

JESUS' INCARNATION

WAS JESUS "CREATED" OR "ETERNALLY DIVINE"?

GOD'S THEOPHANIC SELF-REVELATION TO MANKIND

In approximately 318 AD there arose a doctrine that became known as Arianism, named after Arius, a priest in Alexandria, Egypt, who taught that Jesus was the Son of God, but not eternal, nor equal to the Father. Arius wrote, "There was once when he was not". This position was denounced in 325 AD at the First Nicene Council.

Juxtaposed to this belief is the doctrine that the incarnation of Jesus is God's supreme *Theophanic self-revelation* to mankind.

Hebrews 1:2-3 *NASB* "In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"

Jesus is the "radiance of God's glory" and "exact representation of His nature", though His majesty remained veiled for the most part because He came in the humble role of a servant (Philippians 2:6-7), He did allow His disciples to glimpse His resplendent glory during His transfiguration (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29, 32), which foreshadows His coming glorious revelation in the Day of Visitation (Matthew 24:27-30; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Revelation 1:13-16 & 19:11-16).

Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature; Jesus is God's ultimate representation of Himself to mankind

What a remarkable gift that Jesus has become our sympathetic and compassionate High Priest to make intercession on our behalf!

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

Colossians 1:15-17 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

John 1:18 "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

According to the testimony of Scripture, Jesus is God incarnate and the exact representation of His nature to a world that otherwise could never see or know God. If Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature, He is in all aspects God Himself, and indeed one with God (John 10:30); the sacrifice of His sinless body and blood is God's perfect and just demonstration of His unfailing love and holiness by which our sins are washed away and God's covenant is established.

Jesus is God incarnate, who was "before all things"; what we know of God is expressed in Jesus Christ. Are there things that we do not know about God? Yes! Because God is infinite, finite beings such as we are, will always be discovering new glories of God. But what can be explained about God to mortal man has been explained in the person of Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS FIRSTBORN AND BEGOTTEN

One of Jesus' New Testament names is "*Firstborn*", which has led many to err in the conclusion that Christ was *created*. After all, if Christ was begotten, then He could not have existed before He was begotten.

FIRSTBORN

Consider the following commentary on Jesus as the "firstborn over all creation":

"The firstborn over all creation. In the OT 'firstborn' occurs 130 times to describe one who is supreme or first in time. It also refers to one who had a special place in the father's love: so 'Israel is my firstborn son' (Ex. 4:22). Although 'firstborn' can speak of one who is the first in a series, this cannot be its significance here since the context makes it plain that Jesus is not the first of all created beings 'because' he is the one by whom the whole creation came into being (v. 16). Unfortunately the English word 'firstborn' does not draw attention to this notion of supremacy or priority of rank. As the firstborn Christ is unique, being distinguished from all creation (cf. Heb. 1:6). He is both prior to and supreme over that creation since he is its Lord" (*New Bible Commentary: 21st century edition; 4th ed., p. 1266*).

Firstborn illuminates the nature of Jesus' preeminence over all things. Jesus is Creator of all creation, which excludes Him from being part of the creation itself; in that it says "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities", it establishes that by Jesus all things – including both the visible things on earth, and the invisible things in the heavens – were created. He precedes both the creation of visible and invisible things.

BEGOTTEN

Consider this expository analysis from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words:

"The only Begotten. The Greek word **μονογενής** (*monogenes*, Strong's Greek Concordance #3439) literally means "only-begotten" or "only child". *Monogenes* is used five times, all in the writings of the apostle John, of Christ as the Son of God; it is translated "only begotten" in Heb. 11:17 of the relationship of Isaac to Abraham.

With reference to Christ, the phrase "the only begotten from the Father," John 1:14, indicates that as the Son of God He was the sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent Him. In the original Greek, the definite article is omitted both before "only begotten" and before "Father," stressing the characteristics referred to in the terms used. The apostle's object is to demonstrate what sort of glory it was that he and his fellow apostles had seen. The glory was that of a unique relationship and the word "begotten" does not imply a beginning of His Sonship. It suggests relationship, but must be distinguished from generation.

In John 1:18 the clause "the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father," expresses both His eternal union with the Father in the Godhead and the ineffable intimacy and love between them, the Son sharing all the Father's counsels and enjoying all His affections. Another reading is *monogenes Theos*, "God only-begotten." In John 3:16 the statement, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son," must not be taken to mean that Christ became the only begotten son by incarnation. The value and the greatness of the gift lay in the Sonship of Him who was given. His Sonship was not the effect of His being given. In John 3:18 the phrase "the name of the only begotten son of God" stresses the full revelation of God's character and will, His love and grace, as conveyed in the name of One who, being in a unique relationship to Him, was provided by Him as the object of faith. In 1 John 4:9 the statement "God hath sent His only begotten son into the world" does not mean that God sent out into the world one who at His birth in Bethlehem had become His Son, rather, it means that God sent one who already was His Son. (*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words; Vol. 2, p. 100 and pp. 447–448*)

Begotten signifies the entrance of the Son of God into Creation, not the creation of the Son of God. That Jesus became the “begotten” Son of God shows that the Word of God – who is and always has been God – took on flesh in order that He might explain Himself to His Creation.

Therefore, the physical nature of Christ’s flesh by which He was primarily known on earth was temporal and created, but Jesus Christ Himself – being Himself God (John 8:24) – is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2).

EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING

This harkens back to Proverb’s Wisdom-Christophany:

Proverbs 8:22-23, 30 “the LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting... Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.”

As God is called “the everlasting God” (Gen. 21:23), who is “from everlasting to everlasting” (1 Chron. 16:36), so also it must be that Christ – whom the LORD possessed at the beginning of His way – is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2).

Such talk is too grand for our finite mind to comprehend in full, but faith accepts what Christ has explained about God because faith sees where mortal eyes fail, and comprehends what mortal minds cannot grasp, being itself convicted of greater things to come!

Therefore the prophet Isaiah wrote, “*Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint, nor is He weary? His understanding is inscrutable*” (Isaiah 40:28).

Jesus is called the Creator, therefore, Jesus must also be the everlasting God, and LORD of all creation!

Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming Messiah is, therefore, a fitting conclusion to our question of the blessed incarnation:

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, and upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”