

THE EXAMINER



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MEDITATIONS: "Jesus Christ Has Come in the Flesh" - by

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Synopsis: Discussing the biblical doctrine of the incarnation, Kyle reminds us of the unique blessings that occur because Jesus came in the flesh.

It is generally believed that the first epistle of John was written (in some degree) to counter the early stages of Gnostic belief. Gnosticism, in the first few centuries after Christ, spread throughout the ancient world and led many souls astray. In their view, Jesus could not really have come in the flesh because they felt that material things were inherently evil. To justify their own immoral behavior, Gnostics argued that since Jesus only spiritually came to earth (without ever actually having contact with the material world), they could do whatever they wished with their bodies, yet still be inwardly pure if they attained a secret knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*) which they alone possessed. In refutation of this false doctrine, John, through the Holy Spirit, declared that Jesus was One whom—"we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled" (1 John 1:1, NKJV). That

might initially strike us as an odd way to describe Jesus' coming to earth, but John's point is that Jesus really lived in the flesh. He was not an apparition—He shared our flesh and blood. Because of this, John said further, "every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world" (1 John 4:3).

While our modern world may no longer have proponents of Gnosticism as it once existed in the ancient world, there are still many who have their own reasons for choosing to deny that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." As Christians, we must recognize that, since Jesus really lived in this world, certain conclusions are inescapable.

If Jesus has come in the flesh...He is the way to eternal life.

Jesus offers mankind the way of salvation, but He declares that it is a "narrow" and "difficult" way (Matt. 7:14). Not all roads lead to heaven. Not everything done in the name of religion is profitable to us. While we might hope and strive and try to attain a relationship with God through some

other means (i.e., through our imagination, or through our conscience, etc.), Jesus boldly declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

His word must be followed.

In offering man the way to salvation, Jesus sets down a very exclusive standard of faith and behavior. We will not be judged according to some human philosophy or theory but by Jesus' words: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Since Jesus came in the flesh, the standard of truth is clearly set forth in His word.

We can't follow our own way.

Jesus taught, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Jeremiah affirmed the same principle centuries before: "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Since Jesus came in the flesh and offered mankind the way that must be followed, in matters of personal lifestyle or in questions of religious practice, it is not about what we want, but about what God (in Jesus) wants for us.

Sin can be avoided.

Just as the Gnostics rationalized away the sinfulness of immorality, many today try to suggest that it is impossible for people to resist temptation and avoid sin. They do so either from some theological doctrine

that claims that we inherit a sinful nature, or from a humanistic determinism that treats behavior as the result of genetics, instinct, or ancestry. The Bible clearly states that Jesus possessed the same human nature that we do. The Hebrew writer tells us that Jesus was made like us "in all things," and that He has partaken of our "flesh and blood," which is the very reason He can now act as our "High Priest in things pertaining to God" (Heb. 2:14-17). Yet, Jesus also was "in all points tempted as we are yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). While it is obvious that the flesh is often weak (cf. Matt. 26:41), to suggest that the flesh cannot avoid sin is to reject Jesus' own coming in the flesh.

Many of our friends are lost.

The fact that Jesus came and offered to mankind a new way of salvation sets before us an offer we can either accept or reject. To reject Jesus is to forfeit the only hope that any of us have for salvation. Those who make such a choice will one day hear the sad words, "I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23). The fact that Jesus actually did come in the flesh means that many in the world (including some of our own family and friends) will hear these sad words from the Lord.

We must one day face Him in judgment.

While on the earth, Jesus declared that, when the Day of Judgment comes, He will sit as judge of the world. In his gospel, John relates

Jesus' declaration—"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (**John 5:22**). In teaching His disciples about the final judgment, Jesus said, at the end of things, He will sit "on the throne of His glory" and all the nations will be gathered before Him so that he might separate them "as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (**Matt. 25:31-32**). If Jesus never came, we would have no accountability to Him. His coming in the flesh means that we cannot escape our responsibility to Him and our appointment to stand before Him in judgment. We must never make the same mistake as the Gnostics in allowing ourselves to imagine that we can sin with immunity. Jesus' coming in the flesh demonstrates the inevitability of His second coming. The Hebrew writer declared, "as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (**Heb. 9:27-28**). - Author-Bio: Kyle Pope preaches for the Olsen Park church of Christ in Amarillo, TX. He has written several books published by Truth Publications including How We Got the Bible. The church website is olsenpark.com. He can be reached at kmppope@att.net.

