
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

LECTURE 22: INCARNATION

Lecture Presenter: Robert D. McCurley M.Div.



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev. Robert McCurley is the minister of the Gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church in Greenville, SC, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). www.freechurchcontinuing.org

Module

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

30 LECTURES

ROBERT D. McCURLEY M.Div.

21 CHAPTERS OLD TESTAMENT · 9 CHAPTERS NEW TESTAMENT

Old Testament Lectures:

1. Introduction
2. Creation
3. Fall
4. Noah
5. Abraham
6. Patriarchs I
7. Patriarchs II
8. Exodus
9. Sinai
10. Tabernacle
11. Sacrifices
12. Priesthood
13. Inheritance
14. David
15. Psalms
16. Solomon
17. Temple
18. Kingdom
19. Prophets
20. Exile
21. Restoration

New Testament Lectures:

- 22. Incarnation**
23. Atonement
24. Resurrection
25. Pentecost
26. Church
27. Union
28. Application
29. Mission
30. Glory

Lecture 22

INCARNATION

Lecture Theme:

God displays the fullest and final revelation of his glory in sending his Son into the world.

Text:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 22

When you're scheduled to see a loved one, your expectations intensify the closer you get to that appointed day and time. If they send you notes describing all that they plan to do when they see you, that will strengthen your longing in the joyous anticipation to finally see them. That's how we should feel in reading through the Old Testament. God has been sending His Word and revelation, constantly supplying more and more detail about the Messiah's person and work. All that is left is for Him to come.

In this lecture, He finally arrives to the joy of men and angels. How does Christ connect the Old and New Testaments? What is the relationship between anticipation and then fulfillment? What does the word *incarnation* mean? What do the Gospels reveal about Christ's divine glory? How does Christ reveal the glory of God? What was the message that Christ proclaimed in His earthly ministry? How does that message relate to the Church's message today? At the end of the last lesson, we summarize the points of continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testament.

In this lecture, we move from foretelling, that is the Old Testament, to fulfillment, which is the New Testament, or from anticipation to accomplishment. We're still focusing on God's acts of redemption in history. Our study of the New Testament begins with us standing on the cusp of Christ coming. The incarnation of Christ marks a whole new era in the history of redemption. The history of the whole world centers on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, most of the world marks time by Christ's coming. He is the axis, if you will, upon which the world turns, so we use the designation B.C., before Christ, to mark the years that are before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we use A.D., which is an abbreviation for the Latin words Anno Domini, the year of our Lord (A.D.), to specify the years after Christ. So, the whole history of the world prior to Christ pointed and prepared for this moment, and the history of the world ever since has experienced the world-transforming implications and outworking of His coming.

First of all, I want to take up the point joyous anticipation and fulfillment. We've seen that knowledge of the Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New Testament. Both, of course, focus on Christ. Listen to Jesus's description of the Old Testament Scriptures. He says, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). After Christ's resurrection we read, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:27 and verse 44).

As we turn to the writings of the New Testament, we discover God drawing many parallels between Christ and various Old Testament figures, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, David, Solomon, and so on. The New Testament also draws connections between Christ and many Old Testament events, ordinances, and other types. So, you think in John 12 of the reference to the brazen serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness as a picture of Christ.

With the extensive revelation of Christ in the Old Testament, it's no surprise to find godly believers who knew their Old Testament anticipating His coming. So, we read of Simeon in Luke 2:25-26, "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Likewise, we have the example of Anna in the same chapter, Luke 2:37-38, "And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years," we read, "which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him," that is Christ, "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." This point about the buildup of anticipation and its joyous fulfillment stands out prominently at the beginning of the New Testament, so it's important for us to consider this more fully by demonstrating how Christ's coming connects this anticipation and the accomplishment.

The dominant note in all of this is joy, so consider first of all that Christ's coming was announced by the angels of heaven. In Luke 2:10, the angel proclaims, "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." After all, the angels take a keen interest in all of these things. Remember I Peter 1:12, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves," speaking of the Old Testament, "but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." So, the angels learn about the glory of God through Christ's incarnation through His person and work. Again, in Luke 2:13-14, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest."

Secondly, for the sake of brevity, let's focus on one other event in Christ's ministry that especially highlights this point about anticipation and the joyous fulfillment in the incarnation. Namely, let's consider Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem where the King comes to redeem and claim His Bride. This is toward the end of the Gospels. So, if you consider Psalm 118, this has a very important part to play in our understanding of the New Testament. And, if you look at verses 25 and 26, you see Psalm 118 provides the anticipation. It says, "Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD." Now, keep those words in mind and note that we see this fulfilled in all four Gospels; and you should also note that the word *Hosanna* here is a shout of praise that means "save, we pray," the words of Psalm 118.

So, we read in Matthew 21:9, for example, the people saying, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest." Compare this to what you see in the parallel passages in Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12. Furthermore, in Zechariah 9:9, we read, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Likewise, in Isaiah 62:11-12, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." And again, we turn now to the New Testament, and in Matthew 21:4 we read, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." And then, the passage goes on to quote what we just read from the Old Testament. So, in these examples, you're seeing this buildup of anticipation in the Old Testament and then clear fulfillment with joy over all that is accomplished in the coming of Christ.

