

# The Mystery of Incarnation (2 of 9)

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz explores the profound mystery of the incarnation, emphasizing the significance of Jesus as true man and the implications for believers today.*

**Duration:** 36:55

**Scripture:** John 1:14, Acts 17:28, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Philippians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 2:13

**Topics:** "Incarnation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the current state of the world, highlighting how it is suffering from disease and the exploitation of natural resources. However, there is hope for restoration and redemption. The key to this restoration lies in the coming forth of the sons of God, who will be united with the deity of God through the resurrection of Christ and the impartation of His Spirit. This union does not dismiss or diminish their humanity, but rather amplifies and glorifies it. The speaker calls for believers to embrace their calling and destiny to continue the work that Jesus started, growing in stature and living out their faith through relationship, submission, and obedience to God.

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## Transcript

What is man whose breath is in his own nostrils? Here again is a terrible paradox that earthlings celebrate, if not worship man, and yet God would have us to celebrate man as the epitome of his creation which the enemy is desiring to mar and altogether despoil, so as to discredit God. And so homosexuality, tattooing as a brother came up and shared with us, earrings, puncturing bodies, all of the remarkable things that are happening not just at the subculture level but are becoming now prominent at the highest forms of culture where a tattoo is, what's the word, standard operating procedure. There's a French *de rigueur*, something like that, prescribed, is a remarkable statement of how active the enemy is to despoil man and to discredit God by marring as he did when he had laid his hands on the Lord himself.

So we need to be conscious of that, that man is under attack and to be reduced so as to reduce God and his glory and that therefore we have an obligation to uphold what God has made. As I've said, that was the message in Africa which is not a cheap message that the church has got to be the guardian, the steward of this mandate and take it into places where it will not be appreciated and might even evoke hostile reactions. In the very nation where I'm commending this to the church, journalists have already been evicted or imprisoned or had to flee for their lives who then even raise a criticism about the powers that prevail in those countries.

So to tell the church to challenge those powers in defense of what is made in God's image is no small mandate. It may cost them something but the image of man is being so marred by disease and ignorance, poverty that it's a pitiful thing and a discredit to God. So you can't believe the amount of attention that this theologian gives to the word man.

I just want to read you certain portions. There is obviously no distance between the human definition and the divine. His humanity is not of course his divinity.

In his divinity he is from and to God. In his humanity he is from and to the cosmos. But his humanity is in the closest correspondence with his divinity.

When you read the Council of Chalcedon they talk about made of the same substance there is a Greek word for that but independent, the divinity and the humanity two separate entities but made of the same substance. They don't know how to reconcile what seems to be antithetical, God and man. But here is Karl Barth saying his humanity is in the closest correspondence with his divinity.

How to attain that correspondence of the closest kind is the issue of being human of being man in the image of God. Because without the divine influence what is man? He will fall into something less than an animal he'll be bestial. It's the issue of divinity that is the issue of man.

It's the making of a man. So the familiar saying it takes God to be a man is more true than we have understood. But how do you tap that divinity? How did Jesus do it? How do you appropriate it? So that it configures with the humanity to be the image that God intends by which his glory is revealed is the issue before us.

And we'll not attain to it if we not recognize it as an issue. Because it mirrors and reflects it reflects God. His divinity has its correspondence and image in the humanity in which it is mirrored.

You can't talk about God rightly independent of man. Especially the man Christ Jesus. The classic man the ultimate man, the true man the new man, the pattern for the new creation, the new mankind the second Adam.

I'm not reading anymore, I'm just blabbing. So each is to be recognized in the other. Thus even the life of the man Jesus stands under two-fold determination.

But there is harmony between the two. As he is for God so is he for man. As he is for man so is he for God.

Since the will of God is the basis and man the object of the work in which this man is engaged. That the word was made flesh means first and generally that he became man, true and real man. Participating in the same human essence and existence the same human nature and form the same historicity that we have.

God's revelation to us takes place in such a way that everything ascribable to man is creaturely existence as an individually unique unity of body and soul in the time between birth and death can now be predicated of God's eternal son as well. That God became man is an astounding phenomenon. He took upon himself flesh and in birth and death it had a creaturely existence in everything that is ascribable to man.

It wasn't theoretical it was actual. Everything miraculous about his being as a man derives its meaning and force from the fact that it concerns the true man, Jesus Christ, as a man like ourselves. We mustn't idealize the man that Jesus was.

