

The Incarnation Part 2 - 'Christ Takes Upon Himself Human Nature'

by Charles Alexander

The sermon explains why God became man, highlighting the significance of the incarnation and the purpose of God's task in saving man from their sins.

Scripture: Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 9:6, Luke 15:4, John 8:24, Philipians 3:12, Hebrews 2:7-10, 1 John 5:16

Topics: "The Incarnation", "Redemption"

Description

Charles Alexander preaches about the profound mystery and wonder of the incarnation, emphasizing how God became man, a unique and unparalleled event in all of history. He delves into the contrast between God not taking on the nature of angels but choosing to become the seed of Abraham, highlighting the great honor bestowed upon mankind through this choice. The sermon explores the reasons behind God seeking man, the significance of Christ taking on the seed of Abraham, and the powerful imagery of Christ apprehending and rescuing His own like a shepherd finding a lost sheep. Ultimately, the sermon reflects on how God succeeded in His mission by becoming man, seeking humanity, and triumphantly apprehending souls for redemption.

Transcript

Hebrews 2:16: For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

The incarnation means to be made flesh; it has to do with that great event when God became man. What a wonder that was! What a marvel in the whole universe! We read in Isaiah, His name shall be called Wonderful. We know that the word wonderful indicates mystery or enigma. His name is a mystery because it denotes a great mystery; and that mystery makes His name wonderful or enigmatic to mankind, and indeed to the whole universe. Not the least part of that mystery and that wonder is that God became man. It is the greatest fact in the universe; the greatest fact in all history! This is what makes the Christian faith absolutely unique; it has no competitors. This treasure we must guard as we would guard our own lives: the truth of the incarnation.

Christmas, so called, can simply be an occasion for riotous or expensive behaviour, with little or no relevance whatever to the name of Christ, by which it is supposed to be adorned. This will not prevent us or hinder us in any degree at all, whatever the world says or does, from proceeding with our own glad devotion to the name of our Lord, in the approach which we make to glean some understanding of the

mystery of His incarnation, when God became man. This is a glorious theme and I hope we will not only be better instructed Christians, but also more praising Christians, more believing, more understanding Christians, who will marvel and wonder more and more at the riches discovered in Christ, whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

In our text, the first thing you will find is a contrast: what He did, and what He did not do. He did not take upon Himself the nature of angels, but He did take upon Himself the seed of Abraham. We might have expected that the text should have read, "but he took on him the nature of Adam", for certainly this is what He did. He was the second Adam, the second federal Head; yet our text very peculiarly tells us that the contrast lies in this: that He took on Himself the seed of Abraham, against the idea that He might have taken upon Himself the nature of angels.

Now we look upon the scene at Bethlehem; we see the manger and we wonder at the great event which took place there. We can see that in taking upon Himself the seed of Abraham, by becoming man, our blessed Lord sought the lower level of intelligent creatures, for beyond all doubt angels are greater in power and might and beauty than we are. Not only did He choose to become man; He chose and preferred that when this event should take place, at which all creation would marvel, He would take upon Himself the seed of Abraham, at the very lowest level also.

There was no room for them in the inn. He was not laid on a feather pillow, but on straw in a manger. They laid Him in a manger because there was no room for our God! He took upon Him human flesh and nature there; and not in the king's palace, where the wise men from the east, quite reasonably, expected that such a high and lofty personage might be born.

Behold, therefore, the contrast in our text: He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Now it has been well pointed out by others, that the great honour bestowed upon us by this choice of the Lord in becoming man and not taking on the nature of angels, has bestowed upon mankind a greater honour than upon the great angelic creation.

He chose to become man, He who was spoken of as eternal wisdom in chapter eight of Proverbs. From the beginning, His delights were with the sons of men rather than with the glory of the angels. If, in His descent, He had stopped short at the angelic creation, this itself would have been a marvel: that God should take upon Himself the nature of angels, even with all their majesty, strength, beauty, power and authority which it has pleased God to lay upon them. But no; He passed the angels by and preferred to become man, because His delights were with the sons of men.

Behold what an honour has been bestowed upon each and every one of us: His condescension, His great act of humiliation and of emptying Himself of all His glory in order that He might become man; for this reason, that His delights were with the sons of men. Some may say He had no need to take on Him the nature of angels because it was man who had sinned, and man who was to be found in this state of degradation. Therefore upon whom else would He confer the honour of becoming like unto, than to those who were in actual need? But such an argument forgets entirely that there was original sin amongst the angels, before it ever took place amongst men, and it was through angels that man was tempted and brought low. Surely there might have been a case made out, therefore, on account of angelic needs, that He should take upon Him the nature of angels; but the need of man was greater and the need of man was peculiar.

