

Athanasius
On the Incarnation of the Word
An Outline Summary
By Ben Rogers

Chapter 1: Creation and the Fall

1. The subject – the Word becoming Man and His divine Appearing in our midst.
 - a. Why is it that the Word of the Father has been manifest in bodily form?
 - b. Ans. “Out of the love and goodness of His Father, for the salvation of us men.
 - c. First fact: Renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word who made it in the beginning.
2. The Making of the Universe
 - a. Various Opinions
 - i. Epicureans
 - ii. Plato
 - iii. Gnostics
3. The Divine teaching of the Christian Faith (on the making of the universe)
 - a. Universe did not originate itself
 - b. Universe was made out of nothing by an infinite God
 - c. Universe brought into being by the Word
 - d. God reserved special mercy for the race of men
 - i. Imago Dei
 - ii. Immortality
 - e. Man’s original place was conditional
 - i. Obey = retain loveliness, live in paradise, and attain immortality in heaven
 - ii. Disobey = come under natural law of death, leave paradise, and continue in death and corruption
4. Our Sorry Case
 - a. Necessitated the Incarnation
 - b. We turned from the contemplation of God to evil
 - c. Evil is non-being
5. The Plight of Men
 - a. Turned from eternal things to corruptible things
 - b. Heeded the counsel of the devil
 - c. They became the cause of their own corruption and death
 - d. Man grew worse and worse

Chapter 2: The Divine Dilemma and its Solution in the Incarnation

6. The Divine Dilemma
 - a. It is unthinkable that God would go back on his word (you will surely die)
 - b. It is unthinkable that creatures made in God’s Image be lost and ruined
7. Repentance: not a solution
 - a. Not guard divine consistency
 - c. Does not rescue our nature
 - d. The Word must save the creature and maintain God’s consistency
 - i. He alone can recreate

- ii. He alone can suffer on behalf of all
 - iii. He alone can be an ambassador for all with the Father
- 8. Incarnation: the solution
 - a. The Word entered our world in a new way through the Incarnation
 - b. Must save humanity and uphold God's Law
 - c. Took a body like ours to die for us to abolish the law of death
- 9. Death of the Incarnate One: the solution
 - a. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death...
 - i. Become a sufficient exchange (the death of a human for breaking the Law)
 - ii. End corruption by the grace of the resurrection (Incorruptible Word)
- 10. The Incarnation protects the Goodness of God
 - a. The King analogy
 - b. Scripture references
 - i. 2 Cor. 4:14
 - ii. Heb. 2:9
 - iii. Heb. 2:14
 - iv. 1 Cor. 15:21
 - v. 1 Tim. 6:15
 - c. Summary: "For by the sacrifice of His own body He did two things...(37)

Chapter 3: The Divine Dilemma and its Solution in the Incarnation Continued

- 11. Knowing God
 - a. The purpose of creation
 - b. Image of God given to apprehend the Father and live the blessed life
- 12. Three Ways to Know God
 - a. Creation
 - b. Prophets
 - c. Law
- 13. Renewing the Image of God
 - a. What else was God to do?
 - b. Without this, no possibility of knowing God
 - c. The Word, the Image of the Father, recreates man in God's image
- 14. Illustration – the Portrait
 - a. Man is like a ruined painting on a panel
 - b. Panel is not cast away
 - c. The subject sits again, and his image is redrawn
- 15. The Mediator
 - a. Man was made to look up – i.e. contemplate God
 - b. Man (because of the Fall) looks down – i.e. created things
 - c. The God-Man meets man half way – i.e. he is the Mediator
 - i. Apprehend God by looking at the words he performs in the body
- 16. The Mediator continued
 - a. The actions of the Word made flesh reveal God
 - b. The Savior did 2 things for us:
 - i. Banished death
 - ii. Made us anew
- 17. The Paradox

- a. Word not hedged in by his body
 - b. Despite the Incarnation, the Word still directed the universe
18. The Divine Acts of the Word Made Flesh
- a. Reveal his true identity
 - b. Examples:
 - i. Driving out demons
 - ii. Heal diseases
 - iii. Virgin Birth
 - iv. John's signs, etc.

