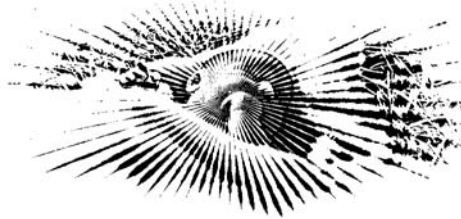


# Born of a Woman—Atonement<sup>1</sup> and the Incarnation<sup>2</sup>



## SABBATH—NOVEMBER 15

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 1:18–25; Matthew 3:13–17; Matthew 4:1–11; Matthew 9:35; Mark 1:12, 13; John 1:1, 2, 14; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But you know that Christ came to take our sins away. And there is no sin in him” (1 John 3:5, NlrV).

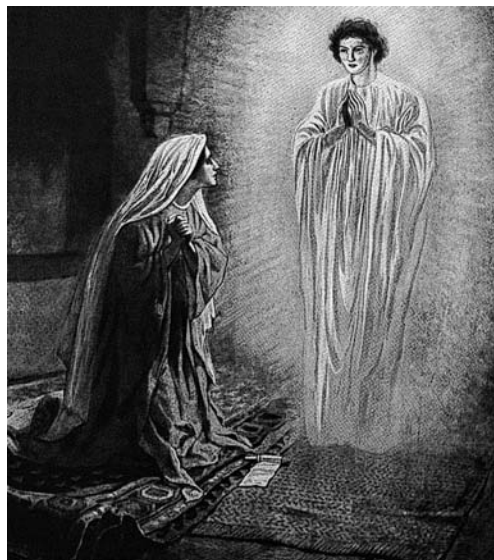
**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** To show that in the person and work of Christ, God was bringing humans (men, women, and children) back to peace and unity with Him and with one another.

**SCIENTISTS ADMIT THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY LEARN,** the universe<sup>3</sup> remains full of mystery.<sup>4</sup> The Bible is full of mystery. The greatest mystery is God's work for our salvation.<sup>5</sup> This week we will study how the Son of God became a human. It is possibly the greatest mystery in all the cosmos.<sup>6</sup> Our limited human mind cannot understand how the Creator was willing to become a lowly human in a world of sin and death. How did that wonderful event happen? Only the Godhead<sup>7</sup> knows! One thing we do know is that if the Son of God had not become a human, there would be no forgiveness of sin and peace with God. That the Son of God put Himself into human form was a very important part of God's plan for the salvation of humans.

1. atonement—the forgiveness and cleansing we receive by faith through Jesus' sacrifice (death) on the cross.  
 2. incarnation—encased in human form. In other words, Christ is God, but He came into this world as a human.  
 3. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.  
 4. mystery—anything that cannot be fully understood or explained.  
 5. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.  
 6. cosmos—the universe (all matter, things, planets, stars) as a system (group of things) that is ruled by order.  
 7. Godhead—the Father, His Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit are the three Persons who make up the Godhead. Together they are one God.

**SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 16****MYSTERY OF INCARNATION<sup>8</sup>  
(Colossians 2:9)**

Mary was told that she would have a special Child. Wondering, she asked, “How will this be . . . since I am a virgin?”<sup>9</sup> The angel then said, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’ ” (Luke 1:34, 35, NIV). This Child (Jesus) came into our history through the creative power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary (Matthew 1:18). The verb *overshadow* reminds us of Exodus 40:35. There we find a description of the glory of



**An angel told Mary that through the Holy Spirit’s power she would give birth to a special Child.**

the Lord on the cloud coming down to live among men in the tabernacle (tent). The Lord was coming down in a mysterious way in order to be born in the womb of this woman.

The coming of Jesus into human<sup>10</sup> form is about the joining of the divine (of God) and the human. The two natures<sup>11</sup> remain separate. But what took place was not just God coming to live *in* a human but *as* a human. This was a *real* incarnation. Christ is truly God and truly man.

**What does Colossians 2:9 tell us about who Jesus was?**

The point is that Jesus was fully God! Suppose Jesus had lost one or several characteristics<sup>12</sup> of God during the Incarnation. Then we would have had less than the incarnation of God. But Paul explains that Christ in heaven was “in very nature God” (Philippians 2:6, NIV), equal to God. But in the Incarnation He took “the very nature of a servant. He was made in human form” (verse 7, NIV).

Jesus put everything He had under the authority (power) of the Father. But in doing that He did not lose any of His traits as God. During the Incarnation, Jesus as God was hidden in Jesus the human (person). But the God in Jesus was always fully

8. incarnation—when Jesus was born as a person.

9. virgin—a person who has never had sex.

10. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

11. natures—the particular aspects or qualities of something that make it what it is. Jesus had two natures: a divine (of God) nature and a human (of man) nature.