We need to recognize a humanity like our own or we miss the great point of God. That's the greater glory. If he was an idealized humanity it would not pass through the realities to which we are called.

But he was man in every way like as we as were also the prophets where we're told they are flesh and blood like as we. Yet Elijah prayed and there was no rain. So we need to be reminded of the stubborn facticity of man as man or we miss the issue of glory.

If we idealize Jesus as a kind of unique manhood unlike our own, we miss the point. And I said to someone our embrace of Jesus if we are embracing an idealized thing in our own imagination, it's not a real union with him. But to embrace him as a marred piece of humanity this blooded and battered Christ in his abject humanity is the deep and the true embrace.

And if we're incapable of that with Jesus in this condition how shall we embrace Israel when it shall come into this condition? For they are not long from the place where they shall be marred more than any man and they will have no beauty that any should desire them. How will you embrace them and be to them what you ought in love in their marred humanity if you have avoided it in Jesus and have idealized him and are embracing him in your imagination? How many of our marriages fail because we have an idealized notion of the humanity of our spouses and when we see them in their BVDs and in their true humanity our idyllic concept is shattered and we're disappointed and disillusioned and often we can't go on. It's important to understand the reality of man as man and Jesus in that very manhood.

That's why the theologian has taken the pains to make these statements that the word was made flesh that he became man, true and real man, participating in the same human essence and existence the same human nature and form that we ourselves have. What in fact makes revelation revelation a miracle, a miracle is that the word of God had actually become a real man and that therefore the life of this real man was the object and theater of the acts of God, the light of revelation entering the world. And if you'll not see that light through that revelation, you'll not see that light.

The most offensive thing for Jews to consider is that God was made man. How could that be? It's an offense to their concept that God is lofty, ethereal and high but to become man seems to be an indignity to deity itself. Got the idea? They cannot bite that bullet.

It's a contradiction of all that they think that God is to be in separation from what is human for God to become man and grovel as a servant and die as a man as a criminal in the vilest form of that death is totally incompatible with the lofty, ethereal and idealized notions of God that Judaism has. The only thing that we can say is however lofty and idealized their view is it is an error. It's the project of their own imagining.

They're making God in their image and will not receive him in the image in which he has given himself which alone is the light that lightens the world. Got the picture? There's a reason for God's madness. There's a reason for God's foolishness.

He's chosen for himself the foolish and the weak thing. The weakest and the most foolish thing the form of man himself as a servant. Let's go back to what we said before.

What Paul says in the beginning. This gospel is the power of God in the salvation to everyone who believes. To the Jew first.

How do you present this untenable view to Jews who are established in another view of God altogether? Can you do it verbally? Or must the gospel have a power even to penetrate these Jewish categories that are so obstinately opposed to the revelation of God in man. The man Christ Jesus. And can we succeed in it unless we ourselves are that very statement.

Not just that we're saying the right thing but we ourselves are the right thing. That's why Paul could say of himself in 1 Thessalonians you know what manner of man I was with you. That the word that you received was not the word of man but the word of God which performs the work in them that believe.

That what I was as a man before you had everything to do with the message which I brought. I was the message. You could believe it because you could see it.

I depicted the very mystery of incarnation because for me to live is Christ. Is not a little catch word but the sum and substance of what I am as apostolic man which is to say true man. And this is I'll call you dear saints.

Paul is the paradigm of the true new man in Christ. And therefore the powers feared him. Jesus we know and Paul we know no question about it.

Because he exhibits what was in Jesus which is to say what is in God which we fear and despise and shrink from encountering. But who are you? You're just a carbon copy. You're just a superficial similitude.

You don't have the awesome, recognizable and unquestionable reality exhibited by both these men in their humanity. You don't have it in yours. You're saying the right thing but we yawn in your face.

You have not yet exhibited this awesome reality which can only come through your union with deity in every place where you have died to yourself and are alive unto God. You have not suffered sufficient deaths. As you can say with Paul, it's death that works in me but life in you.

Which life? The life of Christ. Because you have shrunk from these deaths. Because you have safeguarded yourself and kept yourself at a distance from any requirement to die.

You're unwilling for the embarrassment, for the humility. You've kept your life shielded. There's been no working of his death therefore no exhibition of his life.

