

The Implications Of The Incarnation

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[0:00] 2 Corinthians chapter 8. We're going to begin reading at verse 1 and read through verse 9. 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 1.

! For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to us in keeping with God's will.

And so we urge Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and in your love for us, see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

[1:37] One of the favorite storylines of all times is to see someone who goes from rags to riches. We enjoy following Cinderella with her ash bucket as she becomes that princess in a palace.

We even call sports teams Cinderella teams, don't we? Teams that seem like they had everything going against them, and yet here they are on top. We're a self-made millionaire who starts out with nothing and now owns a financial empire.

And it's that storyline that sells books and makes movies and continues to enthrall people. But our God has written into the storyline of history a story that trumps all of that.

He tells of many going from rags to riches, but only because one went from riches to rags.

That's the storyline of the gospel. And it continues to not only enthrall men, but make men worshipers for time and eternity of this Savior.

[2:53] For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

And so for the month of December, we have been studying the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we've seen, first of all, the wonder of the incarnation, that God, the Word, the eternal Creator, became flesh, took on our humanity, a real humanity, a body just like ours, a mind, affections, a will, just like ours, yet without sin.

The wonder of it. And yet remains God forever. So that right now he is both God and man.

And the more I study it, the more I'm moved at how little I'm moved, and how much more I ought to be amazed at that wonder of the incarnation.

And then last week we saw the purpose of it all. Why? Why did God become a man? And we saw that the immortal God, who cannot die, became a man so that he could die.

[4:26] And die he did. He died the death that we deserve to die. Death under the wrath of God. Death under the curse of God.

Death under the punishment that we should have gotten ourselves. And that only multiplies more and more the sense of wonder.

Why am I no more amazed at this great event of the incarnation, that God became man to die for me? Now we're shifting gears then this morning from the wonder, the purpose of the incarnation, now to the implications of the incarnation.

We're asking the question, what difference should this event make in my life? And what strikes me is the way that we learn about the incarnation in our New Testaments.

This doctrine of the incarnation is not found in a systematic theology book. It's rather found in some of the most practical letters that were written to churches with problems, that were written to Christians, teaching them how they are to live.

[5:45] And it's in the context of those instructions on godly living, that we're taught about this wonderful reality of the incarnation.

And so we learn from this, that the doctrine of the incarnation is meant to affect the way that we live. Not just for the month of December, but when December is long gone, we are to remember the incarnation and it's to have its effect.

Its sweetness is to be tasted in the very way that we live. So we're going to explore what differences the incarnation should make in our lives.

Or to ask it another way, what should I do with the incarnation? Or even more personally, what should I do with the incarnate God? Because we're not just studying a doctrine, an impersonal doctrine.

We're studying the personal God, man. And we're asking, what should I do with this incarnate God? So this morning, four answers to that question.

[6:51] And we must be brief with the first three. And then we're going to spend several weeks on the fourth. And just begin it this morning. First thing we should do is believe and confess it.

We should believe and confess it. There is no genuine Christianity that denies the incarnation. The Apostle John settled that 2,000 years ago when he wrote in his first epistle, chapter 4, verses 1 to 3, Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they're from God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. And this is how you can recognize the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, in humanity, is from God.

But every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of Antichrist. We live in a day when people don't like to have doctrinal standards to determine the reality of their Christianity.

I love Jesus and that's all that should matter, is what carries the day. But what Jesus do you love?

[8:13] What Jesus do you believe in? If it's not the Jesus of the Scriptures, there is no salvation in Him. For there's only salvation in this Jesus, this God incarnate one.

And John tells us, if that doctrine is not embraced and confessed, then you can be sure that the spirit of God is not there.

But it's the spirit of Antichrist. Indeed, when the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3.16, he shows that the incarnation is one of those doctrinal tests of all true Christianity.

It's not optional. He says, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. And then he quotes from what appears to be an early Christian hymn about our Savior.

He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

[9:22] And Paul can say, as he writes, there is no controversy in this among the true church of Jesus Christ. There's no naysayers on this.

We all agree on this matter. And the very first point of the unanimous confession of the Apostolic Church is that he, God, was manifested in the flesh.

No real Christian denies the incarnation. So, we are to believe and clearly confess the incarnation. Or to confess the incarnate God, Jesus Christ.

The second thing we're to do is to adore and worship him. Adore and worship this incarnate God. And that's what we've been doing the last three Sundays as we've been studying the incarnation. And we've seen the wonder of it. The purpose of it. This is one of the great works of God for which he is to be worshipped. Just like his work of dying on the cross, his work of the resurrection, his work of the ascension into heaven, his work of now interceding for us, his coming again.

