

This is the first Sunday of Advent. This is the time of year we look backward to the first coming of Christ and we look forward to when He will come again. I wanted to spend this advent spending a lot of time talking about the birth of Christ. That seems obvious because it is what we should always be doing around Christmas time. But I want to help us think about this rightly. Not merely that we should be thinking about Jesus and His birth. But I want us to learn to think about it theologically. I want these next few weeks to help us understand why the birth of Christ in Bethlehem was such a big deal.

For the next four weeks we are going to be talking about the Incarnation of Jesus. That is a big theological word and it is one I want you to learn. I am going to keep using it. The incarnation is the word that means God has come down to be born in human flesh. This miraculous event is called the Incarnation. And it deserves its own word because it is so significant. Now I am going to do something different in this sermon series. I hesitate to call this a topical series, because I am allergic to the idea. But this is going to be a heavily theological series. My goal is not to just exegete exactly through all of these passages. Though we will do plenty of looking at the Bible. But I want to look particularly about what these passages teach us about the incarnation. What do they say about the birth of Christ. What do they teach us about why it matters.

This morning we will be in John 1 mostly, but we may read some other passages as well. This will be our primer on the incarnation. Hopefully, it will help all of us either learn more about this for the first time, or it will help remind those of us whose memory tends to fade.

This week will be like a primer. We are going to learn and explain what the incarnation means. Today will learn the foundations of the incarnation.

## **I. The incarnation means Jesus is truly God and truly man.**

This is the heart of the incarnation.

The wonder of Christ coming down to earth to being born.

The incarnation means that Jesus that Jesus is truly God and truly man.

Often people might say, Jesus is 100% God and 100% man.  
I have said the same thing in the past.  
I have stopped saying that because I think it actually confusing for people.  
Anyone with some basic math skills will say that does not add up.  
And I think it can have some weird or dangerous implications.  
It is better to say and recognize, Jesus is truly God.  
Everything that it means to be God, Jesus truly is.  
And Jesus is truly man.  
And everything that it means to be human, Jesus truly is.

Jesus is not a weird hybrid half God half man.  
He is not a demi-God like Hercules or the other Greek gods.  
He is also not some weird mixture none of us could pretend to be.  
He is not like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.  
He is also not simply pretending to be human.  
He is not wearing a human suit.  
Jesus is truly a human being.  
And Jesus is truly God.

Let's talk about what it means to say that Jesus is truly God.  
Look at John 1:1 **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."**

Now, when we talk about this verse, we might typically think about the word of God.  
We might think about the scripture or the Bible.  
And we know that the word is a reference to Jesus, but it seems different to us to talk about God this way.

But this would not have been strange for the ancient world. In fact, they would've understood immediately what John was doing.  
Because to the ancient world when they talked about God, they had this idea of the word. Or the logos, which is the Greek word for word.  
And the Greek and Roman philosophers at this time would talk about and believed in the idea of the logos.

Even though the world was largely polytheistic, they recognized that logically, there had to be one ultimate God. There had to be one ultimate power behind everything and the universe. They didn't know who it was or what god it was. So they all just called it "the Logos."

So, when John begins the gospel this way. When He says, **"In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God."**

He is making a statement claiming the Logos is the Christian God.

He's using that language.

So this is Trinitarian language.

The idea that we as believers believe in the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, they are all God.

We do not worship a god, we worship God in three persons.

Skip ahead to verse 14, **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."**

And the word became flesh.

This is saying that that idea that you have about God.

Your philosophy and your opinions has come down in human flesh.

It is Jesus.

The Logos has revealed itself.

And it has revealed itself in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is truly God.

Colossians 2:9 tells us, **"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,"**

That means all of God.

Jesus does not just have a little splinter of divinity.

He is not just slightly more holy than we are.

All of God's nature.

All of God's power.

All of God's incomprehensibility.  
All of God's sovereignty, and might, and majesty,  
Every attribute.  
Everything that God is.  
Everything that makes God, God.  
All of that dwells in the person of Jesus.

He is not a creation.  
He is not a lesser God.  
He is the fullness of God.  
Jesus is God Himself.  
Jesus is the I Am.

