionists. We have created a convenient religion after our own desires that fits into our busy schedules. We have performed correctly all the self-prescribed ceremonies. And if we die before the next assembly the following Sunday, we can remind our god that we have already sanctified ourselves with our religious performances the preceding Sunday.

But deep down inside, we feel that there is something wrong with all this religious stuff. We are not living

as a pagan. We are not bad people. We are good employees. We hug our marriage spouse and we pay our taxes. But we still feel that there is something missing, if not wrong.

We must remember that religion always leaves us with a sense of guilt at the end of the day. Religion always leaves us with a sense of feeling insecure about our faith. Religion, therefore, can never get us to where we want to be in our relationship with the one true and living God, who indeed must be greater than our ability to create in our own minds. And if indeed He is greater than our imagination, then certainly—and this is obvious—we can never through meritorious religious performances on our own behalf do those things that will reconcile ourselves to Him. The point is that He must make all the rules. He must call all the shots.

So now we may be coming to our senses. There is another way to live. We are not pagans. We are not religionists who know that religion is empty and void of meaning. There is only one way of living that God accepts. It is the gospel way! We must seek for the one true and living God who has personally revealed Himself in the flesh of man.

God knew that we would create religions after our own desires because He created us to be religious. However, He has always revealed

from the beginning of time how our religious inclinations should be expressed. Therefore, we should seek for His instructions on how we should live. From the beginning it has always been as Paul spoke to the Athenian philosophers:

And He has made of one man all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might grope after Him and find Him, though He is not far from every one of us (At 17:26,27).

Because we as mankind naturally groped after God, we sought a message from our Creator. This message had come to us in something more than a dream, for we often dreamed nonsense. We needed more than a still small voice in the middle of the night, or a rapturous vision. We needed something even better than angels. As created humanity, we cried out for the ultimate revelation from the God who truly loves us. We sought for personal contact with our Creator. And so, God the Son answered our cries. He showed up in history through the incarnational revelation of Himself in the flesh of a man.

Chapter 2

THE INCARNATE LOGOS

The incarnation of God into the flesh of man is central to the existence of Christianity. Though it is difficult for finite minds to comprehend God's "transformation"—if we could even use this word—into the flesh of mortal man, the Bible still teaches this truth. The atoning physical death of the Son of God on the cross, and His subsequent resurrection are all based on the incarnation of God into the flesh of man.

The English word for this journey of existence in reference to the Son of God is "incarnation." Encap-

sulated in the definition of the word is the morphing of that which was first in spirit into that which is flesh. Most languages throughout the world today have no word that is equivalent to this morphing of God into that which is flesh. There are theologies in mythology that speak of transformation, that is, one existing form of flesh into another form of flesh. But the concept of spirit, especially in reference to God, taking on the form of that which is flesh is usually not a doctrine of the religions of men. It is not simply because incarnation is far beyond the

imagination of men who conjured up religions.

Nevertheless, here we are with this concept in the Bible as a central teaching of the Bible. The apostle John wrote in the midst of idolatrous Greek mythology, and all sorts of other imaginations that were invented by the superstitious inclinations of the ancients. Assuming that his immediate readers would struggle with the concept of incarnation, he used a Greek word that carried with it the interpretative baggage of Plato and other Greek philosophers. Nevertheless, even with all the ancient philosophical baggage of the deductive conclusions of Greek philosophers, John reached into the Greek dictionary to find a word that would somehow convey some distant definition of incarnation. Plato and other Greek philosophers assumed, and correctly so, that if there were a “god” out there, then certainly this god would seek to communicate with those of this world who were confined to the flesh of man.

So Plato and others used the Greek word “logos” (word) to explain their reasoning that such a God should somehow reveal Himself. The Greek philosophers, and especially those men of Athens, even built “*an altar with this inscription, ‘To the Unknown God’*” (At 17:23). They did so because they deduced that there was a

God out there from whom they had received no direct revelation. So just in case they might offend this God by not recognizing him, they built an altar for Him.

The religious philosophers in the history of Greek mythology concluded that if a God could create, then certainly He would communicate to His creation in a manner that could be understood by His created creatures. This communication would be the “logos” (word) from God. And so the best word that the Holy Spirit could direct John to use from the Greek dictionary would be the word “logos.”

When the time came for God to communicate to His creation beyond the use of visions and quiet voices, the “logos” (word) from God would be more than a personification of God. The Word would come forth from heaven in the flesh of man. Through the incarnation, the One who came into the world explained His existence before He came. God the Son explained Himself to us as He walked among us as Christ Jesus. In one statement Jesus revealed this of Himself: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM*” (Jn 8:58).

We see the incarnate Word through the Scriptures, and thus conclude that before this real and actual existence of God in the flesh of man, there was a real existence of the Word

with the eternal Spirit before His incarnation into the real and actual man Jesus. That which was previously in spirit became the real and actual of this world. The metaphor was reversed in the sense that we understand the Spirit through the real and earthly existence of the Son in the flesh. The communication of God in the spirit became incarnate, and thus the incarnational communication of God to man showed up in the flesh. John could only write, “*In the beginning was the Word [logos]*” (Jn 1:1). John then built on this theme.

John wanted us to know that the Logos existed at the time of the beginning of all things that we behold in the physical world. The Logos existed before there was any flesh. We can only look back from the time of the actual incarnation in order to understand the existence of the Logos in the spirit before He came into this world.

John then moved our minds back from the flesh by informing us that the Word (Logos) was actually God in the spirit in eternity (Jn 1:1). “*The Word was with God*” (Jn 1:1). “With” assumes that the Word was not alone in existence. Moses made sure that we understood that the Word was a part of the eternal Collective of God when in the first words of written inspiration, he wrote, “*Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, af-*

ter Our likeness” (Gn 1:26). The Word was in existence with the collective “Us.” Through incarnation, and in some way, the Word disengaged from the form of the eternal “Us.” In order to understand to the best of our finite ability, John wanted us to know that “*the Word was God*” because the Word was with God (Jn 1:1). The incarnate Word confirmed this relational existence with God the Father from whom He came: “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9).

Throughout eternity, the Word was God, but not all that God was. In the text of John 1, the definite article is not before the word “God” in the first verse. John’s emphasis, therefore, was to focus on substance, form, nature, essence, etc. We could go on endlessly in our dictionary in search of some synonym that would in some way explain the existence of the Word as God. But our efforts would be futile in comprehending the totality of God. So John simply stated that the Word was God. He was divine.

John later explained, “*God is spirit*” (Jn 4:24). That is as far as he could go in defining the preexistence of the Word who was with the Eternal Spirit before the creation that was generated out of that which does not appear. “*By faith we understand that the universe was formed by the word of God, so that the things that are seen*

were not made of things that are visible" (Hb 11:3).

Expositors commonly encourage us to understand that the phrase in the preceding Hebrews 11:3 that speaks of the "word of God," refers to the **spoken** word of God. They would lead us to believe that we should focus our minds on the Genesis words, "And God said, ..." (See Gn 1:3,6,14).

But now we might contest this interpretation, especially in view of what both John and Paul revealed concerning creation. It may be that we need to capitalize the word "Word" in the Hebrew 11:3 statement, and thus make it refer to the "Word" (Logos) of John 1. It was the Word that spoke the words, "And God said." Consider this in view of what Paul revealed,

For by Him [the Word, Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible All things were created through Him and for Him (Cl 1:16).

