**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**The Incarnation – Part III**

 ***Incarnation Anticipated?***

 **December 17th, In the Year of Our Lord 2023**

 **Pastor Matthew Diehl**

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

Read and/or print sermon notes from our website – roundtopchurch.org

 The idea of God (god, gods) coming to visit people here on earth is not exclusive to Christianity. Some people believe that the on-going UFO or UAP (unidentified anomalous phenomenon) sightings are somehow linked to beings that could have been considered “gods” throughout history who have visited earth. More likely, these sightings are mere earthlings who have designed craft that outpaces the rest of us.

However, recorded history proves that many pagan belief systems around the world teach that their god or gods came to earth, lived with people, and interacted with their affairs including procreation. A quick read into Greek mythological systems of belief will draw attention to these religions. In addition, the whole Hindu pantheism constructs millions of gods. However, there is a unique character and nature to God the Creator becoming flesh and interacting with His creation. We will talk more about this in a minute. It is observed that these other pagan accounts position their god or gods as manipulating people into their cosmic drama with other gods or using people as a means to gain their personal agenda. These accounts reek of the whole pagan belief system to be a manmade self-generated scheme to control whole population groups or cultural leaders coping with their own fear in attempting to explain the meaning, purpose and reason for their existence. The Apostle Paul explains the danger and reality of pagan beliefs in Romans 1. There has been much attention given to verses 26-27, and rightfully so, but we need to see that the sin highlighted is just a symptom to a larger sin problem declared in verse 28. . . “they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer,” Once this happens, the door is open wide to sin and death freely operating in the hearts and minds of people.

**Romans 1:16-32**

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

**Unique Incarnation (The One and Only)**

So, what is the unique character and nature of God the Creator becoming flesh and interacting with His creation that sets the Incarnation of God as Jesus the Messiah apart from pagan beliefs? First. . . it’s free. Below is a short list of the details of God’s free Incarnation. This list is partial and to some degree overlapping. Time does not permit a fuller teaching.

1. God created people in His image (Genesis 1:26,27, 9:6) in order for us to have a relationship with Him. It is obvious that God as Jesus demonstrated the ability to have a physical presence in His Incarnation. Thereby, God could interact with us in a temporal world. But foremost, we are created in His spiritual image. Therefore, we are able to have a spiritual relationship with God now and also transcend this spiritual relationship from this temporal world into an eternal life leaving this current body behind. This is why Jesus tells Nicodemus he has to be reborn of spirit (John 3).
2. God does not require any human choice to make the Incarnation take place. God did choose to work through Mary (Matthew 1:16ff) and the prophets to foretell of His actions (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14, 53).
3. Once Jesus lived with us, He did not require donations of human money, merit or manipulation to appease Him. Jesus calls for a heart capitulation and a relationship based in faith. (Ephesian 2:89; Romans 4; Acts 2:33ff)
4. God acted alone. No other being possesses the will, authority or power to accomplish the goals of the Incarnation. God’s power and authority is based on His unyielding and unsurpassed grace, love and mercy that fallen humanity severely lacks. Fallen humanity cannot save itself.

**Titus 3:5-7**

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1. The main goal of the Incarnation. God came to pay the price (propitiation) of the sins of the world without cost to humanity. (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10)

Now that we have presented five unique differences of God’s Incarnation, let us review and look at additional questions.

 **Was there an anticipation of the Incarnation?**

 **Was a Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament?**

**Review**

The last two Sundays we looked at the Incarnation of God in two approaches. We first looked at the Genesis account with Christ’s presence recorded in the *plural* use of the Hebrew proper name for God being *Eloheem* used in the book of Genesis starting with Genesis 1:1.

 Strong’s 0430אֱלֹהִים 'elohiym {el-o-heem'}

Genesis 1:1 is followed by verse 2 detailing how *God’s Spirit* moved over the surface of the waters. These two verses and the rest of Genesis records the single nature of God functioning in three different ways. . . God the Father Creator, God the Son and God the Spirit. Tying the Old and New Testaments together. . . we accurately observed that the Gospel of John in the New Testament proclaims the presence of Christ in the beginning (points to Genesis 1) and that all things were created through Him and that He was God (John 1:1,2).

In the second sermon in the series, from last Sunday, we focused on the Spirit of God at work through Jesus during the Incarnation. And that one of the missions of the Incarnation was for Jesus to model God’s intent for our lives by living with the assistance of God’s Holy Spirit, the Helper (John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7; Hebrews 13:6).

 Adding to last week’s sermon we can make the observation (as we have made previously) that Jesus demonstrated His desire for His Spirit to be at work in His followers by breathing His Spirit into them saying *go in peace*. This was during the resurrection time but before the ascension and the day of Pentecost.

