Bruce Barton wrote a book in the 20's about Jesus titled, *THE MAN NOBODY KNOWS*. The subject, of course, was Jesus. It's one of my favorite books ever. Barton explained how it came to be written:

The little boy sat bolt upright and still in the rough wooden chair, but his mind was very busy. This was his weekly hour of revolt.

The kindly lady who could never seem to find her glasses would have been terribly shocked if she had known what was going on inside the little boy's mind.

"You must love Jesus," she said every Sunday, "and God."

The little boy did not say anything. He was afraid to say anything; he was almost afraid that something would happen to him because of the things he thought.

Love God! Who was always picking on people for having a good time and sending little boys to hell because they couldn't do better in a world which He had made so hard! Why didn't God pick on someone His own size?

Love Jesus! The little boy looked up at the picture which hung on the Sunday-school wall. It showed a pale young man with no muscle and a sad expression. The young man had red whiskers.

Then the little boy looked across to the other wall. There was Daniel, good old Daniel, standing off the lions. The little boy liked Daniel. He liked David, too, with the trusty sling that landed a stone square on the forehead of Goliath. And Moses, with his rod and his big brass snake. They were fighters—those three. He wondered if David could whip the champ. Samson could! That would have been a fight!

But Jesus! Jesus was the "Lamb of God." The little boy did not know what that meant, but it sounded like Mary's little lamb, something for girls—sissified. Jesus was also "meek and lowly," a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He went around for three years telling people not to do things.
Sunday was Jesus' day; it was wrong to feel comfortable or laugh on Sunday.

The little boy was glad when the superintendent rang the bell and announced, "We will now sing the closing hymn." One more bad hour was over. For one more week the little boy had left Jesus behind.

Years went by and the boy grew up. He began to wonder about Jesus. He said to himself, "Only strong men inspire greatly and build greatly. Yet Jesus inspired millions; what He founded changed the world. It is extraordinary."

The more sermons the man heard and the more books he read the more mystified he became. One day he decided to wipe his mind clean of books and sermons. He said, "I will read what the men who knew Jesus personally said about Him. I will read about Him as though He were a character in history, new to me, about whom I had never heard anything at all.

The man was amazed.

A physical weakling! Where did they get that idea? Jesus pushed a plane and swung an adz; He was a good carpenter. He slept outdoors and spent His days walking around His favorite lake. His muscles were so strong that when He drove the moneychangers out nobody dared to oppose Him.

A killjoy! He was the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem! The criticism which proper people made was that He spent too much time with publicans and sinners and enjoyed society too much. They called Him a "wine bibber and a gluttonous man."

A failure! He picked up twelve humble men and created an organization that won the world.

When the man had finished his reading, he exclaimed, "This is a man nobody knows!"

"History supports the teaching of Scripture: Some two thousand years ago, the Man Jesus Christ appeared in Palestine. Though some few men have endeavored to prove that Jesus is but a myth, the existence of the New Testament, of the Christian Church, and of the Lord's Day are standing witnesses against such a teaching. Christ has come: it is for us to inquire after the reasons for the incarnation and the nature of it."

THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS / UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS / 2nd Ed. / 1928
THE INCARNATION

One of the most interesting men I ever met was Malcomb Muggeridge. He passed away in the 1990's after a long and fascinating life. In his early years he was an apologist for socialism and lived and wrote in Russia for the Manchester Guardian. I often saw him on such TV shows as The Jack Paar Show (NBC Late Night) scoffing at Christianity; but in his later years he became a devout follower of Jesus. I had the privilege of meeting him and I asked, "What caused you to change and become a believer in Christ?" He answered quickly, "The Incarnation!"

The "incarnation" means simply that God became a man and dwelt among us (John 1:14 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.

The Pre-Existent Christ

While it is true that Jesus came to Earth as a baby from Mary's womb, bred by the Holy Spirit Himself, this was not our Lord's entre to this planet. The Scriptures teach firmly and clearly that Jesus pre-existed, that is, He always "was." It was this startling truth that changed Muggeridge from a critic and skeptic of the Gospel to a practitioner and proponent of it.

Not even Muhammed, in his most outrageous claims, ever testified of pre-existence. Born in 570 AD (died in 632 AD), six centuries AFTER Christ, he was born as an ordinary human being and died as one. No religious leader ever claimed pre-existence.

His birth in Bethlehem fulfilled God's commitments to humanity. Almost six centuries prior to His coming, Isaiah, the prophet, informed us: Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Immanuel means "God with us.") Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

The primary reason for His incarnation is to put away sin and redeem the sinner.

Jesus proclaimed this of Himself: Mark 10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering
of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste
dearth for every man.