Chapter 4: The Death of Christ

19. The Death of Christ
- a. Calls it 'that moment of victory'
 - b. It is the very center of our faith
 - c. Through His death, Christ is revealed as God and the Son of God
20. The Reason for the Incarnation (restated)
- a. Re-create the Image of God in men
 - b. Die to free men from death
 - c. 2 opposite marvels (49)
 - d. Necessity of divine and human natures
 - i. If not human, can't die as a substitute for humans
 - ii. If not Divine, can't destroy death and corruption
21. Objection 1: why not a private death?
- a. An ordinary death would obscure his divine identity
22. Objection 2: why not avoid death at the hands of the Jews?
- a. He came to die, not avoid death
 - b. In so doing, he destroyed death and corruption
 - c. "The supreme object of His coming was to bring about the resurrection of the body."
23. Objection 3: why not die alone in isolation and then reappear?
- a. No one would believe him
 - b. Not in keeping with the whole tenor of his public ministry
 - c. It would create more excuses for unbelief
 - d. His death needed to be a public event so that his resurrection would be a public vindication
24. Objection 4: why not avoid the ignominy of the cross?
- a. He was not limited to a particular kind of death
 - b. Wrestler illustration
 - c. A mighty paradox (24)
 - d. Body not divided so no one may be excused for dividing the Church
25. To the Honest Christian...
- a. Christ died in the manner he did because it was supremely good
 - b. He removed the curse from us by dying an accursed death
 - c. The fitness of his death:
 - i. Outstretched arms
 - ii. In the air

Chapter 5: The Resurrection

26. The Resurrection – no other way to prove his victory over death and divinity
 - a. It was a pledge and token of His victory
 - b. Raised too early – men would believe he did not die
 - c. Raised too late – men would forget him and doubt
 - d. Christ died of no natural weakness, but to show the Savior’s power over death
27. Strong proof of the destruction of death: Christians trample on death
 - a. Death not terrible to them
 - b. Death is a conquered tyrant
28. Strong proof of the destruction of death: Martyrs
 - a. Young believers train themselves for death
 - b. Unbelievers must believe, then he will see...
29. Christ – the Archvictor over death
 - a. Christ has robbed death of its power
 - b. His disciples are monuments to His victory
30. More Proof: the Work of the Living Christ
 - a. Facts as well as words prove Christ’s conquest over death
 - b. The Savior is currently working mightily among men in conversion
 - c. The Savior is currently working mightily among men by destroying idolatry and false religion
31. No grounds for Unbelief
 - a. Have no support of facts!
 - i. Christ is working in conversion
 - ii. Christ is working in the destruction of idolatry
 - b. Good summary (62)
 - i. The God-man had to die
 - ii. The God-man could not remain dead
32. The Invisible God made known through His Works
 - a. Christ’s Resurrection displays his Godhead
 - b. Christ’s work in other displays his Godhead
 - c. The confession of evil spirits display the Godhead of Christ

Chapter 6: Refutation of the Jews

33. Unbelief of the Jews
 - a. General observation: Jews and Gentile have same objections:
 - i. The Incarnation is unfitting
 - ii. The Cross is unfitting
 - b. OT teaches the Incarnation
 - i. A man shall appear
 - ii. He that is to come is Lord of all
 - c. Isaiah 7:14; 8:4; 19:1; , Num 24:5-7; Hosea 11:1
34. OT teaches the death of Christ
 - a. Isaiah 53 foundational text for Athanasius
35. OT predicts the death of Christ on the Cross
 - a. Ps 22 foundational for Athanasius
 - b. “Indeed all Scripture teems with disproof of Jewish unbelief?”
 - c. Also discusses the uniqueness of his birth
36. No King like Jesus in the OT (No one has done what He did)

- a. All nations hope in Jesus, not Kings of Israel
 - b. Jesus died for the salvation of all – no king in Israel or patriarch did this
 - c. No King but Jesus destroys idolatry (important concept for Athanasius)
37. More Uniqueness
- a. Unique death – died under condemnation, not like Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, etc.
 - b. Unique lineage – eternal, and not paternal line
 - c. Uniquely recognized – creation, star, etc
 - d. Uniquely powerful over idolatry and false worship
38. More Proof from OT
- a. Is. 65:1-2
 - b. Is. 35:3-6
 - i. Confirmed by NT evidence
39. Jewish Objection: still waiting for the Word of God to come
- a. Daniel 9 is decisive for Athanasius
 - b. Leaves without excuse
40. Final Proofs
- a. The heathen are called to God
 - b. No more prophecies or visions
 - c. Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed
 - d. Idols are being deserted
 - e. Death has been destroyed
 - f. Sum: Nothing has been left unfulfilled
 - g. Great ending (p.75)

Chapter 7: Refutation of the Gentiles (the Rational Argument)