**John 20:21-22** "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

 There were so many more historical and theological observations in the last two weeks’ sermons, I encourage all to review them again. They can be found on our website (rtchurch@cvctx.com).

**This Sunday we simply ask and explore the questions. . .**

**Was there an anticipation of the Incarnation?**

**Was a Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament?**

These questions have been explored and answered by many over the years. We studied similar lists in seminary. So, the biblical research has been done by great scholars over the centuries. I make this point to say that if someone really wants to know the facts. . . they are readily available online. People research everything else online, why not take a few minutes to find the answers to life’s most important questions. We all know that it is easy to do an online inquiry and find numerous studies. I have chosen three online studies from known credible sources. People have a greater trust in known sources. The information can be the same but because the source is well known the information carries more validity. The second source is a mathematical study. The good news is that other mathematicians can duplicate the study.

Below is a brief review of three of these online credible resources. I have provided the cliff note version of the first two articles making some edits as I condensed the material. The third article is included in its entirety.

**One (Takes into account the Biblical perspective)**

**C.S. Lewis Institute**

**by Randy Newman, Ph.D. / Senior Fellow for Apologetics and Evangelism**

https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/did-jesus-fulfill-old-testament-prophecies-of-a-coming-messiah/

First, we must reckon with the fact that the same verses that New Testament writers labeled messianic are the same passages that Jewish scholars have identified in the exact same ways. But their perceived Messiah had a different mission than Jesus. You can find dozens of such references in the rabbinic writings like the Talmud, Mishnah, and Targums, all written long before Jesus was born. (Alfred Edersheim lists 30 pages of such quotes in his The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, pp. 980-1010.)

Second, Jesus fulfills two very different kinds of Messianic prophecies. Old Testament scholars, both Jewish and Christian. Of the 800 verses pointing to a **reigning Messiah** of peace and prosperity, there are 500 that describe a **suffering messiah** who atones for sins.

(Micah 4:3, Isaiah 65:25, Psalm 2:9, Gen. 3:15, read all of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12)

This study begs the question of how could one person do both—reign and suffer? However, when we received the fuller contexts of God’s Word, we see Jesus is both roles.

 Two Messiahs:

1. Reigning king “Messiah, Son of David.” 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 89

 2. Suffering servant “Messiah, Son of Joseph.” Isaiah 53, Psalm 22

These messianic prophecies tie the suffering and the reigning to the same person. Read Zechariah 12ff. The Messiah came the first time and was pierced. He returns a second time and reigns (see the rest of the book of Zechariah). Rather than pointing to two Messiahs, the Old Testament envisions one Messiah who comes twice.

The New Testament writers identify Jesus as the one who fulfills Messianic prophecies of the **first coming** (Examples but not limited to Matthew 1:22-23; 2:5-6; 2:15; 2:17-18) and the one who will fulfill promises of the same Messiah’s **future return** (see Mark 14:62; Matthew 24:29-31). Jesus Himself claimed that things written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms were about Him (see Luke 24:44) and that “Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56)

Did Jesus Fulfill Old Testament / Prophecies of a Coming Messiah? AUGUST 2023

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**Two (The Mathematical Probability that Jesus is the Christ)**

**Empower International posted this article on their website.**

<https://empower.global/the-mathematical-probability-that-jesus-is-the-christ/>

A professor at Westmont College, has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah. The estimates were worked out by twelve different classes representing some 600 university students.

After examining only eight different prophecies, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^17.

 From these figures, the professor concludes the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of the prophecies – the likelihood of mere chance is only one in 10^17. Another way of saying this is that any person who minimizes or ignores the significance of the biblical identifying signs concerning the Messiah would be foolish.

But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation, the professor used 48 prophecies (even though he could have used Edersheim’s 456), and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is the incredible number 10^157. How large is 10^157? 10^157 contains 157 zeros!

**Three (Examines the Biblical text)**

**Josh McDowell 3/23/2020**

**. . . is a well-known Christian apologist for the last sixty years.**

Since 1961, Josh has delivered talks in 126 countries. He has written or co-authored 151 books, including More Than a Carpenter and Evidence That Demands a Verdict, one of the twentieth century’s top 40 books. Josh and his wife, Dottie have been married 48 years, have four wonderful children and 10 beloved grandchildren.

**Did Jesus Fulfill the Messianic Prophecies?**

 https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog/did-jesus-fulfill-messianic-prophesies/

Identifying the Deity

Now imagine God, several millennia ago, devising a plan to send his only Son to earth to be born as a human infant. If we could have spoken down the corridors of time, we might have asked, “How will we know him? How will we recognize him as the Messiah, the holy Lamb of God-your acceptable sacrifice for sin?”

God might have responded, “I will cause him to be born as an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16).”