This brings us back to John 1:3: "**All things were made by Him** [the Word, Jesus], **and without Him nothing was made that was made.**" And now we see more clearly. It was not

simply a verbal proclamation that brought all things into existence. Creation resulted from the power of the Word, who was God. Creation was the first medium through which the eternal Word let Himself be known to those who would reside in His creation. Paul's affirmation of this understanding is Romans 1:20: "*For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.*"

The Word was determined to be revealed through the physical creation. Through our conclusions concerning the origins of the creation, we know that there was an eternal cause for creation. We of the physical creation (specifically, flesh) conclude that He exists, and for millennia was in existence before history brought mankind to the actual incarnation of the Word. The creation, therefore, set the stage for His glorious entrance into the realm of His creation. We better understand the incarnate Word by realizing that He was the Creator of all that now exists. This explains why John began his document of believing on Jesus by helping us better understand the origin of the incarnate Word of God.

Chapter 3

THE ONE-CELL GOD

If we are allowed to take your minds on an adventure into that about which we know little, then bear with the speculations that follow. When we discuss those things concerning the interaction of God with His creation, as stated previously, we feel quite inadequate to explain such with the words of our dictionary. We thus understand the possible frustrations on the part of the Holy Spirit when He was restricted to search through our dictionary in order to reveal to us those functions of God that were and are far beyond our comprehension.

For example, Paul was once “*caught up even to the third heaven*” (2 Co 12:2). He “*was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to speak*” (1 Co 12:4). The words were not lawful to speak simply because they were heavenly words that had no earthly definitions of the things that were revealed to him. We feel the same in using earthly words to explain the heavenly in reference to the incarnation. Therefore, we must know from here on in our discussions of this subject that we are confined to the definitions of our finite words that the Spirit used to excite our minds to the fact that God in the spirit indeed

came in the flesh of man.

A. **Conceived of the Holy Spirit:**

Our understanding of the incarnation begins with the Holy Spirit recording the following words for us: “*His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child **by the Holy Spirit***” (Mt 1:18). The Holy Spirit wanted us to know that the unborn child in the womb of Mary was “*by the Holy Spirit.*”

The Spirit’s narrative of the subject then continues with the pronouncement of an angel who came in a dream to Joseph, the betrothed husband to Mary: “*Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is **conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit***” (Mt 1:20). The Greek word in both statements is *ek*, meaning “from.” The miraculous conception was the result of the direct work that came from the Holy Spirit.

Now we must stumble into the realm of speculation concerning the “materialization” of God in the spirit into the flesh of man. We reserve our dogmatism on this matter for other subjects. But at the same time, that which happened in incarnation must

in some way be explained in order that we be humbled by the overwhelming sacrifice that was made on the part of the Son of God. It was not just a body that was torn with nails on a cross outside Jerusalem. It was the destiny of a Creator who agonized at the end of a sacrificial journey in order to collect us for Himself for eternity. He was the One who originally created the flesh through which nails could be driven (Cl 1:16). And it was in flesh and blood that He agonizingly suffered on our behalf.

The angel's words, "*of [by] the Holy Spirit,*" will take our minds on a journey of marvelous wonder that is most incomprehensible for finite minds. As soon as the angel said, "*of the Holy Spirit,*" our thinking must disengage from the natural processes of birth in order to focus on the supernatural. Therefore, we begin our quest to understand what was embedded in this utterance by reflecting on the Hebrews 10:5 statement: "*A body You have prepared for Me.*" How was this body prepared? How can we ever connect the dots between "*of the Holy Spirit*" and "*a body You have prepared for Me*"?

B. From spirit to flesh:

If we would allow ourselves to wonder beyond the definition of our words and our understanding of natu-

ral childbirth, then we must consider the Gnostics of the third and fourth centuries who found it most difficult to believe that God in the light could touch the material world that they considered to be all evil.

In the birth of the Son of God, the Gnostics affirmed that a body was presented to the world by Mary through natural birth, a body in which the spirit of Christ indwelt at the time Jesus began His ministry at His baptism until His death on the cross. But the Gnostics could not imagine beyond this material world. They simply concluded that Deity infused Himself into the body of Jesus when the man Jesus began His ministry. The Christ then forsook the body at the cross when Jesus "*gave up His spirit*" to the Father (Jn 19:30).

The Gnostics' conclusions end up in a theological quagmire that leads to nonsense that contradicts so many clear statements in Scripture, particularly those statements wherein Jesus said, "*I and My Father are one*" (Jn 10:30). "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*" (Jn 14:9).

The Son of God and the body of flesh were so connected that Jesus in the preceding statements used the material to identify the spirit that was beyond the physical flesh. The Gnostics, as so many today, found it quite difficult to believe in a God who could so embody Himself on earth in a man-

ner that He would remain one with God the Father in heaven. Nevertheless, through the incarnation, the embodiment of God the Son would be so complete that we would conclude that the Son of God had come on an epic journey from heaven. From being in the light with God the Father, God the Son journeyed into the flesh of man in a world of darkness. The Gnostics simply concluded that gods do not do such things.

The statements about Jesus in John 10:30 and 14:9 were not indicating that the Father was also flesh as Jesus at the time Jesus made the statements. If this indeed were what Jesus meant, then He Himself would have denied His own incarnation. His “incarnation” would have simply been a parallel transfer from a heavenly appearance in bodily form to an earthly appearance in the form of a man. But this thought is infinitesimally far beyond the truth of the incarnation. All those who believe that God the Father in heaven has a nose and eyes simply deny the incarnation of God the Son into the flesh of man, which flesh included a nose and eyes.

On the contrary, the Son of God, *“being in the form of God [in the spirit], did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men”* (Ph

2:6,7). At the beginning of the incarnation, the Son did transfer out of the realm of the heavenly. However, it was a transfer of spirit into the flesh of man.

The Son of God in eternity was not in eternity in the form of flesh, and then became the flesh of man on earth. Therefore, at the time of incarnation, God the Father did not exist in a fleshly form in heaven. When we see Jesus through the written record of the New Testament Scriptures, we see the character of the Father who is spirit. We do not see the appearance of some god we would create after our own fleshly image. That which the Son of God revealed in the person of Jesus was the personality of the eternal God the Father, in whose presence He was before His incarnation into the flesh of man. God in the spirit simply embodied Himself in the flesh of man.

C. Birth into this world:

We must now go to the very beginning of the incarnation, back to the moment that God the Son came into the flesh of man. We are back to what the angel announced to Joseph. The One who was “conceived” “*of the Holy Spirit*” now resided in the seed that was in the womb of Mary.

In the natural conception of a human being in the womb of a

woman, the single cell egg (seed) of the woman is sparked into life by the fertilization of the sperm of a man. The process of cell replication then begins which results in the birth of a person.

Before the birth, and in the case of the incarnation of the Savior of the world, the process of the one cell splitting into two cells marked the beginning of His life. Though the spark of life that ignites the beginning of a human being comes from the sperm of a man, in the case of Mary, we must bypass the sperm of man on earth. Joseph had nothing to do with the beginning of the incarnation. The birth of the Savior of the world would come from a virgin, that is, from a woman who had had no sexual intercourse with a man (See Is 7:14; Mt 1:23; Lk 1:27). Therefore, we must search for another answer as to how the seed of Mary began the process of cell replication that eventually resulted in the birth of the Savior as a person into this world.

The statement “*of the Holy Spirit*” was spoken to Joseph in order to inform and settle his nerves. The angel wanted to spare him from any guilt or questions concerning the fidelity of Mary. It was a statement of reassurance. In this “miraculous conception,” the Holy Spirit had taken the impregnation of Mary into His own hands. Joseph was only a by-

stander to witness the marvel of the Holy Spirit at work in the womb of Mary in order to prepare the incarnate Savior to the world through birth. From the time of the incarnational impregnation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, Joseph and Mary could only behold and wonder at what was transpiring in her womb.

