

Jesus' Nature: Incarnate

Pastors will sometimes say “Jesus incarnate” or “Jesus is God incarnate.” What does incarnate mean? The English word “incarnate” arose from the Latin term “incarno” which means “in flesh.” This concept developed from the Latin translation of John 1:14:

English: “And the Word became flesh...” / Latin: “et Verbum **caro** factum est” (John 1:14)

Incarnation describes the condition where deity and humanity exist in the person of Jesus Christ. How do you make sense of this?

1. When encountering difficult concepts, carefully observe the biblical evidence and allow your interpretation arise from your data. Remember: the more you observe, the less you need to interpret, and the more accurate your understanding. Is Jesus' nature the same as God His Father?

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14, NIV)

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (John 1:18, NIV)

Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. (John 14:10-11, NIV)

2. Is Jesus' nature the same as our human nature?

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:6-7, NIV)

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Heb 2:17, NIV)

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. (Heb 4:14-15, NIV)

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross! (Phil 2:6-8, NIV)

3. How are two different natures united in One Person? As you consider the evidence, which option reflects your data? What are the problems of some of the options? Discuss and share your findings!

Jesus Christ had a human body, but His mind and spirit were of divine nature.

Jesus Christ had two separate and distinct persons (human and divine) in one human body.

Jesus Christ had a single divine nature which was a mixture, a blended synthesis, of the original divine nature absorbing the human nature.

Jesus Christ had a single divine nature, fully human and fully God, in union and without division.

Jesus' Nature: Incarnate Teacher Notes

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Warn the student: when presented snippets of verses, it's vitally important to evaluate their context so that your observation of the text is accurate and not out of context

Ask the student: while the Bible presents Jesus as fully God, is He a clone or a distinct individual?

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Ask the student: what was a reason for Jesus to be fully man?

3. How are two different natures united in One Person? As you consider the evidence, which option reflects your data? What are the problems of some of the options? Discuss and share your findings!

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This view is incorrect; the Bible presents Jesus as fully God and fully human.

Jesus Christ had two separate and distinct persons (human and divine) in one human body.

This view is incorrect; the Bible consistently presents Jesus Christ as one person. If Jesus was two persons, you have problems such as which person was crucified in atonement?

Jesus Christ had a single divine nature which was a mixture, a blended synthesis, of the original divine nature absorbing the human nature.

This view is incorrect; by modifying two natures to create a third means that Jesus was neither fully God or fully man.

Jesus Christ had a single divine nature, fully human and fully God, in union and without division.

This is the correct view.

Inform the student: it is perfectly fine to be puzzled by the mystery of how the natures of God and of a human being can be fully united in a single person.