12. characteristics—what a person’s character (who someone is) is made of; the things that make you who you are, such as patience, kindness, hope, laziness, anger, and so on.

present. For the purpose of the atonement God needed to come in human form, because only God could save us.

**How many miracles happened in Matthew 1:18–25? Miracles are things that cannot be explained other than as the special action of God. What should this tell us about how limited we are in understanding the most important truths? When we cannot understand something, why must we be careful not to think it must be untrue?**

### MONDAY—NOVEMBER 17

#### GOD AND HUMANS (PEOPLE) REUNITED<sup>13</sup> (1 Corinthians 15:45)

**What proof do we have in Matthew 26:38; Luke 2:40; and Galatians 4:4 that Christ was not only God but also human?**

Greek philosophy<sup>14</sup> from before the time of Christ thought of human flesh as evil. The flesh was a prison for the soul. Accepting this view, some early Christians decided that the Son of God could not have come in a human body. He only seemed to have done so, they argued. But the New Testament makes it very clear that Jesus was a real human person. He was born of a woman, grew and developed as a child, learned obedience (Hebrews 5:8), and suffered and

died (Matthew 26:38; Luke 23:46). The Bible also is clear that Jesus was God in human flesh (John 1:1, 2, 14; Hebrews 1:3). The real union<sup>15</sup> of the human and God in Christ must happen for the atonement.

Why? Because after the Fall, Adam and Eve and all of their future children were separated from God. It was a separation that threatened their lives. It was impossible for humans by themselves to be reunited with God. For this reason, the Lord took the first step and reunited Himself with humans. And this He did with the Incarnation, when God became human. Christ became the “place” where the God part joined with the human part in a permanent union. This unity was deeper than the unity between God and humans in the past.



**Christ became the *place* where God joined with the human family to bring us back to Him.**

13. reunited—brought together again.

14. philosophy—the study of human (having to do with people) thought about the meaning of life, how mind relates to matter, and the problems of right and wrong.

15. union—the act of joining together so as to make one new whole.

**How does Paul speak of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:45? And what does that mean?**

In Jesus there was a new beginning for the human group. Jesus was the Creator and the head of that new humanity. He was the new Adam. From Him a new human race (group) was coming into life. Through Christ every willing human can be brought into complete union with God.

**Look up at the stars at night. The wonderful truth that Jesus took upon Himself human form and died for our sins is as real as those stars. How should this truth change your life?**

## **TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 18**

### **THE BAPTISM<sup>16</sup> OF JESUS (Matthew 3:13–17)**

**What important truths can we learn from the story of Jesus' baptism by John in Matthew 3:13–17?**

Christ's baptism has a very important meaning. When Jesus asked for baptism, He put Himself in the same class with sinners. He did not need baptism but asked for it for our sake. By going through baptism, Jesus left an example for those who want to follow Him. But His baptism was more

than an example. Jesus' baptism made it possible for us to be joined to Him through our baptism and to receive the blessings of His baptism at the hands of John.

Second, as Jesus was coming out of the water, He knelt down and prayed to the Father (Luke 3:21, 22). The Bible does not record what was in the prayer. But the answer given by the Father gives us an idea of what was in it. He announced, " 'You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you' " (verse 22, NlrV). God was telling Jesus that His prayer had been heard.

Third, the Godhead (the Father, the Son [Jesus], and the Holy Spirit) was involved and present in the baptism of Jesus. The Father's voice was heard from heaven. The Holy Spirit made Himself seen through the symbol<sup>17</sup> of a dove. God's love was flowing down to His Son as a member of the human race. God accepted Jesus as our representative.<sup>18</sup> Humans were no longer separated from the love of God. This is because Christ formed a way for God's love to reach humans.

**What is the important message to us from today's study about how we as sinful humans can have acceptance with God? Is that acceptance found in how well we perform or keep the commandments? Or is it found only in**

16. baptism—when a person is put completely under water and brought back up out of it. This shows that God through Jesus has completely washed away this person's sins and given him or her new life.

17. symbol—an object, idea, mark, sign, or person that stands for, or means the same as, another person or thing.

18. representative—someone who acts for another.

**Jesus? Why must we always remember that answer even when we have bad days?**



When Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit was seen above Jesus in the form of a dove.

### WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 19

#### TEMPTATIONS<sup>19</sup> OF JESUS (Matthew 4:1–11)

List the three temptations in Matthew 4:1–11 and Mark 1:12, 13 that Jesus faced in the wilderness after His baptism.