And now we are left in wonder concerning the impregnating miracle of the Holy Spirit that set in motion the multiplying of the single seed of woman that resided in the womb of Mary. The body of Mary produced the seed for the Christ and Savior, who in the fullness of time would come into the world through birth. An angel explained to Mary what would happen to begin the process: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*” (Lk 1:35).

Assuredly, many eggs in the womb of Mary had passed through the natural menstrual periods of Mary’s early life. But there was one Seed that was special and chosen “*by the Holy Spirit.*” It would be this chosen Seed who would take all of us into eternity. It would be this chosen Seed who fulfilled the prophesied Seed of woman who would crush the head of Satan (See Gn 3:15).

So our wonder goes deeper into the process of what transpired during the impregnation. We come to the

conclusion that that which was “*of the Holy Spirit*” could only have come from the direct touch of the Spirit on the single-cell seed of woman. It could have been that the Holy Spirit created the sperm that fertilized the seed of woman. This postulation would still remain true to the revelation of the phrase “*of the Holy Spirit.*” The Holy Spirit would have been the creator of the sperm, and thus the egg that was now in the womb of Mary was fertilized “*by the Holy Spirit.*” We must also assume that the Holy Spirit simply set in motion the chosen seed that was provided by Mary. He then allowed the natural process of human development to continue from there.

What is important to remember is that there was more in what transpired in the womb of Mary than just the natural fertilization of the seed of a woman. The selection of the chosen male seed of Mary was not a random choice. The DNA genetics of the chosen egg of Mary was specific and intentional by the Holy Spirit. We would conclude, therefore, that the Holy Spirit Himself sparked the process of the natural multiplication of the single egg cell of Mary, whether by a created sperm or directly through His own power to intervene in the natural process of fertilization. We will never know for sure.

D. The one-cell beginning:

Since there was an incredible sacrifice on the part of the Son of God to become man in the flesh, then we must allow our assumptions concerning the impregnation of Mary to proceed to the beginnings of human life. We must assume something that is quite incredible, if not incomprehensible, but indeed true. When the Son of God gave up being in the form of God in the spirit, **He humbled Himself to the minute flesh of a single-celled egg in the womb of Mary.**

God the Son who created every living cell became that which He created. In His incarnational journey, He started with a single cell. In order to begin His journey, He joined with the single Spirit-chosen cell of a woman in order to begin the nine-month gestation period of woman. **The incarnation began with God the Son connecting with one human cell in the flesh in order to create something wonderful for eternity.**

In order to create that which was awesome and eternal, the Son was willing to begin with that which was small, and the most humble of presentations in order to come into the world He created. We see the power of the Son of God in this marvel of the minute. He in the size of only one human cell was far more powerful than billions of people who are com-

posed of trillions of collective cells in human bodies throughout the world. **He was God in a single cell.**

We might suppose that at the moment God the Son was ready for His incarnational journey into this world, the Holy Spirit signalled to the Son in heaven, and said, *“The fullness of time has come. Therefore, come on. I have a single cell of flesh selected for You.”*

We could then suppose that God the Son would have responded from heaven, *“If all I get to begin My incarnational ministry is only one single cell of flesh in the womb of a woman, then that is all I need.”*

Since this is our speculative summation of what may have occurred, then we can now understand the announcement nine months later by an angel to some shepherds in the middle of the night:

*Do not fear, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be to all the people. **For to you a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord** (Lk 2:10,11).*

It was not simply a body that was born from woman, and then Christ the Lord indwelt the body at the time of birth. On the contrary, He was already

“Christ the Lord” at the time of birth. Our assumption, therefore, has moved on to the reality that “Christ the Lord” waited nine months in the womb of woman in order to come forth as the Savior of the world. He was not born to be the Christ. He was already the Christ at the time of His birth.

We now better understand the following words of John: *“The Word was with God, and **the Word was God**”* (Jn 1:1). And then, *“**the Word was made flesh**”* (Jn 1:14). We conclude that the Word became flesh from the very beginning when the Holy Spirit chose the single-cell seed in the womb of Mary (Jn 1:14). The incarnate Word was then in the flesh for nine months, waiting to be born into this world as the Savior of the world.

After Mary and Joseph had made the strenuous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, *“the days were completed for her to give birth”* (Lk 2:6). The unborn Savior had carried Mary safely for nine months until the time of His entrance into this world. Though she was many months into her pregnancy at the time when her long journey to Bethlehem began, Mary was able to ride a donkey the great distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem without having a premature birth along the way. It was the unborn Savior in her womb who carried her safely to His place of birth. The prophecy

of Micah 5:2 had to be fulfilled. The Savior would be born in the chosen city of Bethlehem.

But we would speculate of things before the journey of Mary to Bethlehem. We would go back to the initial incarnation of the Word in the single cell of the Spirit-impregnated Mary. The unborn Son of God would surely not have allowed anything to happen to Mary throughout her nine-month pregnancy. It is for this reason that we must surmise that He carried her all the way from conception “*by the Holy Spirit*” to the city of Bethlehem and His very birth in a manger.

E. A call for incarnational living:

We must confess that it is quite incomprehensible to consider the eternal Word in the spirit “materializing” into a single cell in the womb of a woman in order to become life in the flesh. But what other answer do we have for the Savior being such before He was born into this world? When Paul wrote, “*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus,*” the ramifications of such a statement are certainly unsettling to all of us who would seek to reverse the incarnational order of the One after whom we call ourselves disciples (Ph 2:5).

When John the Baptist considered such a thing, he continued to eat grasshoppers and lay down his head

at night on a stone pillow (Mt 3:4). He incarnationally lived in order to introduce into the world the incarnational Savior. Paul likewise discarded all his advancements in religion, considering even his own life a minimal sacrifice to pay in gratitude for the incredible sacrifice of the one-cell God who eternally paid the incarnational sacrifice to bring him also into eternity (Ph 3:6; see Rm 9:1-3).

After Paul’s introductory statement in Philippians 2:15 concerning our transformation into the mind and behavior of the incarnate Christ, he carried on in his explanation of the incarnational journey of God the Son. He reminded the Philippians of the gospel sacrifice of the eternal Spirit who impregnated the seed of woman (See Ph 2:5-11). If our Savior could humble Himself to this extreme, then certainly there is absolutely no occasion for those who claim to be His disciples to exalt themselves above one another. We can now better understand the rebuke that the incarnate Word levelled against some of His disciples while they were still comprehending the incarnate God who stood in their midst:

*Whoever desires to be great among you will be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be the first will be the bondservant of all. **For even the Son of Man did not come to be***

served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mk 10:44-45).

F. A call for belief:

If our postulations concerning the incarnation of God the Son are anywhere near to being the truth of the matter, then we are brought to some inevitable conclusions. If the incarnation began with a single cell in the womb of a woman, then God is calling for us to have faith in what may seem quite impossible to believe. But then we recall what the Holy Spirit said of such matters: *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him”* (Hb 11:6).

To those who have no desire to believe, then these matters possibly sound like a fictitious fairy tale that was written to entertain the fantasies of men who have imaginary minds. If we desire to believe, however, no matter how difficult it may be to comprehend any aspect of the incarnation, we still conclude that it is more reasonable to believe.

It is more reasonable to believe because it is quite unreasonable to conclude that our existence is the result of “creative” matter in motion. We thus believe that the incarnation was also for the purpose of sifting out of eternal existence those who have no desire to believe, and thus no de-

sire to live by the gospel of the incarnation.