[10:36] This is one of those great works for which he's to be worshipped. That he, God, became man. The very fact that Paul quotes from an early Christian hymn celebrating the incarnation instructs us that this doctrine is something more, is more than something to be contended for.

Yes, we're to contend for it. We're to fight for it. We're to believe it. We're to hold to it. We're to confess it. But it's also something that's defined its way into our very worship of God.

We're to sing of his incarnation and not just in December. Hebrews 10, we saw it last week, quotes from that inspired hymn of Psalm 40 and it tells us what Jesus said, what Christ said the moment that he left heaven to become a man on earth.

He said to his father, sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. And then I said, oh, lo I come in the volume of the book it is written of me.

I have come to do your will. Oh my God. They sang that in Psalm 40 in the Old Testament. And I'm saying, if the Old Testament saints in their worship sang about the incarnation, how much more should we now that he has come and we see why so clearly on the pages of the New Testament. [11:59] For me, I just reading some of the songs in our hymnal, For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation, thy mortal sorrow and thy life's oblation.

Love caused thine incarnation, love brought thee down to me. Lo, the incarnate God ascended, pleads the merits of his blood.
who is this in yonder stall? Who can explore his strange design? We're saying, pause and wonder at this.

Soul, be quiet and be amazed. Fall down and worship. Rise up and sing of this amazing reality of God become man to save us.

The incarnation is to be found in our worship and it's to make its own special contribution to our singing with gratitude in our hearts to God. That's the second implication of the incarnation.

[13:10] Adore and worship the incarnate God and thirdly, make use of it and make use of him, we would say. So the dust of the earth has been exalted to the right hand of God in heaven.

This morning there is a man, a real man on the throne of God. Let that sink in. Humanity is there on the highest throne of heaven and earth, ruling over all.

That's to affect the way we live here on earth. earth. You know, a man may have every tool that he could ever need in his toolbox and yet may be the worse off for not using them.

Tools were meant to be used, employed, put to work and so is the incarnate God ascended. He's meant to be put to use. John Owen, the Puritan, used that very language and encourages.

He's there. He is there for us. This God man is reigning on the throne and he's there and he's there for us. So make use of him. What use are you making of this great high priest?

[14:30] priest? And the book of Hebrews is urging us to the same use of this great high priest. Since we have such a great high priest, since the Son of God shared in our humanity, became like us in every way, and since he is not unable to sympathize with our weakness but was tempted in every way just as we are without sin, therefore, implication alert, therefore, what?

let us approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Since he has opened up a new and living way into the most holy place through the curtain that is his body, a real human body, let us therefore, implication alert, draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith.

The incarnation is to make a subjective difference in how we come to God in prayer. We're to come confidently, we're to come boldly with assurance, not just because he knows everything because he's omniscient, but because he's been here and he's experienced everything that I experience and out of that experience has a fellow feeling with me in my experience and is able therefore to give exactly the kind of mercy and grace that I need in my trial.

is there something that the God-man on the throne doesn't condemn us for our weaknesses and trials?

[16:26] He rather pities us and he sympathizes with us and he sends us help. Mercy, he's got mercy for us, forgiveness for our faults, grace for us, power to get up and renew the fight.

And it's all familiar ground. We've spent some time on this in our study on the incarnation, but I wonder are we making full use of this incarnate God ascended? He's there for us.

When you're confused and afraid, when you're disappointed and depressed, when you're burnt out and on empty, is he the first one you run to and tell about your trouble? There's a beautiful line in the gospel that when the disciples of John came and found their master had been beheaded and they took his body and they buried it.

And it says, and then they went and told Jesus. Isn't that beautiful? These men with broken hearts, a lost preacher that they had delighted in, and they found in Jesus a sympathetic heart and so they went and told Jesus.

Who do you go and tell? Do you have that intimacy with him? To know that there is a fellow feeling in his heart with you. Does that draw you?

[17:43] Does that draw you to the place of prayer? Does it open your heart and cause you just to pour out your heart? To tell it to Jesus. Tell it to Jesus. He is a friend that's well known.

Do you bear soul to the son of God? He became a man that you might. That's what God is saying to us in Hebrews.

Our conversations with the son of God ought to be different because he is a man. Because he's there for us. Well, those are the three that we've had to rush through.

And some of those have been review of where we've been in our study. But I come to the fourth implication. The so what of the incarnation. What should we do with the incarnation?

We should imitate it. We should imitate him. Now, there are many different ways that we should imitate Christ in the incarnation.

