

B.A.S.I.C.

Brothers And Sisters In Christ

Immanuel

By Pastor Emeritus Daniel J. Fleischer

In the uniqueness of the divine God-head the pre-incarnate Son of God was Immanuel, even as He was Immanuel in His incarnate state, and is the God-Man Immanuel in His ascended state. As there never was a time when God was not, so there has never been a time that Christ was not IMMANUEL--God with us!

The Pre-incarnate Immanuel

"In the *beginning* was the Word and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). In the garden Adam and Eve "heard the sound of the *Lord God walking in the garden* in the cool of the day..." (Genesis 3:8). "I *appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*, as God Almighty, but by my name LORD I was not known to them" (Exodus 6:3). When Israel fled Egypt, "*The LORD went before them* by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light..." (Exodus 13:21). Not only was Israel provided direction and light; they had protection as "*The Angel of God (the Son of God), who went before the camp* of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud *went from before them and stood behind them*" (Exodus 14:19). The Lord said to Joshua, ""No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses so *I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you*" (Joshua 1:5). To Joshua the people said, "Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only *the LORD your God will be with you, as He was with Moses*" (Joshua 1:17). "Where can I go

from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, *You are there*; if I make my bed in hell, behold *You are there*. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there *Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me...*My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. *Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed.*" (Psalm 139). When men of God were thrown into the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt,,,,, and the form of the fourth is *like the Son of God*" (Daniel 3:25). "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; for I have called *you* by your name; *You are Mine*. When you pass through the waters, *I will be with you*; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. *For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior...*" (Isaiah 43: 1-2).

God's Promise: Forever

"Hear now, O house of David...the Lord Himself will give you a sign: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name **IMMANUEL**'" (Isaiah 7:14). And so it happened according to the word of the Lord spoken through the prophet, saying: ""Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name **IMMANUEL**' which is translated, '*God with us*'" (Matthew 1:23). And she brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and

laid Him in a manger..." (Luke 2:7). Of the Son of Mary the centurion at the cross declared, "Truly, this Man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). We would amend the statement of the centurion and say, "Truly He was and is, "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God" (Nicene Creed), Immanuel, God with us!

The Incarnate Immanuel

The whole New Testament abounds with incidents where Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, fed the hungry, embraced the children, cast out demons, comforted the sorrowing, taught the inquiring, raised the dead. Jesus was there. As Jesus went up on the mountain to pray, the disciples were toiling in a storm on the sea when suddenly they "*saw him walking on the sea.*" He stepped into the boat and calmed the storm (Matthew 14:26, 32). After His resurrection Jesus appeared to the weeping Mary (John 20). He appeared to the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24), and also to His fearful disciples who were behind locked doors (John 20). Yet again He appeared on the sea-shore where the disciples enjoyed breakfast provided them by the Lord (John 21).

For our life while on this earth, as well as for the mission He assigned to His Church before His ascension, He promised us for our comfort and peace of heart, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

*"Lo, I am with
you always,
even to the
end of the
age."*

Matt. 28:20

The Ascended Immanuel

Immanuel's promise is eternal. As He told Joshua, so the LORD has told us in Hebrews 13:5, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*"

Day by day Immanuel is "God with us." His unseen presence is with us. He is with us in His holy Word, and in the Sacraments. He is with us in every fruit of faith or act of kindness that He generates in the heart of those who weep with us in our sorrow, comfort us in our distress, help us in our need, and strengthen us in our weakness.

How blessed we are not only each Christmas time but every minute, of every day, of every year, of every decade, that we have the eternal Immanuel with us until the ages end and the circle is complete as it comes to pass for believers in Christ Who prayed in His grand high-priestly prayer, "*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them*" (John 17: 24–26).

The Incarnation According to John

John 1:1-18

By Missionary Matthew Ude

The One True God

Whereas, all the other Gospels assume a basic knowledge of the Judaic faith on the part of their readers and thus a basic knowledge of the true God and the history of the world, John begins his gospel with a poetic summary

of the Old Testament mixed with a foretaste of the new. At once introducing his reader to the true God and setting forth the vital importance and proper place of Christ in this history.