There's no virtue in you. But I'll tell you what. It's easier to suffer a bullet than the moral dust which we're called as believers.

The anguish of soul. The uncertainty. The tension.

So Jesus was faithful in multiple deaths before the ultimate death. Every death was another reenactment of the cross before he was required actually to be impaled on it. But with that death life goes forth.

Which life? The life of God. So the humanity of Christ alone is the revelation of the eternal word. Karl Barth is going out on a limb.

What a radical statement. This exclusive and absolute reference that the humanity of Christ alone is the revelation of the eternal word. That word not for that humanity.

The eternal word could not have been made manifest. That's why in John in the prologue it says, whom we have felt and touched and handled. This flesh is the eternal word which we have touched and handled and fondled.

This is stupefying. The eternal word of God has become flesh and lived and dwelt among us. We've laid our head on his bosom.

We've seen him sweat. We've seen him crucified. This was known of him and desired by him from before the foundations of the world.

Isn't that remarkable? This is a capstone, a conclusion, a finale that he knew would be required in point of time in history and in place through a sent son in his humanity in the form of a man. And the son has agreed to this. So the son shares the father's humility and love.

For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son, but the son was willing to be given. He was not reluctant or under obligation. It was as free as the father's sending was the son's willingness.

And what do we see in that? God. God so loved. How would we know that God loves? Because he tells us so.

We have scriptures that prove it. We need to know that we know that God loves and that we are loved. And so his provision gives us that incisive confidence that Paul says, who can contradict the love of God? Can suffering and persecutions and this and that? Nothing in the world of persecution or opposition because God has so amply demonstrated his love, not just by an abstract word, but by the reality in the demonstration of his son as man, flesh and blood like his wing.

That's love. That's God. See what I mean? Saves us from doubt and inferiority and loss of identity.

This is when you are accepted in the beloved of what shall you be afraid? And why shall you tremble in some confusion about who you are and what you are about if you are accepted in the beloved? God has got to make a vivid demonstration and that's why Barth says the humanity of Christ alone is the revelation of the eternal word. Thus the reality of Jesus Christ is that God himself in person is actively present in the flesh. God himself in person is the subject of a real human being and acting and just because God is the subject of it, this being and acting are real.

Whenever I see the word real boing! Real is the root of the word reality. Reality is God and the real and reality have its foundations, its nexus, its origin, its point in particular in God made flesh. This is reality.

Isn't that remarkable? The thing that the Jew most disparages and says is impossible and contradicts God. The theologian says is the very issue of what is real. The being and acting are real.

They are genuinely and truly human being and acting. Jesus Christ is not a demigod. He's not an angel.

Nor is he an ideal man. He's a man as we are, equal to us as a creature, as a human individual, but also equal to us in the state and condition to which our disobedience has brought us. Son of Adam and in being what we are, he is God's word.

Thus as one of us, yet the one of us who is himself God's word in person, he represents God to us and he represents us to God as high priest. In this way, he is God's revelation to us and our reconciliation with God. This is too much to take in.

That needs to be pondered and reflected on. It's the mystery of incarnation. Imagine reducing this to formula, to a glib two or three statements.

This beggars the mind and the imagination. This is at the heart of the mystery of God. This is the revelation of God as God and it requires flesh.

It requires man and it still requires man. We're stuck. We have a calling and a destiny to continue what Jesus set in motion in his own humanity by the same means by which he performed it.

Through faith, through relationship with the Father as a son, through submission and obedience and everything to which he was called. He grew in stature. That puts a different face on the whole issue of what it means to be a Christian.

How dare we be a slouch about this? Because creation is groaning even now waiting to escape the futility of its bondage by the manifestation of the sons of God in the flesh, in their humanity, in union with deity. Boom! The final fetter is broken and creation itself claps its hands and the hills skip as lambs and the trees clap. I was just looking at Isaiah 53 and the creation the wilderness will be glad for them, which I always construe to mean the presence of Jews in their bedraggled condition but for the first time I'm considering it may also mean or more likely mean that them is the church that has come to sonship, into its adoption, into its fullness and the wilderness is glad for them because when it sees that, its bondage is broken, the curse is lifted.

We're seeing a marred not only marred humanity, we're seeing a marred creation. It's limping and barely making it through. Its trees are suffering from disease and its natural resources are being exploited and raped and this is not the pristine and original condition.

