

LESSON 19: THE INCARNATION (I)

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 8	:	Cover points 1 to 6
For Intermediate Level / Age 11	:	Cover points 1 to 8
For Advanced Level / Age 14	:	Cover points 1 to 11

Revision from previous lesson:

In the previous lesson, we learned about the prophets whom God sent to Israel before and during their experience of the exile. These prophets were called to appeal for the people of Israel to repent from their sins. They were also called to convey God's promise to send the Saviour to save His people one day. In this lesson, we learn about the coming of the promised Saviour.

Current lesson:

1. The people of Israel were taught to hope in this “new David”, the Messiah (which means “the anointed one”). And at the appointed time, God did send the Messiah. He sent His own Son, the Eternal Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, to become man. This event of God becoming man is known as the Incarnation. Incarnation means “becoming flesh”. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity, that is, the Eternal Word, was born into this world as a human baby boy while retaining His Divine nature.

He was (and is) both fully God and fully man. The Son of God took a human body and soul and united it to His divine Person. Without ceasing to be God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man at the same time. The divine nature of Christ is from all eternity. Only His human nature began at the Incarnation.

2. The birth and birthplace of Jesus were prophesied hundreds of years before they actually became fact. God promised that these things would happen and they did – exactly the way He promised. God always keeps His word.
3. Hundreds of ancient prophecies spoke of a Messiah (a Christ) who would one day bring peace to Israel and the world (for example, Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Zechariah 12-14). About 740 years before the coming of Jesus, God had said through Isaiah that the Messiah would be born as a child.

Isaiah 9:5-6: “For a son has been born for us, a son has been given to us, and dominion has been laid on his shoulders; and this is the name he has been given, ‘Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace’ to extend his dominion in boundless peace, over the throne of David and over his kingdom to make it secure and sustain it in fair judgement and integrity.”

Micah 5:1: “But you (Bethlehem) Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, from you will come for me a future ruler of Israel whose origins go back to the distant past, to the days of old.”

4. Read about the event of the Annunciation in Luke 1:26-38. Explain the story to the students.
5. The term “annunciation” has the same meaning as the word “announcement”. Nine months before Jesus is born, the angel Gabriel is sent to the Virgin Mary to announce the conception of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit.
6. Since we celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December each year, it is most logical that we celebrate the Annunciation on 25 March each year, exactly nine months before Christmas.
7. Reading the story of the Annunciation, you will notice that Mary, a young virgin girl barely 15 years of age, was wholeheartedly willing to accept God’s plan for her life. This plan was not easy to accept. What do you think people in the little town of Nazareth would say about a young girl getting pregnant even before she got married? Her pregnancy was going to be a topic for gossip all around the village and her family would be disgraced. The reputation of Joseph, the man she was engaged to, was also jeopardised. Joseph initially intended to break off the engagement. But just like Mary, he too was willing to obey the will of God (read Matthew 1:18-21).
8. Three practical lessons we can learn from Mary:
 - A) Be prepared to be used by God. As an unmarried young woman from Nazareth, Mary had a very low social status, but God does not care about that. God uses the most humble people to fulfil His plans.
 - B) Put your faith in God. In great contrast to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist who doubted Gabriel’s announcement that he would have a son, Mary was described by her cousin Elizabeth as “she who has believed” (Luke 1:45).
 - C) Live your life as a servant of the Lord. Mary ultimately responded to Gabriel with the powerful words, “You see before you the Lord’s servant, let it happen to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38). Through Mary’s willingness to be used by God, the Saviour came into this world to show us the fullness of God’s love.
9. The coming of God as man is called the Incarnation. God had planned to come one day as a human person, to dwell among mankind, right from before He had even created the universe. He had already planned to unite Himself to mankind so that we could share in the perfect love of the community of the Holy Trinity.
10. In creating humanity, God also desires for mankind to love Him back perfectly, not because He needs it, but because He wants what is best for us. (Otherwise, God’s love is already complete in Himself, and He does not need others to love Him.) However, the only way for mankind to be able to love Him perfectly with the same self-giving love is for a member of the Holy Trinity to become a man, and to represent mankind in loving God with the greatest love. Left to our own capacity, mankind would not have been able to love God with the great love that He loves us with.

11. But in order for the Eternal Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, to come as man, He would have to leave behind His eternal glory. In the humility of becoming human, the Creator would be willing to become a creature. God is willing to do this because of His great love for us, even though humanity is undeserving of such love.



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