At no point in these first 18 verses are the

Christ and God ever mentioned or referred to separately. It is always through Christ that God is seen and when John looks for or at God it is always Christ whom he sees.

One does not need the technical grammatical discussions centered on verse one to prove that John portrays Christ as God equal to the Father. The entire first eighteen verses of John One leave no other possibility. They are an anthem to the Word, which would be blasphemous if that Word did not share equal glory with God the Father.

Verse 17 places the revelation given through Jesus Christ above the revelation which God gave Moses.

Verse 14 speaks of the glory of the Word as exactly equal to that of the Father.

Verse 11 speaks of the world as “His own,” giving him full and sole position over all creation.

These are just a few examples. John could hardly have been clearer that Jesus is the one eternal almighty God. Every verse of his introduction ascribes to the Christ attributes which cannot be claimed by any even a single step lower than God.

*“And the
Word became
flesh and
dwelt among
us.” John 1:14*

God Become Man

The simple fact of God having become Man is arguably more central to the Gospel of John than the subsequent crucifixion and resurrection.

In his introduction John does not introduce us to Jesus nor to Jehovah, but to the Word, the God who as a Man spoke to men.

The entirety of his introduction, the first 18 verse of John, focus on the phrase of verse 14, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” just as surely as if he had highlighted this phrase and drawn arrows all around it.

If you were to write down the major thoughts of each section of these first eighteen verses you would find that verse 14 acts like a mirror reflecting backwards the exact thoughts which stand in front of it.

When John proclaims “we beheld His glory,” He does not speak of the glory which shone forth on the mount of transfiguration, as one might at first naturally assume. But rather he describes the glory as that which is “full of grace and truth.” Grace, the undeserved love of God, and truth are not seen in physical white light no matter how bright. They were and are seen in the daily acts and words of Jesus’ life. Acts which were filled with love but nevertheless always give witness to the truth. Words that were never anything but the eternal truth and yet were always spoken in love no matter how harsh.

It is for this reason that we are able to see what Moses could not. For to him was given the law, which proclaimed the glory of God as the perfect righteous God. But through Jesus was given the glory of God that was seen through acts of love and truth of a Man, of the Man God Jesus Christ.

In the Word

When John names Him the Word, he certainly does so in order to emphasize that it is through this Man that we hear and learn about God. This is seen immediately from the parallel of verse eighteen in which John repeats the exact thoughts of verse one, but instead of simply calling Him the Word, uses the more descriptive phrase “He has declared Him.”

But John also apparently uses the Greek philosophical term Logos much as Paul used the altar to the unknown God in Athens. Some Greeks had used the term to indicate

the creating force behind the universe. Verses 3 and 4 parallel the thoughts of these Greeks. John uses the well known teaching technique of starting from something familiar. And yet he immediately makes it quite clear that what he teaches has no common ground with that same Greek philosophy. He calls the Word light and all men darkness. He strikes at the heart of the pride of the Greeks calling them to repentance and acknowledgement of the uselessness of their claimed superior wisdom.

With one word John calls the Greek to recognize the true source of light and life, and calls all men to seek knowledge of God only through the revelation of Jesus, but he also speaks to the Jews to recognize this Man as the active saving power of God. Throughout the Old Testament God is portrayed as performing his saving acts through the Word, Ps 33:6, Ps 107:20, Is 55:11. These are just a few examples. And thus in verse twelve it is this Word which has the power to act in saving men.

In this way John portrays the totality of the incarnation in the single word "Word". The creator God acting in power to save men in words and deeds as a Man.

"...and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14b

Personal

"We beheld His glory." This is the first time that John uses anything other than third person pronouns. Even when he speaks of "His own" people John does not make it personal saying "He gave to **us** the right." But here he makes it personal saying "we" beheld his glory.