41. Objection: the incarnation is unfitting for the Word
- a. Greek philosophers believe in the Word who inhabits the body of the universe
 - b. Why then is it unfitting for the Word to enter into human nature?
42. A Parallel Case
- a. Man and his toe:
 - b. If it is unfitting for the Word to indwell part, it would be equally unfitting for him to exist within the whole
 - c. If the Word cannot be Incarnated (what the Gentiles deny), he cannot exist within the universe (what the Gentiles affirm)
43. Objection: why not manifest Himself by means of the nobler parts of creation (i.e. sun, moon, stars, etc.)?
- a. He came to heal and teach suffering men, not make a display
 - b. Nothing in creation erred in the path of God's purpose for it, save only man
 - c. By becoming a man the Word ensured that men would recognize his divinity by his acts
44. Objection: Instead of the Incarnation, why not merely signify his will via a creative word or a command?
- a. Human nature needed healing and a creative word would not heal it
 - b. The Word healed humanity by interweaving life with it through the Incarnation

- c. Incarnation = enduing immortality to humanity through the resurrection (i.e. destroying death)
45. Sum
- a. The Word's actions are consistent with his purpose – the Word became man to bring life to men
 - b. Word became man to fill all things with the knowledge of Himself
 - i. Heavens display his ordering
 - ii. Works as a man prove his divinity
 - iii. Water was transformed by him declaring he is Creator of all
 - iv. Heroes in Hades nothing compared to Christ who had victory over death
 - c. “For the Lord touched all parts of creation, and freed and undeceived them all from deceit.”

Chapter 8: Refutation of the Gentiles (the Factual Argument)

46. Factual assault by Athanasius
- a. When the Word of God came among men...
 - i. Oracles ceased and became void of meaning
 - ii. Gods and heroes judged to be moral
 - iii. Demons held in contempt
 - iv. The theory and practice of magic was spurned under foot
 - v. Men worshiped the 1, not the many
 - b. “In a word, when did the wisdom of the Greeks become foolishness, save when the true Wisdom of God revealed Himself on earth.”
47. Athanasius assaults:
- a. Oracles
 - b. Demons
 - c. God's of Greek Myth
 - d. Magic
 - e. Greek Wisdom/Philosophy
48. Proofs of Experience
- a. Actual experience
 - i. Virgins
 - ii. Chaste young men
 - iii. Chorus of Martyrs
 - b. The Power and Greatness of Christ (86-87)
 - i. Christ's works, intrinsically and in comparison to with men, demonstrate that he is divine.
49. The Marvels of Christ's Godhead
- a. Virgin birth
 - b. Healed so many diseases
 - c. Restorative miracles
 - d. Christ vs. Aesculapius
 - e. Christ vs. Hercules
 - f. Christ vs. Dionysus
 - g. Marvels surrounding his death
 - h. Teaching spread abroad
 - i. Greek gods powerless before Him

50. The Supremacy of Christ
 - a. Over kings
 - b. Over Greek Philosophers
 - c. Over demons
51. The Power of Christ
 - a. Taught virginity
 - b. Penetrated the lands of the
 - i. Scythians
 - ii. Ethiopians
 - iii. Parthians
 - iv. Armenians
 - v. Hyrcania
 - vi. Egyptians
 - vii. Chaldeans
 - c. Men forsake their ancestral gods
 - d. Warlike men desire peace and friendship
52. Christ, the Peacemaker
 - a. United in peace those who hate each other
 - b. Tame the savage
 - c. Disciples stand arrayed against demons
 - d. Christian youth as an example
53. Christ's Godhead Proved by his Single-handed Acts
 - a. Fight the whole system of idol worship
 - b. Fights demons and magic
 - c. Exposing men's errors
54. Christ's Godhead Proved by his Bodily Works
 - a. Defeated death through death
 - b. Declared the Mind of the Father through the Incarnation
 - c. "Assumed humanity that we might become God" (92)
 - d. Endured shame so that men might inherit immortality
 - e. Healed suffering men through his own suffering
 - f. Regarding Christ's work... "For, indeed, everything about it is marvelous, and wherever a man turns his gaze he sees the Godhead of the Word and it smitten with awe." (92)
55. Summary
 - a. Since the Savior's advent...
 - i. Idolatry is decreasing
 - ii. The influence of demons is dwindling
 - iii. The Savior's teaching increases everywhere
 - b. When the real king emerges... things stand differently (94)
 - c. "Now this is proof that Christ is God, the Word and Power of God."

Conclusion

56. This has been a brief statement of the faith of Christ and of the manifestation of His Godhead to us
 - a. This is just a beginning... must go on to prove it by the study of Scripture
 - b. Learn of his second manifestation to us as well
57. In order to rightly understand Scripture, you need...

- a. A good life
- b. A pure soul
- c. Christian virtue
- d. Imitate the life of the saints