[18:52] We're going to look at just one this morning. We'll return to this theme in the future, God willing. But we need to first start with this. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is an unrepeatable act.

It is an unrepeatable event as much as the crucifixion of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, the second coming. Nobody can reproduce that, right?

None of us start out as God and become man. It's impossible. So we need to be careful when we talk about imitating the incarnation. It is an unrepeatable event, but the spirit of Christ in the incarnation is repeatable and is meant to be repeated over and over in the lives of his people.

His attitude in the incarnation is to be found reproduced in the lives of his followers. It ought to give a stamp to our character. That's right. The incarnational stamp ought to be on our lives such that when people see us, they take notice of us that we have been with Jesus, that one who was God and became man.

And there's something about that in his people. So we turn to this great text that we had read for us on the incarnation, 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9.

[20:19] for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.

So here's this one who went voluntarily from riches to rags in order that through his poverty we poor sinners might go from rags to riches and we're not left to guess who he is.

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's who did this. It's our Lord. Jesus Christ. And once again we face this wonder of the incarnation and it's the wonder of it is measured by the infinite chasm between what he was and what he became.

How big is that chasm in your mind? This passage is meant to stretch it so that we'll appreciate just how rich he was and just how poor he became.

That's the wonder of the incarnation. Well, what was he before the incarnation? This verse tells us he was rich. He was rich.

[21:28] He was rich. How rich was he? Well, he was rich in the majesty and glory of God. He shared equally in the Father's glory. He shared in that communion with God the Father and God the Spirit for eternity.

He was rich in fellowship even before the worlds began. God. He's God with all the rights and privileges of God. That's rich. He was rich in years.

He's the everlasting Father. He's the eternal one. Without beginning or ending of days before Abraham was I am. He's rich in years. He's rich in possessions.

Remember, he's that self-sufficient creator who made all things. He says in Psalm 50, every animal in the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills.

I know every bird in the mountain. And if I were hungry, I would not tell you. Isn't that good? That's who he was. So rich, doesn't have any need of anyone supplying him with anything.

[22:31] For the world is mine, he says, and all that is in it. He was rich in worship. Sinless angels focused their worship upon him.

And angelic beings incessantly stood in awe of him and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.

The whole earth is full of his glory. He's receiving this worship of the spirits of just men who died and have been perfected. They're there and they worshiped him.

He was rich in worship. everyone there in heaven acknowledged him. They knew who he was. They knew his worth. They ascribed to him glory. He was rich in power and sovereignty.

He did whatever pleased him and he was answerable to none outside of himself. He was rich in knowledge. He knew everything. He was incapable of increasing in knowledge.

[23:38] No limits on his power and knowledge. All of this and more was his and his by right because he's God infinitely rich. Rich beyond telling.

None was ever richer than the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet we read though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor. What did he become by the incarnation?

He became poor. How poor did he become? Well, the Bible tells us Jesus was born a poor family in poor circumstances.

He who had heaven for his throne now sleeps in a rude cattle stall. Heaven and earth could not contain him.

He worshipped. He who those worshipping angels are replaced now by the dumb stares of animals looking on.

[24 : 39] He who created foxes and birds is now poorer than foxes and birds because foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has no place to lay his head.

And he who owns everything does not now own his own home. He is truly homeless and sleeps on the ground for a bed and under the stars for his nightlight or in another person's home as a guest. And he dies broke. Even his clothing is stripped from him and he's buried in a borrowed tomb. Yes, the rich one became poor.

But his becoming poor is not referring so much to the lowly circumstances of his birth but to the fact that he should be born at all.

There is the mystery. There is the wonder. There is the impoverishment that God should be born a human being. That's what bankrupt him.

[25 : 48] That's what impoverished him. Just the fact that he was born. It's the incarnation itself that's being pointed out here.

his becoming a man. That's the way he became poor. That he whom the heaven and earth could not contain is now within the womb of a virgin. And he who was the great I am that I am with no needs completely independent of anything outside of himself is now a dependent human being and depending upon nourishment from that umbilical cord attached to his mother Mary.