There is no doubt that the seeing of these acts of love and words of truth is the most personal thing to John. For in his entire gospel he always refers to himself as the recipient of this love and truth, naming himself the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

And yet John does not attempt to prove this statement with accounts of the wonderful acts of love which Jesus did for him personally. But rather he proves Jesus' love for him by showing Jesus' love for all. John takes this universal love and makes it personal because he had seen that in the incarnation the universal had been made personal.

Jesus weeps at the death of his friend Lazarus, because he is His friend and his death touches Him.

Jesus gives wine at the wedding for the sake of His mother. And because He desired that these men should be glad and rejoice in this individual celebration.

He heals the blind man and then returns to give him comfort and strength. The blind man is not just some person, whom Jesus heals showing how great He is. The blind man has a family. The blind man reacts to Jesus. The blind man's life is changed. The blind man has trouble and shows courage. He is an individual and the God Man deals with him as an individual. The women of Samaria, Lazarus, the blind man, Nicodemus, Nathaniel are all individuals with individual histories, triumphs, and difficulties. John shows them as such and shows God in Christ touching them personally.

The Life of Men

In John the first miracle of Christ is nothing more than a gift given for the purely physical enjoyment of men. It is thus a vivid picture of chapter one verse seventeen.

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

What a difference this Christ is to the rigid law giver, or the pure utilitarian. Man is His creation. Beauty is His creation. Joy is His creation. John says "in Him was life," "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more

abundantly,” “that your joy may be full.”

There is no denying that the life given by the Word is far more than the physical. When Jesus tells us to pray that “our joy may be full,” He does not want us to pray for cars, toys, and dresses. He wants us to pray for the joy that comes from above. But there is also no denying that it includes the physical.

The Word rejoices at the wedding and cries at the funeral. He does not despise the emotional or the social aspect of men. The Word is a Man who meets us as a Man and blesses all aspects of that humanity, except that of sin.

To thus rejoice with a heart of worship and faith in God would be impossible without the incarnate God. For everything we do is so full of sin that we would have no choice but either to reject God or follow the monks, not that even that would remove the sin from our lives. Yet Jesus teaches us daily repentance. Repentance that never makes light of sin, always acknowledges its continual presence, and seeks to remove, but at the same time grasps in faith the promise of God and lives rejoicing in His forgiveness. And because we live in His forgiveness we can rejoice also in all the gifts He gives to us.

Eternal Grace

This incarnate God is the one who gives grace for grace. We can translate this many different ways. My favorite is to say grace because of grace. Thus we are met with an eternal chain of causes, where the answer to why is always because of His love. His love causes him to give and the giving of His love causes Him to give more. The character, love, or faith of man never once enters the equation.

When it comes to us giving we often hold back for any number of reasons. “They are just going to use it for alcohol.” “They need to learn to work for themselves.” “We are encouraging

them to beg.” Yet God never once withholds His grace because man is going to waste it.

In India it is common for begging women to rent children from their poor neighbors. They can get more money begging if they have children, Of course they don’t care about these children but beat and abuse them. This is such an abomination, that one seems well justified in not giving to such women. And yet who am I to withhold because I judge someone to be unworthy of my puny little gifts.

The Incarnate Word does not withhold His gifts from any, even such as me. He showers His gifts equally on the adulterous women, the woman of Samaria, the Pharisee Nicodemus, the disciples, the lepers, and even the Roman men who pounded the nails through His hands. He gives and gives and gives. Always He gives first forgiveness, showing by the very way He talks to them that they are forgiven. Even the feeding of the five thousand, knowing how they will completely misread His intentions, He nevertheless gives and gives in abundance.

Perhaps it was this very thought which drove John to write about these people in such detail. He is showing what kind of people they were to portray more vividly the love of the Man who is God. He is proving that he was the beloved not because he, John, was special but because Christ was. He is calling us to rejoice also in the ever giving forgiveness and love of the God who became Man and died for our sins.

“And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.”

John 1:16