The temptations of Jesus show several differences with those of Adam and Eve. First, Adam was tempted<sup>20</sup> while in the Garden of Eden. Eden was free from sin. But

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness under the influence<sup>21</sup> of evil powers. Second, Adam had plenty of food. But Jesus had no food. Third, Adam was not fasting. Jesus was. Fourth, both Adam and Jesus were tempted to satisfy their desire for food apart from the will of God. Adam accepted the food, Jesus did not. Fifth, Adam was tempted to question what God had said and showed lack of trust in God's word. Jesus also was tempted to question God's word. But He refused to fall for this temptation. Sixth, Adam openly went against the Lord and joined Satan in his rebellion (war) against God and His government. Jesus was offered the kingdoms of this world if He would only worship and join Satan in his struggle against the kingdom of God. But Jesus remained loyal to the Father.



Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world if only He would worship Satan.

19. temptations—things that can turn us away from God and that try to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

20. tempted—being presented with an opportunity (chance) to do wrong.

21. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

Jesus overcame Satan on these points that Adam failed to overcome. By doing this, Jesus was undoing Adam's failure. And He was making His (Christ's) victory available to those who would put their faith in Him. The "new" human group will not receive from Satan a spirit of disobedience (breaking God's law) and rebellion, as the "old" human group did from Adam. Instead, the "new" humans will make a humble surrender<sup>22</sup> to God's will (plan) for our lives.

**According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, what does Jesus' victory (win) over all sin mean for us?**

That deep unity between the Father and the Son was not broken through the temptations and attacks that Satan threw against the Son of God. Jesus overcame every temptation and remained totally dependent on the Father. No other human being has been, is, or will be exactly like Jesus. He did not sin by His own choice. It is there that we find the reason for Jesus' ability to save us. The Sinless One became sin for us so that we can receive by faith the righteousness (holy life) that was not ours but His. The perfect sacrificial<sup>23</sup> Lamb took on Himself our sin so that He can restore us to unity and peace with the Creator.

## THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 20

### MINISTRY (WORK) OF HEALING (Matthew 9:35)

Through His healing ministry Jesus was overcoming the part that death played in the suffering of the people. Jesus' future victory over the very kingdom of death was foreseen in His daily healing works.

Jesus' miracles also served to break down social barriers. The leper felt accepted by Him (Mark 1:41). The Samaritan came back to give thanks (Luke 17:11–17). And He also reached out to a Syro-Phoenician woman and healed her daughter (Mark 7:29, 30). The separation of humans from one another was being broken down through Jesus' healing ministry. He was creating a new kind of people at peace with one another.

But Jesus' miracles also served to bring people back to peace and fellowship with the Father.

**Which other methods did Jesus use in His ministry to bring people back to peace with society and with God, according to Mark 2:15–17 and John 4:39–42?**

The separation between God and humans was bridged by both Jesus' own person and the power of His

22. surrender—the act of giving one's whole life to Jesus to love and serve Him and to obey His holy law.

23. sacrificial—having to do with an animal, gift, or offering that is given up to get something else that is wanted.

words of salvation. To those who received Jesus, “he gave them the right to become children of God” (John 1:12, NIV). These persons were born not of the will<sup>24</sup> of the flesh but of God (verse 13). Jesus Himself was gathering a new group of people who were at peace with God, in and through Him. Jesus tried to bring humans back to God and to one another. He did this by eating with them in open fellowship. Through these fellowships Jesus was preaching that God accepts any person who comes to Him and that His followers should do the same.

**Take a look at your relationships and ask yourself: How is my relationship with God made clear in the way I treat and accept others?**

### FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 21

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Christ’s work was to bring man back to God through His human nature, and God to man through His divine [godly] nature.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Confrontation*, page 38.

**Prayer at Baptism:** “Jesus received baptism at the hands of John. In coming up out of the water Jesus bowed upon Jordan’s banks, and offered up a prayer to Heaven. . . . Jesus was accepted by Heaven as a representative of the human race. With all our sin and weakness, we are not thrown

aside as worthless. Instead, we are accepted in the Beloved. For this reason, heaven has been opened to our prayers through the Son of God. The gates are left open. And the light of heaven will shine upon all those whom Jesus came to save, if they will come within the light of the Sun of Righteousness [Jesus]. This is because God has made sure that every soul who has accepted Jesus is saved.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, July 28, 1890.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Give as many possible answers as you can to this question: Why was the Incarnation very important to Christ’s work of atonement?
- ❷ Why is Christ as a human so important to us? Why is Christ as God so important to us too?
- ❸ As we saw in Sunday’s study, there are many mysteries about the incarnation of Jesus. What other mysteries are there, such as in nature? How can these other mysteries help us understand what it means to live by faith?
- ❹ How can we as a church follow Christ in healing and bringing people back to God? What does your local church do? What more can and should it do? Most important, how can you be more involved?

24. will—the desires and lusts of our fallen or sinful selves.