There was a world of difference between the need of man and the need of angels; and, if I may dare to say so, between the sin of man and the sin of angels. It is a difference, we scarcely know how to put it, whether in degree or in quality, because all sin is sin, and is the same in its nature and quality, whether it is among angels or men. But there was this difference that man was a limited creature and angels were not limited creatures. When man sinned he did not commit the unpardonable sin, because he did not sin against supreme light and supreme knowledge; but the angels did, who surrounded the throne, who were able from the beginning of their creation to probe the mystery of their own nature, and to know far more than we mortals know yet of the glory of God and of the nature and majesty of the eternal being of God.

They were completely enlightened as to the cause and meaning of their own creation, but man was not capable of so knowing, not in their degree, although he was informed from the beginning, probably by angelic agency in the day of his creation, that he was born to rule and to have dominion; and yet this was not his final destiny, because he was to have the rule over all creation. This he did not and could not understand; he can scarcely understand it to this day, except that in this same chapter of Hebrews (2:7-8) we read that God made man "a little lower than the angels, crowned him with glory and honour, and put all things in subjection under his feet." Paul goes on to say (2:8-9), "We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

So we see here again the great difference between man and angels; man so inferior, so weak, so subject to limitation and change; angels so grand and glorious, so perfect in their knowledge, in their intelligence, so near to the majesty and to the glory of God. When they fell and sinned, they sinned in the full volume of pride; when they fell, they fell instantly into an eternal and irrecoverable hell; they kept not their first estate and God cast them down into darkness; so says the scripture.

With man it was different, man being a limited creature who could not have known in the day of his creation that which has become clear and plain since. Nevertheless his sin was without excuse, but on the other hand a sin which in itself, to quote the words of the apostle John in his first epistle, was not in that sense a sin unto death, though it brought death. "There is a sin unto death and there is a sin not unto death," John tells us. Who has committed the sin which is unto death? I am certain that the Jews in Jesus Christ's day committed it, and I am also sure that Judas Iscariot committed it. To sin against superior light and the testimony that God had become man is to commit it. "If you believe not that I am he," said He to the Jews, "you shall die in your sins." Have any of us committed a sin which is unto death? Is it that our hearts are still lifted up with pride? Are our hearts still hardened against God and against His truth, still unyielding to God and Christ? Though often we have sat under the sound of the gospel, yet it has had no affect on us in changing our hearts. Is this not a sin unto death? Let us beware lest we may be found amongst that number who, like the angels, sinned a final sin against all the privileged light which God may have bestowed upon us.

Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Why did God seek man? Why did He take on Him the seed of Abraham and become man? You must go back to the first chapters of man's history, where we read again how the woman was deceived, and her eyes were opened. She saw that the tree was good for food; it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; wise not unto life, but wise unto death and condemnation. And she gave to her husband; he took from her hand and did eat. Yet he was not deceived; the woman was. He was in the transgression; that is, his transgression was worse than hers. She was deceived; she was dazzled by the serpent, by his methods and movements, and by his deceptive talk. As Adam did not encounter the serpent, and his

knowledge was superior to hers, his guilt was the greater because he was not deceived. Rather, as an act of deliberate disobedience, he broke the sacred covenant between God and man, and so was cast out from His presence. But notice the delay; not as with the angels who, the instant they sinned, were cast down into the caverns of darkness, and the blackness of the pit of despair.

Not so man! He was still in the garden moving about with his wife, and they heard the voice of the Lord God as He came, no doubt, in angelic form amongst the trees of the garden, where the man and the woman were hiding themselves from His presence. His first word to them was, "Where art thou?" His second word was, "Who told thee thou wast naked?" He came to acquaint them of their guilt, that they might know that they were guilty indeed. He came first in grace when He asked, "Where art thou?" He did not go seeking angels and say, "Where are you? Where are you? I want to find you." But to man He said, "Where art thou? I am come to seek thee," and indeed He did; make no mistake about that! This is the unquestioned force of the Lord's first word to man: "Where art thou?" And ever afterwards He has been seeking, seeking, seeking; seeking you and me. "Where are you?" He cries.