It is not that we must understand all the specifics that occurred in the incarnation. It is only necessary to believe that it happened and that the result thereof was that the saving Son of God was born into the world He created in order to be a prepared sacrificial body that would be offered for the atonement of our sins.

Because we have realized the hopelessness of our predicament in this world of sin, we want to believe. We cry out for deliverance from this wicked and painful world of suffering. Because of His love for us, He responded to our desperate cries. Out of love, therefore, He paid the price for our redemption from this world by making an incarnational journey into this world. He desired to be in the form of our humble flesh by which He could fellowship with us His brethren. The nail-torn flesh of the cross, therefore, measured the extent of His love for us.

We are simply held in awe at such a thing as this. We realize that the magnitude of the incarnation is overwhelming. It is so overwhelming that it could have only been in the mind of a God of love who so loved us. Not even in the wildest imagination of the most devout monk could such a thing have been conceived. For this reason, we can only conclude that

the incarnation of God the Son to be only that which the one true and living God could do.

Chapter 4

THE INCARNATIONAL ENTRANCE

In John 1:14, John brought his readers to the incarnational revelation of the Word: “*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*” God the Father and Holy Spirit acted upon God the Son in order to allow Him to come into the existence of the material world that He, the Son, had created. It was a voluntary venture on the part of the Son, for Paul wrote that “*He made Himself of no reputation*” (Ph 2:7). As the Son created all that now exists out of that which is not seen, so He incarnated Himself out of spirit into the flesh of man that could be seen. It is thus exhilarating to read the following inspirational words of John that he inscribed many years after his personal encounter with the Word in the flesh:

*That which was from the beginning, that we have **heard**, that we have **seen** with our eyes, that we have **looked upon** and our **hands have handled**, we proclaim concerning the Word of life (1 Jn 1:1).*

Incarnation was complete. The Word was not a hallucination. He was

not a phantom. He was not a spirit roaming among men. He was indeed flesh, a sensory perceived human being.

The Hebrew writer wanted his readers to understand that in their possible apostasy from that which the incarnate Word revealed, they were not simply leaving a good Rabbi named Jesus. If they went back into the religion of their forefathers (Judaism), then they would be forsaking the incarnate Word of God who came in the flesh of man. They would be forsaking the atoning blood offering that was the purpose from which the Word was incarnate in the flesh of man.

In Hebrew 10:5-8 the Hebrew writer cited a lengthy quotation from Psalm 40:6-8. The entire quotation is accurate according to the Greek Septuagint. However, in the middle of the quotation, the Holy Spirit inserted a statement that often causes a great deal of speculation concerning the actual incarnation. In verse 5 the Holy Spirit directed the Hebrew writer to inscribe, “*Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a **body You have prepared for Me.***” The high-

lighted words of this statement are not in the Psalm 40:6-8 text. Neither is there any notation in any Greek text that would indicate that these words are an explanatory phrase that was added to the original autograph by some copyist. They are the added words of the Holy Spirit to the text of the quoted Psalm 40.

The quotation from Psalm 40:6-8 focuses on the offering of the bodies of sacrificed animals. In the first four verses of Hebrews 10, the writer informed us that the sacrifices of animal blood and bodies could not be acceptable as sufficient sacrifices for the atonement of our sins. In contrast to animals, the Hebrew writer seeks to turn our attention to the incarnate body of Jesus.

It is because we can understand the insufficiency of the sacrificed body of animals that we can understand why the Holy Spirit injected the phrase, “*a body You have prepared for Me.*” Though this phrase **is not** in Psalm 40:6-8, it is inserted by the Holy Spirit as if it were, suggesting that the Spirit wanted us to focus on the incarnation. The pronoun “You” in the phrase would be a reference to God the Father. The pronoun “Me” would be a reference to the incarnate Son of God. God the Father prepared a body for the Son. This opens some doors for understanding the incarnation that are quite impossible for us

to fully comprehend.

Nevertheless, we must connect some revelational dots in order to understand why the Holy Spirit inserted the phrase “*a body You have prepared for Me*” in the context of discussion concerning the insufficiency of the sacrifices of animal blood and bodies. When the dots are connected, we come to the conclusion that the prophecy of Psalm 40:6-8 was originally meant to refer to the coming incarnation.

At the time the psalmist wrote the prophecy, however, it was not a time to reveal the coming incarnation of the Son of God. This revelation was far too complex for the recipients of the time to comprehend. We even have difficulty understanding the incarnation. And we have the living example of Jesus inscribed in the New Testament Scriptures. The apostles saw, touched and handled the body of the incarnate Word. But then later in his life, John the apostle confessed, “*It has not yet been revealed what we will be [when Jesus comes again]. But we know that when He appears, we will be like Him*” (1 Jn 3:2).

If John, who saw, touched and handled the body of Jesus, did not comprehend the resurrected flesh and bones of Jesus after His resurrection, then certainly those to whom Psalm 40:6-8 was originally written centuries before would be thrown into a

state of confusion if the Spirit had added the statement, “*a body You have prepared for Me*” to the text of Psalm 40.

The Hebrews 10:5 reading presents some very interesting opportunities to speculate as to what actually transpired in or during the incarnation. There were a host of speculations by the Gnostics of the third and fourth centuries.

As previously stated, one group of Gnostics assumed that through the seed of Mary, a body was prepared for the dwelling of the Christ who originated as a digressed *aeon* from the Light. They assumed that there was no real incarnation because of their foundational doctrine that nothing that is of God in the light could ever touch that which is of this world. A fleshly body was thus prepared, and then within this body (Jesus) dwelt the Christ. The beginning of this indwelling supposedly took place when the man Jesus was about thirty years of age (Lk 3:23). At this time Jesus went down to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. It was then that the Gnostics supposed that the Christ came to reside in the prepared body of the man Jesus.

And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up immediately out of the water. And behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit

of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him (Mt 3:16).

Some Gnostics believed that it was at this time that the “prepared body” was injected with the Christ, and thus became Jesus Christ. The Christ resided with the “prepared body” until the death of the man Jesus on the cross. “*Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, gave up His spirit*” (Mt 27:50). And so the Christ returned to God the Father in heaven in order to resume His eternal existence in the light with the eternal God. The man Jesus, on the other hand, later revived in the coolness of the tomb, and then migrated on to somewhere in southern Egypt where He lived out His life to be an old man.

Many have heard of the movie “The Da Vinci Code” that was released in 2006. The movie was produced after the theme of a best selling book by Dan Brown that was published in 2003. The entire theme of the movie was based on the Nag Hammadi texts what were discovered near the village of Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. The book purports the fantasy that Leonard da Vinci painted an embedded code in his painting of the *Last Supper*. The code was supposedly kept secret from the Christian world for 2000 years.

Brown’s supposition was that the Gnostics who wrote Nag Hammadi

documents—also known as the Gnostic Gospels—believed that Jesus did not die on the cross, but later resuscitated in the coolness of the tomb. He then escaped out of Jerusalem and married Mary Magdalene. The two then fled to Egypt. If this speculation of the Gnostics is true, then there would be no such thing as the gospel of the incarnation.

Because of their fundamental theology that God who is light could in no possible way mingle with that

which is flesh, and thus evil, the Gnostics concluded that the Son of God could not become flesh. The statement, “*A body You have prepared for Me,*” was not answered by the Gnostics’ speculations. But neither have we answered the possibilities that are posed by the statement. We simply take the Scriptures for what they clearly state. At the time of His birth, Jesus was already Christ the Savior who had come into the world through the impregnation of Mary.

