



**KING'S  
CHURCH**  
EDINBURGH

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# The Incarnation

The Christmas story is about the incarnation, God taking on human flesh (*Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 1:30-37, John 1:1-5, 14, 18*). It's extremely complicated and the early church had to work extremely hard to produce documents that accurately summarised and described what the Bible shows us (see links to the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian Definition below). It sets Christianity apart from all other faiths and sects, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism (*1 John 2:22-23, 4:2-3*). It's so important because the incarnation is the key to all of Christianity: it explains how Jesus could do miracles, teach with authority, die and rise again to new life – and for all of this to have an impact on us.

Four titles/names of Jesus that show what good news the incarnation is:

## 1. He's the Son of God, so we know what God is like.

We're shown what this means in *Hebrews 1:1-3, Colossians 2:9, John 14:9*. By taking on human flesh, God is able to show us what we could not otherwise see. Whenever you aren't sure what God is like, or someone is challenging you about this, look at Jesus because it is in Him that we definitively see God.

## 2. He's the Son of Man, so the physical world is good.

The title Jesus most preferred to use about Himself was "the Son of Man", partly because it means "belonging to humanity." Not only did Jesus create all things but that He took on physical flesh and experienced life as we do. He worked (*Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3*), cooked (*John 21:9, 13*) ate and drank (*Matthew 11:19*). In all this He was

God too, as shown by the miraculous catch of fish (*John 21*) and turning water into wine (*John 2*). He was resurrected in a physical body too (*Luke 24:39*) and what happened to Him will happen to us (*1 Corinthians 15:2*).

### 3. He's Immanuel, so God understands us.

Immanuel means God with us (*Matthew 1:23*). He has lived on this earth with the physical limitations we have and the emotions we have (*Mark 3:5, Matthew 19:24, Mark 3:17, Luke 10:21, John 11:35*). Many religions present god as a distant and untouchable figure, but Jesus literally was carried in Mary's body, and later her arms and the arms of others, and was jostled in crowds. Don't isolate yourself from Him when He has come so close, don't give up hope when He has such power: talk with Him, knowing that He has experienced human life and that He is Almighty God (*Hebrews 4:15-16*).

### 4. He's Jesus, so we can be saved.

The name Jesus means God saves (*Matthew 1:22*). *Matthew 8:23-27* shows us His humanity and divinity together, and the cross does this climactically (*Romans 8:3, 2 Corinthians 8:9*). He has to be human if He's to represent us, He has to be God if He's going to live without sinning; He has to be human if He's going to die, He has to be God if His dying will defeat Sin and Death. Hallelujah, He is.

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## Resources:

- Artwork used: Adoration of the Shepherds (<https://www.artbible.info/art/large/656.html>) by Gerrit van Honthorst (1622).
- Video explaining the phrase "Son of Man" (<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/son-of-man/>) in more detail than Luke had time for.
- The Coming (<https://www.poeticous.com/r-s-thomas/the-coming>) by R.S. Thomas.
- Video of Nicene Creed (<https://vimeo.com/160494511>).
- Text of Chalcedonian Definition (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-hypostatic-union/>).
- Explanation of key differences between Christianity and Mormonism (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-8-beliefs-you-should-know-about-mormons-when-they-knock-at-the-door/>).

- Explanation of key differences between Christianity and Jehovah's Witnesses (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-11-beliefs-you-should-know-about-jehovahs-witnesses-when-they-knock-at-the-door/>).

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## Questions:

- How are you as a small group going to do Reading God's Word Together in 2020?
- Why is it essential that Christians believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man, two natures in one Person? Given how complicated this is, how much effort should we give to trying to comprehend it?
- Why does the Bible focus much less on the "How" of the incarnation and much more on the "Why"?
- Which of the four titles of Jesus that Luke mentioned excited you the most: Son of God, Son of Man, Immanuel, Jesus?
- Theologian Fred Sanders says that "the incarnation needs no illustration"; what do you think he means by this?
- How would you explain this to a non-Christian?



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