“He who preached the greatest sermons ever uttered did not come into the world
primarily to preach. He who gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and speech to
the dumb did not come to the world primarily to heal. He whose lofty ideals and
principles radiated from a sinless heart and a flawless character did not come into the
world primarily to establish an example for conduct. He whose fidelity in life and
courage in death will forever be incomparable did not come into the world primarily to
teach men to live honestly and bravely. These attributes, however commendable and
worthy, are insufficient to tell the motive which drove Him from realms celestial to
regions terrestrial. There is one magnificent accomplishment that stands preeminently
above all others and gives to each accompanying attainment its proper value. Spirit
prompted, divinely given, faithfully recorded, it reads gloriously, ‘Christ Jesus came into
this world to save sinners!’”

SHULER’S SHORT SERMONS / JACK SHULER / ZONDERVAN / PP132-3

Yet another reason for Jesus’ incarnation was so that He could destroy the works of
Satan
Hebrews 2:14-15 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,
he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy
him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; [15] And deliver them who
through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

When Jesus died on the cross, it marked “defeat” for Satan and his dark kingdom. His
future is the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into
the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall
be tormented day and night for ever and ever.)

The incarnation of the Christ also provided humanity with an example of holy living.
1 John 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he
walked.

As one commentator has observed, “The writers of Scripture were infallible teachers; but
they were not infallible characters. Christ was the only one who was infallible.”

Many have read the classic Christian novel, In His Steps, by Sheldon. The indwelling
Christ (living inside of the believer) provides the power, the ability, to live holy lives.
Jesus gives us the power NOT to sin.
It is a glorious truth that the Incarnation 2000 years ago provided the setting for Christ's second coming! Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

When Jesus died on the Cross, He redeemed - or purchased - all of His creation, which was lost at the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. However, He is holding back the actual full deliverance of creation until that glorious day of full revelation Paul addressed in Romans 8:18-25 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. [19] For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. [20] For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, [21] Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. [23] And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. [24] For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? [25] But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

That scripture is perhaps more easily comprehended from The Message: Romans 8:18-25 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. [19] The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. [20] [21] [22] All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. [23] But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. [24] That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. [25] But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

So Jesus first coming - the Incarnation of God coming to Earth as a man - was necessary as a preparation for His second coming.
CHRIST’S PREPARATION OF HIMSELF TO COME TO EARTH AS A HUMAN

Decades ago, Crystal Lewis wrote one of the greatest song lyrics ever:

Love sent my Savior to die in my stead / Why should He love me so?
Meekly to Calvary’s cross He was led / Why should He love me so?
Nails pierced His hands and His feet for my sin;
Why should He love me so?
He suffered sore my salvation to win / Why should He love me so?
Oh how He agonized there in my place / Why should He love me so?
Nothing withholding my sin to erase / Why should He love me so?
Why should my Savior to Calvary go? Why should He love me so?

Paul wrote a verse to the Philippians that tells us somewhat of Jesus’ preparation to come here: Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Jesus emptied Himself of His POSITION in Glory, not His power on Earth. The Greek word is κένωσις (kenosis) from which we get the word kenosis. This means self-emptying. Some claim that Jesus emptied Himself even of His power but we know that is not true for on Earth Jesus rebuked the wind, miraculously fed the hungry thousands, healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. Note this: In His earthly ministry, Jesus was always perfectly holy, just, merciful, truthful and faithful. But He emptied Himself by temporarily giving up the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.)

ON EARTH, JESUS, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD, WAS MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MANKIND

Romans 8:3 KJV For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Same verse from The Message: Romans 8:3 God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn’t deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.) Simply put, you and I could never live such a neat life it would warrant eternal salvation. Only God could make that possible - and that by giving His Son to be like us and to die for us.
1. Jesus had a human birth. Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

I could teach on that verse for hours. “The fulness of time” is a magnificent phrase. God knew from before Creation that human redemption would be necessary. So why did He not send Jesus during the “golden age” of David and Solomon? Or to stave off the Babylonian invasions around 600 B.C.? Or some other time? A good student of Roman history could answer those question from so many perspectives. One of them I will just touch on: Rome’s “Pax Romana” — the Roman peace. Along with the greatest road building efforts up to that time along with the firm rule which discouraged most criminal activity (piracy, road thieves, etc), it became possible for free people to roam the known world in relative peace. Thus the message of Christ could spread around the nations speedily. It was the perfect time for Jesus to come.

Secondly, Jesus was “made of a woman.” Note, Paul did not write, “Made of a man and woman.” The sire, the Father, was God Himself Who moved by His Spirit upon the virgin Mary. Luke 1:30-38 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. [31] And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. [32] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: [33] And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. [34] Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? [35] And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. [36] And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. [37] For with God nothing shall be impossible. [38] And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

It is interesting to note that several times in Scripture, Jesus is referred to as the son of Joseph. This was done by those who were not His friends or who were only slightly familiar with Him or His work.