The blessed Lord Himself, when He had become man, presented Himself to the people as the Good Shepherd of Israel. He spoke in parables to them of the shepherd who had lost a single sheep out of one hundred, and did not rest, but went out to seek it, and sought it until he found it and brought it back upon his shoulder rejoicing: "Rejoice with me; I have found my sheep that was lost." All heaven is filled with joy and praise when a sinner is saved, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

It was man God sought from the beginning! What was it that Bishop Lancelot Andrews said? In his quaint old language, this very learned man said this: "We fled and He followed us flying!" Think of that; let that sentence remain ringing in your ears and through your mind, not only today but all the days. We fled from God; we fled and He followed us flying. Again, to quote the good Bishop, he puts into colloquial English words which Christ had already uttered (Hebrews 10:5-7): "A body hast thou prepared me.... Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." That referred to the incarnation, but this is the way Bishop Andrews put it: "Get me a body and I will after him, for only in the body can I reach him and find him." This is why God became man. When man hid himself God said, "I will after him." Will you hide yourself? God seeks you and asks you these questions: "Where are you? What have you done? What is this that you have done against me? What is this that you are continuing to do?" And yet there and then in the garden He pronounced the secret of man's deliverance, when He said to the serpent, in the hearing of the man and the woman, that the whole human race might hear it through them: I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (her seed) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Sadly, this truth is being misrepresented, so that it is no longer understood, except by the faithful, to whom it is clear and plain.

Four thousand years elapsed before that promise was fulfilled, twice as long a period of time than has passed by since Christ was born at Bethlehem two thousand years ago. O the deep mystery of the incarnation! "His name shall be called Wonderful"; but before He could live and die in that body there had to be a development of the human race upon earth. This could not take place until human history and the human family had been so developed and its sinful cause had been so marked, that they were in the position of being the most privileged race upon earth, yet refused to recognise their God, rejected Him, and required that He should be crucified, condemned to hang upon a tree and become a curse for them.

Christ could not die until there had been an apostasy on earth so great as to require all the instruments by which His sacrifice could be completed, and would be seen in heaven and earth to have been completed. When we get to heaven, when the eternal world dawns, when this world and all its works are passed away, when God's book of history to the last page has been written and completed, and all the world stands before Him, we shall then see more clearly than we ever can as mortals that God is righteous and true. We shall see what it all means: the setting up of that cross, the crucifixion, the curse, the dying, the mockery, the scourging, the last wondrous cry, "It is finished!" We shall then understand fully why God sought man. That is why God became man, and finally we have seen the contrast. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but took on Him the seed of Abraham. We have seen that He sought man because His delights were with the sons of men, and it was through man that He determined to complete all the wisdom of His task, exalting man to the highest and eternal communion with God through Himself becoming man.

How God succeeded!

Why is it said that He took on Him the seed of Abraham? Because God made a new beginning of the human race in Abraham and pronounced this decree: "In thee Abraham, and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." He was not narrowing salvation down just to the Jewish race; in any event, the Jewish race as a whole has never been converted. The seed of Abraham was none other than Christ Himself, and through Christ those who are blessed with Abraham, who believed, and whose faith became the type of the justifying faith of all those who should believe as Abraham believed. It is written that "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness," and through this faith of Abraham, all families on the earth are to be blessed, as we are today; though not of the seed of Abraham natural, yet of the seed of Abraham spiritual. So Christ took on Himself in a special sense the whole burden and obligation of those who were to be redeemed; He took on Him the seed of Abraham.

Paul, speaking of his own individual conversion, said, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." To apprehend is to lay hold on, it is vehemently to grasp, it is determinedly to close your hand upon the villain who is to be brought to execution or judgment, or the sinner who is to be rescued and delivered from his sins. "Christ apprehended me," says the apostle Paul. With what determination and strength the Lord laid hold upon him on the road to Damascus, and in a moment turned him aside from his persecuting, murderous pathway, and showed him how great things he must suffer for Christ's name's sake.

As the shepherd rescued the lost sheep, placed it on his shoulder and brought it back rejoicing, our Saviour apprehends His own, taking hold of you, transforming you and placing you upon His strong shoulder, so that you can never fall away. You can never be lost because He has won you from the fields of loss and sin, death and shame, and so He succeeds with His task. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Let us remember how God became man, and why He became man; why He sought man and how it is that He succeeds in the task He has set Himself in apprehending our souls, laying hold upon us with His great strength, bringing us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the redeeming love of God.

Amen

Source:

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