It's only a glimmer but even that glimmer is impressive but when it breaks the fetters of bondage, you'll be staggered because you'll see the beauty of God the Creator in its creation full as it was at the first before Adam's fall. Now you're seeing only a very marred addition. What's waiting for the release? What's the key? The coming forth of the sons of God in their humanity, in union with the deity of God through the resurrection of Christ and the impartation of his spirit who are living out from his life and not out from their humanity and yet the remarkable thing, it doesn't dismiss or blur the humanity, it amplifies and glorifies it.

What will it take to attain this? It'll take what Troy had to suffer this morning. Small kid stuff. Much more, much more of confrontation, humiliation, contradiction, stupefying disappointment in how we're treated and how can that be God? How can it require disobedience? Much more that we might be conformed to his image.

But it's all voluntary. It was voluntary for Jesus and it's equally voluntary for us. At any moment we can throw up our hands and say this far but no further and that's what the church has done.

They want the form of it, not the reality. They don't want to suffer to obtain this union and this witness. They don't want to be sons.

They want to remain children, enjoy the benefit of salvation without the requirement to be conformed to this image. How was it for Jesus? How did he attain it? By the things which he suffered through obedience and if the son of God had to come to it by such a means, by what means shall we come? What are we now king's kids and we ride home free and have no requirement? If we believe in him we're required also to suffer with him that we might be glorified with him, Paul says. Suffering is the name of the game because you can't be perfected in this mystery at ease.

It costs something. There's something to be borne. He had to bear it, we also.

I don't know about the Greek where it says that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh. Maybe we can read through our mortal flesh, through our humanity, through our manhood. This has got to be made manifest or it cannot glorify God.

It's not an abstract thing. It requires flesh, it requires humanity and the obedience to voluntary free, willing, obedience of a man for that thing to be expressed to us. As Jesus expressed the father so we also express the son.

But to express the son is to express the father. And is the son resident in us that he's still obeying the father in our bodies? Are we renewing our covenant that for us to live as Christ we're covenantally joined with him that we give up the rags of our humanity and dependency upon it and trust him for life. And every time we take communion we're renewing that covenant and strengthening the deity that is in us in Christ by which we live which is to say we die that that life might go forth for us.

That's why I'm taking communion every morning. How can I face the day without the renewal of this covenantal blessing and the life that God gives as his covenantal provision so that we can live as sons. It's an extraordinary requirement and so as we have allowed that remarkable sacrament to be diminished it's an indication that we have not understood our call and what sonship requires and that needs to be renewed in every eating and drinking by faith of his body and of his blood.

So it wouldn't be extreme to sum it up by saying that we need to come to a place of agreement with Paul where we can say with equal integrity truth and sincerity for me to live as Christ. If that falls into a little cliché of unreality that we don't really mean or intend or have appropriated we have failed in the intentions of God. We have got to come to a place where we believe and say and live by that life for me to live as Christ and the remarkable thing is that when Christ is your life your humanity is distinguished and amplified but if you seek to live out of your humanity, independent of that life, your humanity diminishes.

You lose your manhood, you lose your distinction because it takes God to be a man. When you're living by that life your humanity comes into a fullness that is the witness and it needs to be said before the Jew because they are the most critical of this phenomenon. They could not believe it in Jesus.

Is not this Joseph's son? He could do no great works in Nazareth because they could not believe. They saw only the man. They could not see the deity in the man.

Not because he lay it aside and emptied himself but because he was in union with the Father and therefore that union was the source of deity, not the natural or the supernatural thing that was his by virtue of being God. They could not see it. And how about us now? A final thought before the bell rings.

Are you seeing incarnation? Are you seeing through the veil of the flesh the truth of the life that really animates and expresses itself? Or are you seeing only the husk? You are seeing only the man. Can you

recognize the mystery of incarnation presently when it is set before you? If it is set before you in the rare instances that we might be privileged to see it? Or are we as much staggered by the phenomenon we really cannot bring ourselves to believe it and we can say, isn't that Joseph's son? Isn't that our cats from Brooklyn, New York? We know his parents. Are we staggered and offended by incarnation as much as Jews? And if we are instinctively, how then shall we ourselves come to that reality and express it? There is something about God and man that even Christians shrink from considering.