Chapter 5

THE EXTENT OF THE INCARNATION

When John inscribed his latter epistles, he surely had the coming Gnostic heresy in mind that would not begin developing until the latter part of the second century. Some have estimated that nearly half of the church went into the Gnostic heresy, and in doing so, many questioned the very incarnation of the Son of God. The Gnostic heresy was a direct attack against the incarnation of God the Son, and thus an attack against the gospel.

Nevertheless, though John wrote in the latter part of the first century, some were already denying the incarnation. In fact, in 2 John 7, John used the past and present tense verbs when he wrote the following statement:

*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess that **Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh.** This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

Deceivers were teaching that Jesus would not bodily appear in His final coming simply because they did not believe that He bodily appeared in the flesh in His first coming.

These deceivers were not those of the idolatrous world who had in total rejected Christ and Christianity. On the contrary, these were those who were once believers in the incarnate Christ, but like some in the audience to whom the book of Hebrews was written, they consigned Jesus to be-

ing just another angel. They were sliding back into Judaism. These were as those Christians who did “*not abide in the teaching of Christ*” (2 Jn 9).

It is imperative to understand, therefore, that through the life-style of some, they denied the incarnational belief and life of a disciple who sought to live after the incarnational example of the Son of God (See Ph 2:5). By doing such, they walked away from Christ, and thus went beyond Christ. They denied that the Son of God came in the flesh, and therefore, He would not be coming in the flesh in the future. They tore the heart out of the gospel, and as a result, denied the incarnational offering of the Son of God.

A. The incarnational decision:

Without the gospel of the incarnation, there is no gospel. There is no good news onto which we can gravitate for deliverance from this world and our bondage in sin. Our Creator, God the Son, knew our problems even before He created the world. And for this reason, “*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation [creation] of the world, but was manifest in these last times*” (1 Pt 1:20). He was predestined to be the incarnate Savior of the world before He created the world. God the

Son made the decision to incarnate into this world before the words were spoken, “*Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness*” (Gn 1:26).

Since God the Son was our Creator (Cl 1:16), He was revealed to be a just and loving God by the fact that before Adam and Eve were breathed into life from dust of the earth, there was a solution for sin and death. There was a predestined plan of redemption before the first sin was committed. Since sin would inevitably be committed by the free-moral choice of man, then there had to be a plan of redemption in place before the first sin was committed. Genesis 3:15 was the first indication to man that this plan was in place at the time Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden.

B. The extent of the incarnation:

In order to implement the gospel plan of salvation, God the Son would incarnate into the environment of man in order to reveal the plan. The Holy Spirit through Paul explained this “invasion” in Philippians 2. In Philippians 2:7, the translators have had difficulty with the wording of the incarnational action on the part of God the Son. In his explanation of the gospel journey of God the Son, Paul revealed the initial incarnational appearance of Christ the Savior: He “*made himself of no reputation*” (KJV); He “*emp-*

...tied himself" (ASV); He "*made himself nothing*" (NIV); He "*made Himself of no reputation*" (NKJV, IKJV).

Though the translations of the verse are different, one thing is unmistakably clear. **The action of incarnation on the part of God the Son was self-imposed and complete into the flesh of man.** God the Son Himself made the decision to make the journey from God to ground before the first human being was spoken into existence.

In some way God the Son made Himself of no reputation, that is the reputation of what was deserving of being God in the spirit (Jn 4:24). His existence as God in the spirit was given up in order that He might empty Himself of all that which defined Him as an eternal Spirit. The more we study this subject, the more we are held in awe as to the extreme step that God the Son made through the incarnation.

He made a step from eternity to possible termination. At least this is what is inferred when the Holy Spirit used the word "corruption" in reference to the body of flesh into which God the Son emptied Himself. This word is used in the text of the Scriptures to refer to that which will decay, and subsequently be terminated from existence. Paul used the word in reference to the creation as a whole. In some way in the future of this cre-

ation, Paul wrote, "*the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption*" (Rm 8:21). Instead of the creation passing way from existence, something seems to be coming wherein the creation of the physical world will be delivered from its bondage of destined termination.

The incarnation of God the Son was so complete that He subjected Himself to the possibility of corruption, that is, death, decay and termination. He allowed Himself to come into the bondage of death.

But David prophesied of something different in reference to the Holy One of God. In the context of Psalm 16, David first spoke of himself. But what David did not fully understand at the time the Spirit moved his hand to write the prophecy, was that in the prophecy the incarnate God would sit upon his throne. David prophesied and Peter quoted, "*You [God the Father] will not leave My soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see decay*" (See Ps 16:8-11; At 2:27).

David originally made the preceding statement in reference to his own resurrection from the dead. But when Peter quoted the psalm in the Pentecost sermon of Acts 2, he went far beyond David and his resurrection. Peter applied the statement to the resurrected incarnate God the Son in the flesh of Jesus. In order that the incarnate body of Jesus not decay to the

dust of the earth, God the Father “brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead” (Hb 13:20). He “raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rm 4:24).

The resurrection of the incarnate body of Jesus was a joint effort between the Father and Son. We must conclude this from what Jesus said during His earthly ministry concerning the destiny of His own body of flesh: “My Father loves Me because ***I lay down My life so that I may take it up again***” (Jn 10:17).

The eternal Word was incarnate in the flesh of man in order to personally lay down His life on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. When He laid down His life, He had the power to take it up again.

When God the Son came into the flesh of man, He did not separate Himself from His power as God. In unity with the power of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He retained His right to resurrect Himself. When the Scriptures affirm that God the Father raised Him from the dead, then we assume that the Father and Son were as one in the action of the resurrection, as they were one throughout the ministry of Jesus.

Nevertheless, the extent of the incarnation remains. There had to be a

resurrection from corruption (decay) lest the incarnate body go the way of all human flesh. We still wonder concerning the possible termination of the incarnate body of flesh. The extent of the incarnation is measured by the possibility of the incarnate body of Jesus decaying into the dust of the earth. The extent is measured by the fact that in order to avoid this decay and termination, there had to be a resurrection of the body. Jesus’ body had to be resurrected, and thus, He actually died bodily as all men do in order to be resurrected. There could have been no resurrection if there were no death, and thus possibly the termination of the flesh in death.

If Jesus were proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the death—and indeed He was (Rm 1:3,4)—then the retention of the resurrected body throughout eternity will be the enduring testimony that the gospel of the incarnation and resurrection will always validate the truth of the gospel of His atoning death. Every time we see Jesus in the new heavens and earth to come, we will be reminded of the price that He had to pay to get us there. There is something to be argued for the permanency of the incarnation of Jesus after the final coming.

Chapter 6

THE CHANGED BODY

It was not that God the Son existed on this earth as an individual who was separate from God the Son in the spirit. There were no parallel existences of the Son of God. However, there was something different about His body after the resurrection, than before the resurrection.

A. The “flesh and blood” body:

The incarnation of God the Son into the flesh of man assumes, as Paul wrote, that He took “*the form of a bondservant*” and was “*made in the likeness of men*” (Ph 2:7). He was “*found in appearance as a man*” (Ph 2:8). The Word actually became flesh (Jn 1:14). He died like a man of the flesh (Ph 2:8). He was so human that He wept (Jn 11:35). He sweat (Lk 22:44). He ate (Lk 14:1). He was a man just like us. This was Jesus before the gospel of the crucifixion and resurrection. This was the body of flesh into which God the Son personally came into our world.

Jesus was flesh and blood, just like any other person. The extent of His incarnation into the flesh and blood of man was for the purpose of identifying with those whom He would redeem. Consider this:

Since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He [God the Son] also Himself likewise partook of the same [flesh and blood], so that through death [of the flesh and blood] He might destroy him who had the power of death [of flesh and blood], that is the devil (Hb 2:14).