You'll notice similar language woven throughout other Old Testament passages. Psalm 45 speaks of the King's daughters rejoicing. Psalm 24 speaks of "lift up your heads, O you gates," and says that "the King of glory shall come in." In the Song of Solomon chapter 3 is a reference to the daughters of Zion beholding the king. We can cite many, many more: Zephaniah 3, Psalm 96, Psalm 98, and so on.

But then, you turn to the New Testament, and in John 12:15, you see the language "Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh," in the name of the Lord. All of this is showing the connection between anticipation and joyous fulfillment. Note also the connection between Isaiah 40, where the big theme is "Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, . . . his reward is with him, and his work before him" (verse 10), and Isaiah 62:11-12, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." Then, you turn to the New Testament, and you can in this instance, for example, go all the way to the end, [the] last chapter of Revelation 22:12, to see the fulfillment. And then we read the words, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me," it goes on to say, "to give every man according as his work shall be."

What's happening here? Why, I'm merely supplying really a brief sampling of passages as examples just enough to convey to you the profound sense of Old Testament anticipation and the overwhelming joy of fulfillment in Christ's coming, in Christ's incarnation. You'll need to search this out further in your studies, but the repeated call to "behold, behold" in the Old Testament gave way to actually seeing the promised Christ and hearing the sound of His voice. No wonder God's revelation in the incarnation of Christ brought so much joy both the angels and to men. We should share in that joy ourselves. This is a stupendous event, the incarnation, a stupendous event indeed.

Secondly then, let's turn our attention to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His person. The word *incarnation* means literally "in flesh," so it refers to the humiliation and condescension of the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, in coming to take to Himself a human nature and continuing as both true God and true man in two distinct natures and one person forever. Shorter Catechism question 22 summarizes it this way, "Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born of her, yet without sin." In your studies of systematic theology, you will explore the details of all that this doctrine entails. But for our purposes in this course, we will focus on the self-disclosure of Christ and His revelation of the glory of God. This is very much central to the incarnation.

So, notice under this the second point. First of all, Jesus is true God. Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ continues to disclose His own divine glory. For the sake of brevity, consider some of the highlights just from the Gospel of John. The book opens with a clear declaration of Christ's divine glory in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." So, you see Jesus identified as God and yet, at the same time, distinguished from God. So, He's the second person of the Trinity, and He is true God along with the Father and the Spirit.

As you progress through John, this recurring theme continues to unfold, and I'll just give a couple of highlights. In John 8:58, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am;" chapter 10:30-33, "I and my Father are one." The Jews understood what this meant. Notice what the text says, "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father. For which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." You recall that God revealed Himself as the great I AM to Moses. That's the name Jehovah: Exodus 3:14, "And God said unto Moses, I AM that I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Well, in the Gospel of John, Jesus uses that name repeatedly in reference to Himself. So, if you study John, you'll recall what we sometimes call the seven *I am* sayings of our Lord. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), "I am the door," "I am the gate if you will," "of the sheep" (John 10:7&9). He says that "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11-14), "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), and "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Lastly, "I am the true vine" (John 15:1 and following).

You have all of that, and then at Christ's arrest in the garden, we read in John 18:5-6, "They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he." Literally, in the Greek, the pronoun *he* is not there, so literally

he says, "Jesus saith unto them, I am. . . . As soon then as he had said unto them, I am, they went backward, and fell to the ground." You see this amazing proclamation of Christ. You'll also discover many Old Testament passages that refer to Jehovah being cited in the New Testament as references to Christ. That would be, I think, an edifying study for you to actually list those out. But what happens is, in doing so, the New Testament is proving that Jesus is Jehovah. One example from John 12:41 cites the vision that many are familiar with in Isaiah 6, the vision that Isaiah has of Jehovah, and then, John says that Isaiah saw Christ. There are many examples like this where Old Testament references to Jehovah are applied in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see the same point in many of the titles of Christ. So here are two examples. He's called the Son of God; He receives worship. So, in John 9:35, 30–38, Jesus [asks] "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man answers and says, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." Similarly, we have the title *Son of Man*. Jesus uses this title in reference to Himself probably more than any other, 81 times in the four Gospels.

Now, you may recall from your studies of the Old Testament [that] the Old Testament use of the title Son of Man is a reference to deity, to divine glory. Yes, sometimes people might think, "Well Son of God refers to His deity; Son of Man refers to His humanity." The fact is that even the title Son of Man refers to His divine glory, so remember the description given in Daniel 7 where he sees the Son of Man ascending to the ancient of days, and there are many places where divine attributes are given to this title the Son of Man. When you come to the culmination at the end of the gospel of John, Thomas, one of the disciples, looks upon the resurrected Christ and declares openly His divine glory. In chapter 20:28, "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." The whole New Testament unpacks this doctrine: Jesus is true God.