So if Jesus was born of Mary, a human, did He then have an inherit sinful nature? Some claim that He did since He was tempted in all ways as we are. However, if He did, He kept His human nature from manifesting itself in any actual sin but gradually purified it through struggle and suffering until in His death He took upon Himself our human sins by drinking the cup in the Garden of Gethsemane. Small wonder His struggles in the Garden resulted in His sweating as it were great drop of blood.
2. Jesus had a human development. Luke 2:40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Jesus was trained in His godly home (John 7:15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?) That is, Jesus was not trained in schools in Alexandria or even Jerusalem. We know He learned in the synagogues and Temple with His regular attendance: Luke 2:46-47 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. [47] And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And think of the development of Jesus as He communed with His heavenly Father: John 4:32-34 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. [33] Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? [34] Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

3. Jesus had human names. The name “Jesus” is but the Greek of the Old Testament “Joshua.”

4. Jesus had human needs. We know that Jesus was:

- Weary John 4:6 Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

- Hungry Matthew 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungry.

- Thirsty John 19:28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

- Slept Matthew 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

- Tempted Hebrews 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (enable to victory) them that are tempted.

Even while pointing out these human qualities of Jesus, we must always remember that He was true God. He had not emptied Himself in glory of His divine attributes, but only of the independent exercise of them.
THE CHARACTER OF JESUS

In this study of Jesus’ character, we feel as Isaiah did, Isaiah 6:5: Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

1. Jesus was Holy. (Absolutely holy!) Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

He had no sin - “was without sin.” Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus could have compassion upon your and me (feeling for our infirmities) because He went through everything we humans go through.

It is always a comfort to me to know that, while I am just an old German human being, I have an avenue or ability for spiritual growth based on many scriptures such as: 2 Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2. Jesus had genuine love. Ephes. 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Christ’s love is given freely to all sinners. Matthew 11:19 .... a friend of publicans and sinners. In this regard, Jesus reflects the Love of His Father toward us: John 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life for us: Ephes. 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. (The Message) Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.

Jesus loves us so much that nothing can separate His love from us: Romans 8:37-39
Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. [38] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus' love for people is so great that He even prayed in intercession for those who killed Him on the cross: Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

3. Jesus was truly humble. Philip. 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [6] Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: [7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: [8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus grew up in a poor home and environment. (There are those in Christian media today who claim Jesus was rich. Sorry! Scripture says differently! 2 Cor. 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

He was born in a stable. Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

In His ministry, he did not stay at the Waldorf Astoria: Luke 9:58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Jesus needed a miracle to provide funding for Him and His disciples at one point in His ministry: Matthew 17:27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

He was buried in a borrowed tomb: Matthew 27:57-60 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: [58] He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. [59] And when Joseph had taken the body, he
wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, [60] And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had
hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and
departed.

In remembering the humility of Jesus, we recall that He engaged in the most mental
service: Matthew 20:28 * Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto,
but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

4. Jesus was meek. Matthew 11:29 * Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for
I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

Being “meek” does not mean being a “milquetoast.” R. A. Torrey wrote: “....that
attitude of mind that is opposed to harshness and contentiousness, and that shows itself in
gentleness and tenderness in dealing with others.

Look at how Jesus dealt with:

- the repentent sinner: Luke 7:37-39 * And, behold, a woman in the city, which
was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house,
brought an alabaster box of ointment, [38] And stood at his feet behind him
weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the
hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.
[39] Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within
himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and
what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.*

- doubting Thomas: John 20:29 * Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou
hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet
have believed.*

- even with the traitor Judas: John 13:21 * When Jesus had thus said, he was
troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that
one of you shall betray me. * Matthew 26:50 * And Jesus said unto him,
Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus,
and took him.*

5. Jesus was balanced. Thiessen writes: “Jesus was grave without being melancholy;
joyful without being frivolous.

Isaiah wrote: Isaiah 53:3-4 * He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows,
and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was
despised, and we esteemed him not. [4] Surely he hath borne our griefs, and
carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

I have heard some preachers remind us that scriptures do not relate Jesus ever laughing. However, in His teaching He sometimes introduced humorous and ridiculous things:
Matthew 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the
eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Matthew
23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

But we read that Jesus wept: John 11:35 Jesus wept. Jesus knew what was coming
to Jerusalem just forty years down the road - the massive invasion by Rome in which up
to a million people would die. Jesus knew the wrath of God was coming upon the Holy
City - and He wept.

In two weeks: Part Two: What The Bible Says About Jesus