Since we are throughout our lifetime subject to the fear of the death of our flesh and blood, we are in the bondage of the death of flesh and blood. Therefore, Jesus had to become the same flesh and blood in order to reveal through resurrection, the way out of the bondage of the death of flesh and blood. He did not in the resurrection give aid to angels who needed no resurrection, for they were not incarnate into flesh and blood (Hb 2:16). But He gives aid to us who are the flesh and blood after the seed of Abraham. Therefore, the Hebrew writer concluded:

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren [in flesh and blood], so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. For since He Himself has suffered

while being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hb 2:17,18).

B. The “flesh and bones” body:

Something had to change in the flesh and blood of the man Jesus, as there must also be a change in us in the future. For eternal dwelling, flesh and blood must be transformed into flesh and bones. Paul inferred this in the following statement: “*Now I say this, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable** [flesh and blood] **inherit the imperishable**” (1 Co 15:50).*

After the resurrection of Jesus, there were some interesting events that took place in His appearances before His disciples that reveal that a change had taken place in reference to His body. John was one of those early disciples who experienced the changed body of Jesus after the resurrection. With others in his literary audience denying that Jesus came in the flesh, John wrote that he and the other apostles were involved with Jesus both before and after His resurrection: “*That we have **heard**, that we have **seen with our eyes**, that we have **looked upon** and our **hands have handled**, we proclaim concerning the Word of life*” (1 Jn 1:1).

The preceding statement was

surely written about the apostles’ contact with the body of Jesus both before and after His resurrection. In view of the fact that there were some deceivers going out into the world proclaiming that the Son of God had not come in the flesh, John wrote this statement concerning their validation that He had actually come in the flesh (2 Jn 7). He could not have been more definitive in his description of the body of Jesus both before and after the resurrection.

1 John was written with a special purpose in mind: “*Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God*” (1 Jn 4:2). The proof that John and the other apostles were from God was in the fact that they personally interacted with Jesus both before and after His resurrection. They confessed the incarnation. And since John’s preceding testimony was also written in reference to Jesus’ resurrected body, John was also testifying to the fact that he and the other apostles gazed upon and handled the body of Jesus.

But we must consider some interesting behavior of Jesus in His resurrected body after the resurrection. Immediately after the resurrection, Jesus “appeared” to Mary. She was overcome with emotion at the time of her first encounter with the resurrected Lord. Therefore, as she was joyously clinging to the resurrected

body of Jesus immediately after the resurrection, Jesus said to her, “*Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father*” (Jn 20:17). We would correctly suppose, therefore, that Jesus was not resurrected in the form of a spirit. He was not a hallucination. His resurrected body was real and tangible.

Immediately after the resurrection, and instructed by an angel to go tell the disciples of the resurrection, Jesus met the two Marys and Salome on their way to the disciples. “*And they [the messengers] came and held Him by the feet*” (Mt 28:9). Jesus’ body was tangible. He was not resurrected to be a ghost among the disciples. He had the same feet with which He had walked the roads of Palestine throughout His earthly ministry.

After the resurrection, there were two desponded disciples who were returning to their home in Emmaus. The resurrected Jesus joined them on the journey, but they were blocked in their minds by Jesus, and thus they did not recognize Him. Only when they finally arrived at their homes in Emmaus, and sat down to eat, did Jesus allow them to recognize Him. Luke recorded of the incident: “*Then their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. And He vanished from their sight*” (Lk 24:31).

We do not think it impossible for

the resurrected Jesus to dematerialize. At least He did on this occasion. He was God the Son in the resurrected flesh, and thus He could do that which He desired to do. If we start imposing impossibilities on God the Son, then we are confessing our inability to reconcile our finite thinking with the infinite ability of God the Son to do as He so chooses.

In the middle of the night, the two Emmaus disciples then rushed back to Jerusalem to the apostles. “*Now as they spoke these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them*” (Lk 24:36). The resurrected Jesus surely beat these two men back to Jerusalem. They were exhausted, but He was in a different body than theirs that was still of flesh and blood. Jesus did not walk through a door to where the disciples were meeting. The text simply states that He was there.

A similar appearance of materialization was recorded by John. The gospel of John was written as a defense of belief in Jesus as “*the Christ, the Son of God*” (Jn 20:31). This purpose for John’s writing alerts us to understand the appearance case that transpired a few hours after the resurrection. This appearance probably occurred on the first Sunday after the Sunday of resurrection (Jn 20:26). Notice how John records this apologetic in defense of the Jesus as the resurrected Son of God:

Being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst. And He said to them, "Peace be to you" (Jn 20:19).

And just in case we did not pick up on the fact that the doors were shut, John again recorded that eight days later the same thing happened:

And after eight days His disciples were again inside and Thomas with them. Then Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst (Jn 20:26).

Here again are two cases wherein Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples without walking in or through any doors. There are two concepts we must reap from this incident of Jesus' appearance: (1) John specifically notes that "*the doors were shut.*" He wanted us to know that Jesus did not walk in the room through one of the doors. **They were all shut!** He simply appeared in their presence.

(2) In His resurrected body, Jesus could disappear and reappear without the notice of the human eye. We do not find this difficult to believe. Our eyes catch the reflection of light off animate objects. If there is no object from which a reflection of light can be detected by our eyes, then we can-

not see the object, or the object does not exist.

In this case of the appearances, it may have been that Jesus was preparing the disciples and us to understand better how He would exist after He was caught up in a cloud at His ascension and before He bodily comes in the clouds in His final coming.

At the time of the ascension, the apostles gazed at Him as He bodily ascended into heaven. Luke recorded, "*While they were looking, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight*" (At 1:9). Two angels who were standing by then said to the disciples, "*Why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in like manner as you have watched Him go into heaven*" (At 1:11). There would be no secret coming of Jesus in the end. He will bodily come as He bodily went.

Now back to the materialization of Jesus when the two men of Emmaus returned to Jerusalem in order to report that Jesus had bodily appeared to them. While they were speaking, Jesus appeared in the presence of the disciples. Everyone in the room was "*terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit*" (Lk 24:37). It seems that Jesus materialized in the room wherein they were meeting, and thus they were in-

clined to believe that a spirit was appearing to them. But Jesus calmed them by saying, “*Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me, and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have*” (Lk 24:39). Possibly on this occasion or another, Jesus even asked Thomas to come forth and put his hand into the open wound where the sword had pierced His body when He was on the cross (Jn 20:19,20,27).

After the resurrection, the body of Jesus changed, but it was the same body. The wound into which Thomas placed his hand was not healed up, and neither was Jesus bleeding from His side or His nail-pierced hands. He was no longer “flesh and blood,” but

only “flesh and bones.” We would suggest that all His blood was poured out at the cross for our sins, and thus He was left with only flesh and bones. Since it is not possible that flesh and blood can inherit the kingdom of heaven, Jesus was changed bodily by the resurrection in order to inherit the throne of David in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. In our resurrection to come, we thus assume that we will be resurrected as flesh and bones of Jesus in order to enjoy His presence for eternity in the presence of God. This was the revelation of the Holy Spirit through John when He revealed that we will be like Jesus (1 Jn 3:2).

Chapter 7

HE IS AS WE WILL BE

We may endlessly postulate how the Son of God now exists, that is, between the ascension and final return. His present existence is beyond revelation, and thus anyone who would be dogmatic in reference to how He now exists at the right hand of God are basing their conclusions on speculation. The biblical language that is used in discussion concerning the subject is loaded with metaphors. The metaphors are only earthly concepts that are used to take our minds

on an adventure into the unknown.