He is the one who created all things.  
He is the light.  
He is God.

So, in the incarnation.  
In Jesus, we have someone who truly is God.  
This is why John one says that the word was there in the beginning.  
From the very beginning of time and eternity past, Jesus always has been.

And this is important.  
Because if Jesus had a beginning.  
If there ever was a time where the son was not, as Arius said.  
If Jesus had been created at a moment, then He is not truly God.  
Then He would be a lesser God.  
Then He would be a creation instead of the Creator.  
So that is why we talk about how God is eternally begotten from God.  
He came forth from the Father eternally, not at some moment.  
We're trying to communicate there is Jesus is the son of God.  
But there is not a moment when He was born.  
He has always been the son.

Which is why John says in verse 3, **"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."**

There is nothing in the world that Jesus's hands were not on.

Nothing has been created that Jesus didn't have a say in its design.

The world was formed by the entire Trinity.

Jesus was there in the beginning.

So as we think about the incarnation.

As we think about what it means, when Jesus says, I am God.

When Jesus says **"I am the I am."**

Jesus is claiming to be God.

And Jesus truly is God.

In Jesus, we see the fullness of God.

Now, what does it mean when we say that Jesus is truly man.

John says, **"the word has become flesh."**

It means that He put on a human body.

He did not put on a superhuman body.

They were the same flesh as you and I.

He did not have a spiritual body.

He did not come in a glorified body.

He came in flesh.

Says why earlier in John 1:11, **"And He came to his own people."**

This does not just mean that he came to the Jewish people or Israel.

It means that he came to the human beings that he was now a part of.

We are His people not because of who we are.

But because of who He is now

Jesus' body is truly human.

He was not pretending to have a body.

Often times the angels would appear miraculously in the Scriptures.

They would look like they had human bodies, but they did not

They had spiritual or angelic bodies.

That is not what's happening here.  
Jesus had real human body like you  
There's nothing particularly special about his fleshly body.

It seems like he did not even necessarily pick a great one.  
Isaiah tells us that there was nothing about him that we would notice.  
Isaiah 53:2 **"he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him."**

He did not have a body builder body.  
He did not have gorgeous hair or dashing good looks.  
Almost every show or movie about Jesus always has an actor who is at least somewhat good looking that we would enjoy watching on our screens.  
Jesus was just average.  
Nobody cast him in their movie or think twice about Him if He passed us on the street.

We need to understand and recognize how amazing this is that God was really willing to be truly like us.  
He was not just a pretender  
He was not pretending to be a person or a baby.  
He was not pretending to need sleep  
He was not pretending to eat.  
He was not pretending to bleed.

His body had all of the same limitations as ours.  
He can only be in one place at a time.  
His arms could only stretch out so far.  
His eyes could only see so far away.  
He's willing to endure the limitations of having to grow up.

Jesus didn't cheat and come down as a 30-year-old.  
He came and as we celebrate and remember this season,  
He was born as a baby.

That God was willing to be truly human he had to be truly born and he was.

And he had to grow up.

He watches His body grow and stretch.

His teeth fell out his adult teeth came in.

He had to bathe.

He had to go to the bathroom.

When he did not eat, He got hungry.

He got overwhelmed by crowds and needed alone time.

He got exhausted from all His ministry and needed to sleep in the boat.

He wept when friends He loved died.

When He was crucified, He felt every moment of pain.

Whatever we think being human is, Jesus is.

He is one of us.

He has felt all that we feel.

This is part of the insanity and the miraculousness of the incarnation.

This is why I think it deserves a big word to explain it.

There's something about having to use a big word because you recognize that this thing is hard to describe.

The incarnation is hard to describe

But it's miraculous the word became flesh.

Jesus is truly God and He is truly man.

## **II. The incarnation means salvation is possible.**

This is part of what the incarnation requires.

Our salvation required the incarnation.

If Jesus was not truly God and Jesus was not truly man, then we are doomed.

Jesus had to be truly God and he had to be truly man in order to bring us salvation.

A simple way to think about the incarnation matters for salvation is an old saying from the early church.

They would say that Jesus became like we are so that we could become like He is.

Jesus became like sinners so that we could become holy.