“But,” we might have protested, “Abraham’s descendants will be as numerous as the stars!”

“Then I will narrow it down to only half of Abraham’s lineage, and make him a descendant of Isaac, not Ishmael (Genesis 21:12; Luke 3:23-34).”

“That will help, but isn’t that still an awful lot of people?”

“Let him be born from Jacob’s line, then, eliminating half of Isaac’s lineage (Numbers 24:17; Luke 3:23-34).”

“But-”“I will be more specific. Jacob will have twelve sons; I will bring forth the Messiah from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23-33).”

“Won’t that still be a lot of people? We still may not recognize him when he comes.”

“Don’t worry! Look for him in the family line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:23-32). And from the house and lineage of Jesse’s youngest son, David (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23-31). And then I will tell you where he will be born; Bethlehem, a tiny town in the area called Judah (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1).”

“But how will we know which person born there is your Son?”

“He will be preceded by a messenger who will prepare the way and announce His advent (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-2). He will begin his ministry in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-17) and will teach in parables (Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34-35), performing many miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 9:35).”

“OK, that should help a lot.”

“Oh,” God might have responded, “I’m just getting warmed up. He will ride into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:2; Luke 19:35-37) and will appear suddenly and forcefully at the temple courts and zealously ‘clean house’ (Psalm 69:9; Malachi 3:1; John 2:15-16). In one day I will fulfill no fewer than 28 specific prophecies spoken at least 500 years earlier about Him! Listen to this:

 He will be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:49).

 The price of his betrayal will be 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15).

 His betrayal money will be cast to the floor of my temple (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5).

 His betrayal money will be used to buy the potter’s field (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7).

 He will be forsaken and deserted by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50).

 He will be accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59-60).

 He will be silent before his accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12).

 He will be wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 27:26).

 He will be hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4; John 15:25).

 He will be struck and spit on (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67).

 He will be mocked, ridiculed, and rejected (Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 27:27- 31; and John 7:5,48).

 He will collapse from weakness (Psalm 109:24-25; Luke 23:26).

 He will be taunted with specific words (Psalm 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39- 43).

 People will shake their heads at him (Psalm 109:25; Matthew 27:39).

 People will stare at him (Psalm 22:17; Luke 23:35).

 He will be executed among ‘sinners’ (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38).

 His hands and feet will be pierced (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33).

 He will pray for his persecutors (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34).

 His friends and family will stand far off and watch (Psalm 38:11; Luke 23-.49).

 His garments will be divided up and awarded by the casting of lots (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).

 He will thirst (Psalm 69:21; John 19:28).

 He will be given gall and vinegar (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34).

 He will commit himself to God (Psalm 31:5; 23:46).

 His bones will be left unbroken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33).

 His side will be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).

 Darkness will come over the land at midday (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45).

 He will be buried in a rich man’s tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60).

 He will die 483 years after the declaration of Artaxerxes to rebuild the temple in 444 BC (Daniel 9:24).

As a final testimony, on the third day after his death, He will be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31), ascend to heaven (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9), and be seated at the right hand of God in full majesty and authority (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3).”

What extraordinary lengths God went to in order to help us identify and recognize His only begotten Son! Jesus fulfilled 60 major Old Testament prophecies-with about 270 additional ramifications-all of which were made more than 400 years before His birth.

This makes a compelling case for Jesus being the one and only person to “take away the sin of the world.” With so many prophecies that have come true, is there any way someone could say Jesus isn’t the Messiah?

The answer is a resounding, “No!” But if you’d like to read more about Messianic prophecies read 55 Old Testament Prophecies About Jesus.

Adapted from “Beyond Beliefs to Conviction” by Josh McDowell, Bob Hostetler and David H. Bellis, and from “The Unshakable Truth” by Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell

 **Conclusion – Incarnation of Peace**

 The Incarnation of God to be one of us is a miracle. The God, Creator of life, has the power and authority to incarnate himself into human flesh (John 1:14). His goal is to bring peace to all. God is not limited in any way. It is one thing to have all the power and authority but how is it used? The author of life used His power and authority by extending His grace, love and mercy to every person who has ever been conceived by becoming one of us in the pursuit of peace. Remember, God’s love afforded free-will for Adam and Eve to choose to surrender to His power of grace, love and peace. However, they rebelled and choose their own way which created a need for God’s never-ending grace, love and mercy to even abound more in the Cross of Christ (Romans 5:15, 15:13).

**Isaiah 9:6**

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

 So, when God incarnated himself as Jesus, He came to accomplish this mission of peace that no other being could do. In **Ephesians 2:14-17,** Paul talks about Jews and Gentiles (v.14) being reconciled into one group and then as one group God desired for them to be reconciled through His Cross (v.17). This is the main mission of the Incarnation.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY,

AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; **AMEN**