When we read metaphors such as “the throne of God,” we must not make the mistake of carrying the earthly substance of the metaphor into the realm of the heavenly. Too many novice interpreters make this mistake, and by doing so, they create an earthly heaven that they can understand. There is no literal throne in heaven at the right hand of God. But there is the authority of a throne.

We will not allow the earthly ori-

gin of the metaphors to frustrate us with that which we are not intended to know fully. When the Scriptures speak of Jesus now being at the “right hand” of God, we will not so foolishly conclude that God has a hand. If we do, then we will miss the entire meaning of the metaphor. On the contrary, we will meditate on the metaphors, assuming that the Holy Spirit wants us to do just that.

So in reference to what we would understand concerning Jesus’ present existence, we can only connect the dot of the bodily ascension with the dot of the final coming. In reference to the final coming, John, who experienced and handled the resurrected Jesus, wrote a very revealing statement of fact:

*Beloved, now we are the children of God, and **it has not yet been revealed what we will be.** But we know that when He appears, **we will be like Him**, for we will see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2).*

At the time he wrote this statement, we are sure that John remembered an experience almost fifty years before when he, with the other apostles, gazed upon Jesus as He ascended into heaven. The voice of the two men who stood by the apostles on that occasion still rang in his ears. *“This same Jesus who was taken up*

from you into heaven will come in like manner as you have watched Him go into heaven” (At 1:11).

At the time of the writing of 1 John, John was writing in reference to the future. “This same Jesus” would again appear. We must, for a moment, reflect on this very important text of revelation in order to postulate concerning Jesus’ present existence. This is important because of what John wrote in the following verse: *“Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”* (1 Jn 3:3).

Those who hope in the gospel of the incarnational return of Jesus will keep their minds focused on heavenly things. They will *“seek those things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God”* (Cl 3:1). They will *“put to death”* impure behavior (Cl 3:5-7). They will put off *“anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech”* (Cl 3:8). And by putting off that which is impure, they will *“put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him”* (Cl 3:10). Those who continue to put off that which is impure, are walking in the light as Jesus is now in the light with God the Father. The result of the Christians’ daily gospel walk with Jesus is that they are cleansed daily of all impurity. This gospel living is inspired in our lives by our hope that we believe

in the bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though John had experienced the resurrected body of Jesus, he still wrote that we would be like Him, though we do not know what we will be. Paul at this point steps in with some very interesting points of explanation. 1 Corinthians 15 is an incredible revelation that explains the bodily form in which Jesus will come.

The Holy Spirit begins His revelation through Paul with the statement, *“Christ has been raised from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who are asleep [in death]”* (1 Co 15:20). The resurrection of the body of Jesus is the guarantee that we also will be bodily raised when Jesus comes again.

We must follow the narrative of 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 closely. The first point that is affirmed is that there will be a bodily change in the resurrection just as there is change when a seed is planted (1 Co 15:36-38). And to prove the point of change, Paul introduces the thought that there are *“heavenly bodies and earthly bodies”* (1 Co 15:40). This is the first indication that there was a change in the body of Jesus before and after His resurrection, though He was with the same body. The body that went into the tomb was changed when it came out of the tomb.

“So also is the resurrection of the

dead. It [the body] is sown perishable. It is raised imperishable” (1 Co 15:42). *“It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body”* (1 Co 15:44). The natural body comes before the spiritual body, for the natural body is earthly, and thus, subject to death and decay. It is the “seed body” from which the spiritual body will come. However, the second body is from heaven in that it is the work of God to change our natural body into the spiritual body that is necessary for eternal dwelling. Paul added, *“Now as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us also bear the image of the heavenly”* (1 Co 15:49). This change is necessary because *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Co 15:50).

This is a mystery to all of us while we dwell in our earthly bodies. Nevertheless, *“we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Co 15:51,52). This earthly body that is subject to decay when it dies, will be changed into an imperishable body at the resurrection, just as Jesus’ body was changed into flesh and bones when He was resurrected. Admittedly, this is certainly a mystery to us while we are in this earthly body. Nevertheless, we know that this same body that is earthly will be the “seed body” that God will use to embody us again in a spiritual body.

This brings us back to the state-

ment of John in 1 John 3:2. John said that *“it has not been revealed what we will be.”* Paul in the best metaphors possible sought to explain this mystery of what we will become when Jesus comes. So John stated, *“We will be like Him.”* **If we will be as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15, then Christ is now, or will be as Paul explained we will be.** In other words, if we will be changed to be like Him when He comes, then He will be as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15.

This may not help much in explaining the possible incarnational existence of Jesus at this time as King of kings. But at least in the incarnational coming of Jesus in His resurrected spiritual body of flesh and bones, we will be like what Paul explained we will be. Those who do not believe, and thus proclaim that Jesus is coming in the flesh and bones in which He ascended into heaven in the presence of the apostles, are deceivers (2 Jn 7). They are deceivers in the sense that they are as some in Corinth who denied the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Therefore, if one does not believe *“that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh,”* then he is self-deceived in thinking that he will be received up into eternal glory to forever be with the Lord (1 Th 4:17).

We would add here the revelation through Paul in 1 Thessalonians

4:13-18. When Jesus comes again, He *“will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus”* (1 Th 4:14). Jesus will bring with Him the spirits of those Christians who died before the final coming. The spirits of departed Christians, therefore, can exist apart from their bodies that were buried in some grave.

If we can exist apart from the body, which is affirmed in the context of the 1 Thessalonians 4:14 revelation, then Jesus can and could exist in His separation from His body of flesh and bones at this time. In the spirit, and between His death on the cross and resurrection, Jesus preached the gospel *“to those who are dead”* (1 Pt 4:6). In the spirit after His death on the cross, *“He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison”* (1 Pt 3:19). As the rich man did not need his body to communicate with Abraham after his death, so one’s presence with his body is not necessary for communication (See Lk 16:23,24). We need not wonder as to how such communication could take place. We simply need to believe that it occurred because of the preceding cases that are revealed in the word of God.

Since we believe that Jesus is coming bodily, then we have not deceived ourselves into believing that He did not bodily ascend, and thus will not bodily descend in the future. Those who preach the gospel message

of His bodily ascension and coming again are not deceived. They are those who are going forth proclaiming that Jesus will appear bodily in the heavens. His coming will be globally witnessed just as Paul wrote in the following revelation:

For this we say to you by the word of

the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will not go before those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God (1 Th 4:15,16).

Chapter 8

THE INCARNATIONAL EFFECT

Someone recently wrote and asked us, “Who is a false teacher?” Our answer to the question was not as that which would commonly be given. Our answer to the question was that a false teacher was anyone who would through belief and behavior deny any aspect of the gospel, which specifically would include the gospel of the incarnation of the Son of God.

In particular on the continent on which we presently reside, false teachers would be those who have developed the teaching and behavior that denies the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. They do such both by their teaching and life-style. The subject of their teaching is commonly referred to as the “prosperity gospel.” Their materialistic behavior reflects their theology.

For example, we have had our passports stamped into countries af-

ter some “prosperity profiteering” prophet had just left the scene. The sheep in wolves clothing had recently passed through after having taken advantage of the poor of the country with fake miracles for the sake of profit. The Gentile governments of these countries subsequently banned said “profiteers” from ever entering their countries again. The Gentile governments were as the Gentile Luke who looked from outside into the Jews’ religion of his day and wrote the indictment of the leaders of the Jews’ religion, “*The Pharisees who were lovers of money ... scoffed at Him [Jesus]*” (Lk 16:14). The profiteers have brought shame on the name of Jesus and caused thousands throughout the world to repudiate Christianity.