And if he's to live he must draw life from her. That's how poor he the rich one became. And the one who was clothed in glory is now wrapped in swaddling bands and he who once inhabited the unbroken bliss of heaven now dwells in a world of sin and misery as none other than the man of sorrows tears and agony.

he was who was so rich that he could not be tempted by Satan is now the brunt of all of Satan's worst attacks and he suffers when he is tempted and he who had need of nothing is now so in need of all things and so poor that he must beg everything from his father in heaven and so he prays as a dependent man upon his heavenly father to feed him to strengthen him to help him and the one forever praised in heaven is now the one ignored on earth the one who was known by all and acknowledged by all in heaven well comes down to where he's not known where he's a nobody a man of no reputation Paul says and the one loved by the father was now despised and rejected by men and he's so poor now that he's lonely he who had that eternal fellowship in heaven is now a man and like you and me a social creature desires friendship and he wants his friends to be with him in his darkest hour but rather than watch him pray with him they're sleeping and they leave him all alone and they deserted him and fled he's poor he's so poor he doesn't have a friend by him in his time of need and so the one who was immortal god incapable of dying is now left alone to wrestle with the fears of dying and he who is the standard of justice and the judge of all the universe now suffers the greatest injustice and he who is the truth is now slandered with lies and the one crowned with eternal glory is now crowned with cruel thorns and the one clothed with divine splendor is now stripped of his clothes and hung up naked to die and he who created all oceans and lakes and rivers and springs cries

I thirst I thirst and he who gives all men life and breath now breathes his last and dies and dies how the rich one became poor by becoming a man and yet brothers and sisters he became poor still poor still because he came to die as the curse bearing substitute of his people he came to step in as a substitute in the place of his people and so that means that when he stepped in for us sinners that all our debts and liabilities were put to his account and we're talking about riches and poverty and now we're talking about all our debts being transferred onto his account our sins our guilt became his and once his he became the poorest man ever do you know that my debt to God just mine forget yours forget the world's debt my debts to God are so great that I could never begin to pay them off by an eternity of torments in hell that's how much in debt

[30 : 45] I was to God and he takes all my debt onto him and bears it to the place of punishment where he pays it all with his own precious blood and not just mine but yours brothers and sisters all

his people of all time the debt the liability was put on him how poor he became then infinite mountain of debt there was no other good enough to pay the price for sin he only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in and so the one who enjoyed the constant smile of his father for all eternity is now abandoned by him for the very first time and he who was the delight of his father is now cursed by him and made to drink the full cup of

God's wrath down to the dregs and he whose home was heaven is now made to experience hell on the cross none was richer none became poor that's the wonder of the incarnation the chasm of infinity between what he was and what he became and then we come over to the purpose of the incarnation why why did the one so rich become so poor and we're back at the purpose of it what was the purpose and the answer is for your sakes for your sakes though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might be made rich that's why and I wonder if that's sunk in we've heard the Christmas story so often have we have we had our hearts stirred afresh with the reality did he do this for me that's that him for me kind

Jesus was thine incarnation this verse takes us right into the heart of the son of God what was the moving influence behind the incarnation he wants to enrich poor sinners that's it he became poor to make us rich well what were we when he found us we were poor dirt poor weren't we how poor were we we were bankrupt of any goodness at all to commend ourselves to God for entrance into heaven entrance into his favor we didn't have one good thing to say!

We were not a shred of righteousness of our own that would suffice God's holy eyes our best deeds only increased our debt and condemnation our sins had put us so in debt to God that though we suffered a billion years in hell we would not ever get to the place of having completed the first down payment on our debt it was infinite debt against an infinite God requiring infinite torments in hell we were so poor that we had nothing to offer to diminish God's wrath one degree but the Lord Jesus Christ willingly impoverished himself by taking our debt upon himself and bearing it to the place of punishment and paying that debt to make us rich and how rich are you brother how rich are you sister how rich

I am since Jesus came my way redeem my soul and turn my night today how very rich how very rich I am have you tallied up your riches lately brothers and sisters have you counted up how wealthy you are because he became poor for you what is it worth to have all your sins forgiven to have them remembered no more what's that worth to you you can't put a price on it there will be millionaires billionaires at the day of judgment who would have gladly given all their riches for that one blessing but it will be too late and you have that I have that all my sins not in part but the whole nail to his cross I bear them no more I'm forgiven how rich I am how rich you are we could stop there and we'd be rich wouldn't we eternally rich oh but then

[35:36] Jesus perfect righteousness the very thing I need to get into heaven and I get the unceasing prayers of Jesus for me Jesus praying for me all through this life what's that worth I have the spirit of Jesus dwelling in me every day there to help me there to strengthen me I have God for me in all things I have his loving kindness that is better than life I have his blessing of the Lord makes rich and adds no sorrow with it I have his great and precious promises I have his precious word more precious than gold than much fine gold I have a precious faith a faith in things unseen why do you believe that there's a God you haven't seen him why do you believe there's a Christ sitting on the throne who's a God who's God and man why do you believe in heaven hell the judge you haven't seen it but you have a precious faith you're rich you're rich you have joy unspeakable and full of glory peace with