Jesus became one of us so that we could become his brother.

And only the incarnation can make that possible.

Verse 16, **"For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."**

The appearance of Jesus Christ is grace on grace.

I love that phrase, **"grace upon grace."**

And this came from the fullness of Christ's divinity.

It came from the fullness of Christ's humanity.

We did not deserve grace.

We did not ask for grace.

We did not earn grace.

And yet, Jesus gave us grace on grace.

Grace upon grace.

How do we receive this grace?

Through Jesus as the mediator.

He is the one who brings us to God.

Verse 17, **"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."**

Moses brought us the law.

We have been talking about the law in Exodus on Wednesday nights.

The law is good.

It is beautiful and it shows us God.

It shows us what is required to be holy.

But the problem is that we cannot keep it.

We cannot perfectly obey the law.

We fail and we need someone to give us a better way forward.

And so Christ came to bring grace.  
Moses was a mediator.  
He stood between Israel and God.  
He talked to God face to face.  
And he taught Israel the rules they had to follow if they could be around God.  
But Moses could not bring them into the presence of God.  
Jesus can.  
Jesus is the mediator between us and God.  
And with Jesus, we can be in the presence of God.

He was the perfect sacrifice.  
He was the sacrifices all of the goats and bulls pointed to.  
All of the blood pointed to His blood.  
And He would not have been the perfect sacrifice without being truly God and truly man.

Our salvation requires that someone die in our place.  
The wages of sin is death, and we all deserve death.  
God cannot die, only man can.  
We need someone who is one of us to die for us.  
But all of us are sinful.  
Our salvation requires a perfect and sinless sacrifice.  
Man cannot be perfect, only God can.  
Mankind followed the path of the first Adam, and we need a second one.

Only Jesus can be what we need.  
Only the incarnation can provide the sacrifice.  
Because Jesus is perfect and He is man.  
He is the perfect sacrificial lamb.  
He can die in our place.  
He can be the mediator between us and God.  
Grace upon grace.

And how did it come through Jesus?  
It came not just through His teaching and His love.  
It came through His life and death on the cross.  
It came through His resurrection and conquering of death.

Verse 12, **"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"**

Only God can give us the right to be His children.  
And only Jesus can give it to us.  
And He does.  
He does so willingly.  
He does so gladly.

If we want to receive this salvation, we have to believe in His name.  
And we have to receive Him.  
We need to receive and accept Him as God and man.  
To be a Christian, you must accept the incarnation.  
It is not optional.  
It is not a weird belief over in the corner.  
It is part of the heart of our faith.

You must believe in Jesus.  
If you do not believe in Jesus, I invite you to accept Him.  
To trust in His own words about Himself.

And if you do, you can gain the right to become children of God.  
I hope that you do.  
And that I can call you brother and sister.  
Because in Christ, there is grace upon grace.

Jesus went and ate with sinners.  
Grace upon grace.  
Sinners could now be in the presence of the holy of holies.  
Grace upon grace.

Sinners could spit in His face and mock Him.  
Yet He forgave and died anyway.  
Grace upon grace.  
And He shows to grace upon grace to us, in the incarnation.

### III. The incarnation means we can see God.

We see this in the middle of verse 14, **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."**

We have seen the glory of God.  
This is what the incarnation means.  
It means that what was unseen is now seen.  
Invisible God is now visible before us.  
The glory Isaiah saw in his vision of the throne room.  
The glory that was hidden in the holy of holies.

Verse 18, **"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."**

This is the verse that helps us understand what's going on here.  
You see before the incarnation.  
Before the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, no one had ever seen God.  
No one.

God tells this to Moses in Exodus 33 that no one can see the face of God and live.  
I don't think that this means did God would actively kill us if we dare to see him.  
Really what I think this means is that God is so beyond us that he is so holy nature somehow made it into his presence we got to look at him our bodies would disintegrate.  
Our sin would not allow us to be in his presence without dying.  
Our mind would simply break because we could handle what we see.  
We can't handle His presence any more than fire or ocean depths

It's no one in all the Bible had ever seen God really or fully.

Sometime they got glimpses.

We can think of Moses, who did not see God's face, but not to see the backside of God.