These were the false teachers of Jesus’ day. These were the “dogs” and

“evil workers” about whom Paul later warned the Philippian Christians (Ph 3:2). These were the deceivers about whom John wrote who were going about in the middle and latter part of the first century.

Through their behavior, these deceivers are those who deny the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. They are as those today who use the name of Jesus for their own profit. By their own greed they deny the incarnational behavior of all those who seek to keep their minds focused on heavenly things (See At 19:14-16). They are the wolves who vigorously proclaim Jesus, and then promise miracles for their own profit. They extract widows’ coins for their own prosperity. This is indeed the true false teacher of our day.

One of the best statements that was ever made in reference to defining religion was made by one who formerly “advanced” in the religion of pomp and prosperity. You know the man. The apostle Paul. He was formerly a Pharisee of Pharisees, and thus once used religion for his own advancement (See Ph 3:4-6). He knew what he was talking about when he later brought the judgment of God down on false teachers who, for their own prosperity, beguiled the innocent sheep of God.

“*For you have heard of my behavior in the past in Judaism,*” Paul

apologetically wrote in reference to his past religious behavior (Gl 1:13). “Judaism” was literally the Jews’ religion that was promoted by the greedy religious leaders, the Pharisees. Being a Pharisee himself, Paul wrote that he once had “*confidence in the flesh*” (Ph 3:4). Paul was deep into religion. He said in reference to his involvement in the Jews’ religion. “*I advanced in Judaism above many of my contemporaries in my own nation*” (Gl 1:14). In order to advance in religion, he was “*extremely zealous*” to behave according to the religious traditions of the Jewish fathers (See Mk 10:1-9). In other words, he was extremely competitive in order to advance above others in the Jews’ religion. And by advancement, he meant advancement in power and purse. This is religion at its best. This is the opposite of the incarnational affect that the Son of God should have on our lives.

When Paul encountered the incarnate Son of God on the Damascus road, his life changed. His religious world was turned upside down. It was after this encounter with this God who became flesh that he later wrote, “*I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*” (Ph 3:8). All the advancement in popularity and prosperity that he had enjoyed in the Jews’ religion was now lost for Christ. In fact, he

became emphatic in reference to those lost things. *“I count them refuse [literally in Gr., “dung”] so that I may gain Christ”* (Ph 3:8). This is the effect that the incarnation of the Son of God should have on the sincere believer.

In order to gain Christ there must be a paradigm shift in one’s life in reference to one’s attitude toward the things of this world. Paul explained, *“Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus,”* who **gave up** being in the form of God. The Son of God gave up in order to give in to the bodily flesh of man (Ph 2:5; see Jn 1:1,2,14).

To other disciples, but in reference to this paradigm shift in belief and behavior, Paul wrote, *“But be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Rm 12:2). Incarnational living first demands a transformation of our mind. Then comes a change in behavior when our mind is transformed into the mind of Christ. When our mind is transformed, it is then that we follow the incarnate Son of God who leads us down the road of giving up that which we treasured so much when we had the mind of this world. We begin to understand what Jesus said, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth”* (Mt 6:19).

Too many people want to reverse the order of incarnational living. The Son of God went from God to man,

but we often seek to go from man to being some lord who would be famous among those over whom we would rule (See Mk 10:43,44). Some are deceived into believing that when they come to Christ, Christ is a means by which they can gain wealth, notoriety, fame, or power. **Incarnation in behavior, however, means that God in the spirit became man in the flesh in order to go to the cross.** If we would claim to be disciples of this incarnate God, but seek to reverse this order of behavior, then we are misguided religionists. **We have denied the gospel of the incarnation by our own worldly life-style.** We have created a religion in which we can advance, which thing Paul left and subsequently considered human refuse to be discarded.

Religion was surely in the mind of the rich young ruler who *“came running”* to Jesus (Mk 10:17). Since Jesus at the time was the Rabbi to follow, the rich young ruler possibly saw an opportunity to use his religiosity and wealth as an advantage in order to gain respect with an incarnational God. If he only knew who Jesus was, then he would have realized how foolish he was.

He was a fine-looking rich young man who evidently was well dressed. He certainly was an upstanding person of the community, for he was some sort of ruler. He had riches and

notoriety, and thus assumed that he could simply transfer all the advancement of his life-style to his discipleship of Jesus. In order to impress the One of whom he would enroll as a disciple, he even prided himself in his religiosity. He defended his self-justification according to law with the words, “*Teacher, all these [commandments] I have observed from my youth*” (Mk 10:20).

Unfortunately, when the young ruler checked off all his obedience, he presumed that he was religious enough to follow an incarnate God in the flesh. He could not have been further from the truth of true discipleship of the One who existed in the form of God but gave up being equal with God in order to incarnate in the flesh of man. He did not realize that if he were to become a disciple of Jesus, then his standard of living would have to come down.

Jesus was not an opportunity to advance in the community. He was not an opportunity for more wealth, or a financial investment to whom to give in order to get more. Jesus was not a passing sage with whom one could attach himself in order to join in on the great following of disciples. The rich young ruler had little or no understanding of gospel living after the incarnate Son of God.

So the incarnate God said to the proud young materialistic religionist,

“One thing you lack. Go your way and sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, take up the cross, and follow Me” (Mk 10:21).

These words certainly crushed the self-proclaimed religionist. They penetrated to the very soul of who he prided himself to be. He subsequently went away sad. He was grieved because of what Jesus instructed him to do (Mk 10:22).

What answer would we expect from One who was God in the spirit, but humbled and humiliated Himself to become man in the flesh? All these profiteering prophets today would certainly go away grieved if they realized that they too had to sell all they had, take up a cross, and then follow the incarnate Son of God.

The greatest prophet who had lived on the face of the earth at the beginning of the earthly ministry of this incarnate God gave up a future prestigious priesthood in Jerusalem if he would only have followed in his father’s footsteps. But he gave it up in order to live in the wilderness and eat grasshoppers dipped in honey. There were no three-piece suits for this incarnational living voice in the wilderness who introduced the incarnate Son of God. Jesus later said of John the Baptist, “*For I say to you,*

among those who are born of women there is no greater prophet than John" (Lk 7:28).

If one would be great as a servant of the incarnate God, then he cannot advance in a religion that encourages material prosperity. He must count all those things that materialistic religionists consider great to be loss for the excellency of the Lord Jesus. If one would be a disciple of the God who came in the flesh of man, then he cannot pride himself in the performance of his religious rites and rituals. Material prosperity must be considered rubbish. If one would be a disciple of the God who was in spirit, but loved us so much that He sacrificed heaven for the environment in which we all live, then he or she, as Paul, must set his or her mind on those things that are above this world. We must be willing to sacrifice all that is necessary in order to be a disciple of the One who gave up all that He had in heaven in order to wash the dirty feet of those whom He had created on earth (See Jn 13:1-17).

This is incarnational living as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. If

one is not willing to go there with Jesus, then he will go away from Jesus sad because he is not willing to live after the example of John and Paul, who followed the example of the incarnate God who came in the flesh. Even before the gospel of the cross, the apostles said to Jesus, "*We have left all and have followed You*" (Mk 10:28). During the ministry of Jesus, they were already into their incarnational journey with the One after whom they called themselves to be disciples.

If one uses the incarnate Son of God as an opportunity to extract wealth from the people, then we know that that person is indeed a false teacher in the clothing of sheep. "*Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves*" (Mt 7:15).

We must commit ourselves to follow incarnationals. This was what Paul meant when he wrote, "*Be imitators of me even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Co 11:1). In other words, "Incarnationally follow me as I incarnationally follow Christ."

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**