God freedom from the bondage to sin and Satan newness of life all the old life it's gone I have new life in Christ and a reason to live and one to live it with my Savior and instead of that eternity under torments I have everlasting life with Christ to look forward to when I should have rotted in hell forever I will be basking in the bliss of heaven how rich we are and every single one of those riches are ours because he who was rich became poor that he might enrich us in just those ways he won those riches for us by his impoverishment we're as rich as Christ is rich we're co-heirs with Christ sharing in his glory partaking of his divine nature the unsearchable riches of his grace you know when a man and a woman marry and unite in marriage they share all things alike so when my wife and I were united in marriage her blue and white

Mustang became mine and my three speed bicycle became hers and we shared everything alike and it's that way with our Lord Jesus Christ when I was joined to Jesus by faith all of his righteousness became mine and all my sins became his I'm rich because I married up I'm married

to the one with infinite riches and I ask you this morning what kind of a God is it who finds joy in enriching wretched sinners and not only enriching us but enriching us at the cost of his own blood his own life and what is the folly of all who continue to reject such a great God and Savior as our Lord Jesus can it be that some of you here this morning have been pushing away this Savior who comes with his arms laden with gifts to enrich you for eternity and you still have pushed him off and said not now he brings grace everlasting favor undeserved and he's here this morning in the preaching of his gospel offering himself and his riches again come and take me he says come to me and all that I am is yours and all in Jesus I find he will give to you all these riches if you will take him don't reject him again can you see why the greatest sin the greatest insult to God is to reject this Savior after he has done so much to impoverish himself to enrich us can you see what a great offense it is to reject!

him to treat it as a ho-hum little diddly diddle dumb thing that doesn't mean a hill of beans to me I'm going to live without this Savior I don't need this substitute oh I plead with you to see this Jesus the Lord Jesus Christ full of grace for sinners so here he offers himself receive him receive his grace here's that never ending story of one becoming poor to enrich others but why is this verse about the incarnation found in chapter 8 of 2nd Corinthians why is it found in this letter to a local church in Corinth well because Paul's urging the Corinthian church to be generous and giving to the needs of the saints back in Palestine they probably never saw him never met him but they were children of God and and they're in great need and Paul says let's send help to them so

[41 : 20] Paul stirs up generosity and he wants to spur them on to excel in the grace of giving and so he does so by holding before them two examples how about those Macedonian churches who were so poor themselves and yet out of that poverty and joy welled up this great generosity to give oh but the winner of all the real powerful example is the Lord Jesus and that's how he uses this verse on the incarnation you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor!

here's the supreme example to move us to sacrificial generosity in our giving to others the Lord Jesus if he impoverished himself that way to make me rich then nothing I give or do for him can ever be too much all I have is his now to be used for him and his purposes and so the implication of the incarnation is clear I am to imitate the spirit of Christ in the incarnation in my giving to those in need this is the crowbar that's meant to open wide our tight wallets not a command here but an example the incarnation and Paul just assumes that everyone who personally knows this grace of having been enriched by Jesus poverty that they'll get it you know it he said you know the grace you've received now freely you've received freely give like that let the incarnation pry open your hand to be generous even to the point of sacrifice he became poor to enrich others you now become poor to enrich others that's why we set before you this opportunity it's just one of millions people in need people in need of the physical stuff that keeps people alive of food and supplies and medicines but also in the other hand to be giving them this gospel about this one who can really make them rich rich for eternity so we set that before you let's imitate the incarnation let's become poor let's let's be moved by the grace of Jesus to enrich others he's the one who tells us it's more blessed to give than to receive but before you give a penny first receive God's indescribable gift yourself and then you will have the heart to give out of that fullness of grace that you have been shown let's pray tell me the old old story the hymn writer said and we would ask Holy Spirit you would tell us this old old story of Jesus birth over and over until it seeps into our pores of our hearts and shows us how rich Jesus was and how poor he became for us that he would become poor for these 33 years that he might enrich us forever please work in us to will and to do of your good pleasure please give us faith to go on believing and confessing such wonders give us grace to see how wonderful it is and to stand in awe and worship and grace to make use of our God man on the throne who invites us to come and then to imitate him in so many ways draw sinners this day from their poverty into everlasting riches make them rich today Lord don't let them live another day of their lives in such poverty guilty vile and condemned bring them to be forgiven adopted rich sons we ask it for Jesus praise amen may