Secondly, Jesus is the revelation of God, and this is connected to what we've just seen. God purposed in the incarnation to reveal His divine glory in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we read in John 1:14 and then again in verse 18, "and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Verse 18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." You see in the incarnation we have a revelation of the glory of God. Likewise, we read in John 14:9, Jesus says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Again, the whole New Testament expounds this theme: Christ is the fullest and final revelation of God.

The Bible describes Christ as the One "Who is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) and elsewhere, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," (Hebrews 1:3). So, our knowledge of God is tied to His revelation of Himself in the person and work of Christ. To be God-centered is also to be Christ-centered. At every significant event in Christ's life and ministry, we see the revelation of the operations of the whole Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You see it at His birth, at His baptism, through His teaching, at His death, resurrection, ascension, and at the day of Pentecost, for example. We also see a confirmation of all that we learned about Christ's three offices in the Old Testament. The New Testament sets forth Christ as God's Anointed, God's Messiah, God's Christ, and as God's final Prophet. Remember what we saw in Hebrews 1:1 and following. It sets Him forth as our only High Priest, consider for example Hebrews chapter 7 to 10, and sets Him forth as the King of all kings. This is seen several places, Revelation 1 for example. And so, in considering Christ's person, we see that He is true God, and we see that He is a revelation of God.

Our third main point pertains to Christ's message, the message He delivered in His incarnate ministry. And, the first theme that comes out in the opening of the Gospels pertains to the kingdom, His message about the kingdom. Christ began His ministry proclaiming the kingdom. So, Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Likewise, in Mark 1:14–15, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." The idea of the kingdom, as you know, has its roots in the Old Testament, but it comes to fruition in the New Testament.

We see it first of all in the garden of Eden where Adam lived obediently under God's rule; but that arrangement was destroyed by the fall, and the remainder of the Bible unfolds God's plan of restoring His people to serve willingly as subjects under God's reign. We saw the development under Abraham at Sinai where he erected a kingdom of, under the monarchy of David and Solomon, and through the promise proclaimed by the prophets. The kingdom of God is the display of divine glory through God's saving reign and the maintenance of God's rights by

a people who willingly serve as His subjects. It pertains to God's salvific dominion established through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension and seen in all of His enemies being made His footstool. It was proclaimed in Christ's preaching in parables, and it will be fully consummated at the second coming and return of Christ.

So in the future, the second coming of Christ, the day of judgment, the reign of God, will be seen in its fullest expression. But at present, we also see it through the Messianic preaching of Christ, no less than through Christ's miracles. As in the Old Testament this preaching proclaimed God's claim and His promise and His demands. Christ describes the kingdom in several parables. If you look at Matthew 13, you'll see a collection of them. He describes the kingdom under the parable of the sower, and then the parable of the tares, and then the one of the mustard seed, the parable of the leaven, the treasure hidden in the field, the parable of the pearl of great price, the net, and so on. These speak of the incalculable value of the kingdom and of its gradual growth and expansion throughout history. It starts the kingdom as a mustard seed, and it grows to a full tree. It's like leaven sewn into lump; it fills the whole lump. It's a picture of the expansion of the kingdom of God in history. It's related to the church.

Westminster Confession chapter 25 paragraph 2 says, "The visible church, which is also Catholic or universal under the gospel, not confined to one nation as before, under the law, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion and of their children and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." You'll notice in the passage I cited earlier that the preaching of the kingdom, that message, is connected with repentance. So, the message of the kingdom included the demands of repentance. Repentance is turning from sin to God for mercy. Turning with our whole being to Him to receive mercy. It's turning from the reign and dominion of sin, the kingdom of Satan, to the reign of God in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's turning to follow Christ, to take His yoke, to deny oneself, and to go after Him. Christ calls to men and says, "Come unto me," the promised Messiah and Savior. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

We cannot explore this fully here, but Christ came preaching the kingdom and calling men to repent. He also brings the confirmation of the covenant. Jesus referred to aspects of the covenant throughout His ministry, but this comes out beautifully, for example, at Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper, where He employs the Old Testament language of the blood of the covenant, in setting forth this New Testament, new covenant, ordinance of covenant renewal, the Lord's Supper. At the heart is the message of His sacrificial death in His broken body and shed blood for His people, but you will note that the Old Testament themes of kingdom, of Mediator, and of covenant all terminate in the person of Christ.

All of this has relevance for New Testament preaching, the preaching of the apostles, the preaching of the church today. Paul writes in Romans 16:25-27, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." The church is called to preach Christ, His person and work. You'll see this all through the New Testament Scriptures. I Corinthians 1:23, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

As you study the book of Acts, chapter after chapter after chapter records the history of apostolic preaching. Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to [teach and preach] Jesus Christ." Christ's incarnation provides the display of divine glory. The revelation of God through Christ and the message Christ proclaimed are all tied together. This shapes the content and the focus of the preaching of the present-day church. Christ must have the preeminence. He must be high and lifted up, drawing men unto Himself. To preach biblically, we must preach the whole person and the whole work of Christ through the whole of the Scriptures. As Paul summarizes in I Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh," there's the incarnation, "justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Well, in this lecture, we have seen that God displays the fullest and final revelation of His glory in sending His Son into the world. In the next lecture, we will consider how God further expands this revelation through the work of Christ's atonement.