They want to give God a distant recognition but to see him evident and working and expressing himself through flesh offends us. I'll tell you what, I wish I had a buck for every time I experienced this. There is nothing that infuriates Christians more than to say to them, the words that I speak are not my words but the words that my father has given me.

They don't want to hear that. You know why? Because they want you on the same ground that they occupy. They want you to succeed as a Christian and act in ministry the same basis by which they do, out of their unaided humanity.

And here you're making a pretentious claim that the words that you're speaking are not your words but God's. If that's true then you're blowing the whistle on their inferior walk. It's an indictment that they have fallen short of the glory and they don't want to hear it.

Therefore they have to say, come on cats, don't give us that baloney, it's you. Well I know better than you who it is. So let's face up guys.

There is a conscious, willful or unconscious resistance against the mystery of incarnation. We like Jews want to keep God distant and we only want to see men as men as we are so that no greater requirement is made of us because they are not exhibiting another standard. That's why they said of Paul, he's not fit to live.

They were more infuriated against Paul than they were against Jesus because what he exemplified and demonstrated in his apostolicity was an indictment against Judaism itself that wants to succeed on the base of its own humanity and its own religiosity and here's a man exhibiting the righteousness of God, the boldness of God, the courage of God, the love of God, the faith of God through his humanity in total obedience and surrender death by death to that life that it might go forth as life to others. He's not fit to live. So we need to make our peace and surrender to the great mystery.

Not just as it may be depicted by others but that it would be depicted by us and it's going to require much more than our young brother experienced this morning and if we're unwilling for that we will forfeit the means by which sonship and union with Christ comes because it comes in such sufferings as that. Got the idea? So, how do we pray? If we don't know how to speak if this is too much like me who is sufficient for these things? How do we pray? That true prayer in the last analysis is God's prayer. So the creation is groaning and travailing waiting for the manifestation of God who in their own spirit travail and cannot speak civil prayers but only groanings that cannot be uttered.

So Lord, we are at a threshold of something and we're just feeling away Lord. It's crude and inadequate and yet we suspect on time essential for the church of the last days to consider and to apprehend for we have lost the apostolic glory and indeed the thing that Paul warned us has come true. We are only mere men acting out of our mere humanity rather than the union with divinity by which our humanity could be the revelation of yourself.

So Lord, help us. We don't know how to proceed. In fact, it's a marvel that you brought us through this morning.

We died multiple deaths just to introduce this subject. We brought Bibles and books not knowing which way to go and turn or to employ. That somehow you by your incarnate life in us would bring it forth out of your own wisdom and ability.

And even though you have demonstrated it to whatever measure you have there's doubt and unbelief in the class that thinks that it's art and has not recognized the mystery and therefore will fall short of it themselves. So Lord help us, help us, help us, help us, help us Lord. Precious God that you might be glorified in your sons who can say with Paul in complete candor and without contradiction, for me to live is Christ.

In him I live and move and have my being. Thank you Lord. And how that we are dead and hid with Christ in God until his life is revealed in whatever form he chooses to reveal it when he will.

And it will often and must always be contrary to our desire. It may even offend us when it comes forth. So it's much safer to live out of ourselves.

Predictable and nice, acceptable, pleasant but short of the glory. So come my God bring us into this ground we pray. Break us up in the deeps through your word and enlarge our faith.

Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God. We are called not just to acknowledge the mystery of incarnation but to exhibit it to the toughest audience of all, the Jew and the world that we Jews have made that is shot through with unbelief, cynicism, religiosity and all of the things that are contrary to your mystery. What a calling, what a task my God.

Praise God there's a resurrection or we of all men will be most to be pitied. So come Lord and bring us day by day into this reality concluding days, our week is finished. One week left Lord.

A brother asked, are you going to leave us in this condition? God forbid. Come my God that we might leave this place with rejoicing for the reality to which we have been called and the great enablement out of your life. Thank you Lord.

Thank you my God. To you be all praise, glory and honor. Even for bringing us this far where has the church in modern times ever even so much has been confronted with these considerations let alone have attained to them.

So we are privileged beyond speaking and we just conclude by saying thank you Lord. Whatever it takes however disappointing, however painful, however confrontive, however disillusioning, whatever it takes to bring us my God into this union with you by which our humanity is fulfilled we are willing. Thank you for the privilege.

Come and don't spare us Lord and be formed in us we pray as we agree together in Jesus name. Amen.

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