Which is really kind of some poetic language to say that he only got to see a glimpse a small piece of what God is like.

The only one who has seen the only thing we have seen is Jesus the father side who has made him known.

John 6:46 later, **"not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father."**

It's only Jesus has truly seen the father.

Really anytime we see in the Old Testament these ideas of someone seeing God or speaking with God

You can think of the one who had a face like the son of God in the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel.

Moses saw the angel of the Lord, who spoke out of the burning Bush.

All of those times seem to be the Son of God.

All the other appearances have gone in the Bible or visions or small glimpses.

Significant for us to understand it remember because God is so far removed from us. We can't see him.

Do you think it is the attributes of God.

One of them being that God is incomprehensible.

We cannot grasp understand him.

He is beyond the capacity of the human mind to even think about properly.

He is impassible, which means he is not controlled by his emotions and the way that you and I are.

His anger and love cannot overwhelm Him.

His rage or jealousy could never force him to act in a way He would regret.

He is holy, holy holy Lord God, Almighty.

Have the power to create the cosmos on all of the universe with just a word.

His voice thunders and shakes mountains and also can bring bones back to life.

It's hard to figure that God out.

It is hard.

We think about the questions about justice we may have about God.

How can we say that God is good and God is love and yet he was also vengeance and wrath?

God is good and loves us in the flood and destroy the nation of Egypt and destroy the nations in Canaan?

How can God be all knowing and yet gracious still.

This God chooses seemingly random people like Abraham and David to be chosen vessels, despite their own inadequacies.

We can't figure that God out.

We have some good answers to those questions.

But full comprehension of sight of our God is beyond us.

We cannot see him.

But the wonder in the grace of God

And the beauty of the incarnation is that God comes so that now we can see Him.

Now we can behold Him.

No one got to see God before.

Moses got to go and kind of talk with God face-to-face.

But even in that he didn't really see God's face.

And he was only one man

Once a year the high priest would be allowed to go in to the holy of holy, and he could just see part of the presence of God.

There's no longer it.

Now in the incarnation, everyone can see God.

We just read in exodus when God comes down at Sinai and gives the 10 Commandments and the law of Moses.

The presence of God surrounds the mountain that thunder and lightning and fire and trumpets are going off.

I got warn them to make fence and let anyone even step foot on here they die, including animals.

In Jesus incarnation, Jesus is born surrounded by animals.

God is born in flesh and now we can see him and we see him as a little baby.

Anyone may come and see.

The shepherd were in the lower end of society and look down upon.

They are invited to come and see when the savior is born.

Wise men come from nations because they've seen the star and they've heard that God is here.

Jesus shows us what God is like.

Through Jesus, we are able to see God.

We can see Him.

We can see the gentleness of Jesus in the way that he says no don't keep the little ones back. Let all the little children come to me for them belongs the kingdom of God.

In Jesus, we can see his compassion towards the weak and towards us as he seeks those who are far from him and invites them in.

In Jesus, we see the grace of God as he invites all the sinners to come and be around him and come and follow him.

In Jesus, we can see the patience of God to see his patience over and over with his disciples even as they continually don't get it I don't understand what he is saying.

In Jesus, we get to hear and know the word of God.

We get to read it for ourselves.

The incarnation as well, the most profound gifts of grace in the world. Because in it, we have been given the ability to see God. We can see him for ourselves.

Too often, I will see people try to pit the old new Testaments against each other.

They will try to say all there's the Old Testament God, and then there's Jesus.

In the Old Testament, just shadows and foreshadowing.

And in the new testament, you get to see the fullness that you've been reading about.

Every story in the gospels is a revelation of who God is, in Christ.

This is the fullness of our God.

When you see Jesus, you see God.

Come and see.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. The incarnation means Jesus is truly God and truly man. It means salvation is possible. And it means we can see God.
2. The incarnation is one of the foundational beliefs of our faith. Our faith falls apart without it. And so we should understand it if we are going to call ourselves Christians. But it should also lead us into worship and adoration. We should see the incredible blessing it is to be able to see God. We no longer have to have idols or pictures, now we have the WORD in flesh. A God that we can see. Grace upon grace.