What Happened to Your Hands? - by Richie Thetford

Jesus said in **John 15:13**, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man

lay down his life for his friends." Before we can live the Christian life we must first know how great this love is that Jesus described. Once we fully understand the love, devotion, and sacrifice that God's Son has for us, then we can understand the true meaning of Christianity.

No greater love has ever been shown and no greater love will ever be shown than the love that Jesus showed to us, sinful men (**Rom. 3:23**). He died on the cross so that we can have forgiveness of sins through his blood. Jesus came to this earth without blemish to show us love and compassion, and die a sinless death. Why did he do it? So that you and I might have life eternal with him.

Hands Without Blemish

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only be-gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (**John 3:16**). Seeing that man was full of sin, God sent his only Son, a Son without blemish to fulfill all prophecy and redeem man from sin. God did this because he loved man (**Rom. 5:8**). When Jesus came to this earth he knew the wonderfulness of heaven, a place without tears, pain, or sadness. Jesus said that his kingdom was not of this world (**John 18:36**) and that he would prepare a place for us (**John 14:1-3**).

Jesus was sent to the earth by God to save man. While on earth, he was moved with compassion on the multitudes as sheep that had no shepherd (**Matt 9:35-36**). Jesus rejoices over each individual who will

recognize him as being the Christ and as a result will seek repentance and follow him (**Matt. 18:11-14**).

Hands Full Of Love

While on earth Jesus' hands were full of love as he taught how we should forgive. He taught that we should be willing to forgive our brother as often as he asks (**Matt. 18:21-22**), and said that when we do so our heavenly Father will also forgive us (**Mark 11:25-26**). Christ showed us the ultimate example of forgiveness while dying on the cross. In all his pain and suffering he was still able to say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (**Luke 23:34**). His hands were full of love as he healed the sick, made the lame to walk, and gave sight to the blind (**Matt. 4:24; 12:15; 14:14; 11:54**). He further showed us his great love as he fed the hungry and raised Lazarus from the dead (**Matt. 14:15-20; John 11:14-45**).

Hands Scarred For Man

Though Jesus lived a sinless, compassionate, caring life, most men still hated him. We learn from the Scriptures that he was delivered to die because of envy (**Matt. 27:17-18**). A mock trial was given to God's only Son (**Matt. 27:27-31**). Then Jesus' hands were scarred for man as he was crucified, enduring the pain and agony, because he loved us (**Matt. 27:46-50**). Jesus died, his heart broken, as he bore the sin of all mankind. Yet today, many people willingly sin and trample under foot God's Son after receiving the knowledge of the truth that Christ delivered to us. The Hebrew writer says, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.... Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (**Heb. 10:26, 29**). After Jesus arose from the grave he later appeared before his disciples. Initially, Thomas was not there (**John 20:20, 24**). When the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (**John 20:25**). Eight days later Thomas did see Jesus and was able to see and feel his hands and side, and believing said, "My Lord and my God" (**John 20:28**). Jesus told Thomas that he had seen and believed but, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (**John 20:29**). John tells us that the things written were written so that all "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (**John 20:31**). We need to have faith in Jesus Christ and believe in him even though we have not actually seen him. Do we have a devoted love for God's Son? Do we have a love that will cause us to lay down our life for him as he did for us?

Conclusion

The Christian life is a life of service, duty, and devotion to our almighty God. He gave his only Son, a Son without blemish, to die for us and he did so that we might have eternal life, which we can obtain if we will obey him (**Heb 5:9**). Let us not be guilty of taking for granted the love of Jesus as he suffered pain and anguish on that cruel cross for you and me. May we always keep in remembrance the love that Jesus showed us (**John 15:13**), as we believe in, even though we have not seen, the scars on Jesus' hands - Via - **Guardian of Truth XLI: 9 p. 8-9, April May 1, 1997**