

INCARNATION: God Comes

Tonight we are continuing in our series titled Credo: I Believe. Tonight we are in our 7th study in the series and it deals with the Incarnation, God coming into human history as the man Jesus Christ.

My wife Valerie was just 22 years old when she gave birth to our first child, Deborah. I remember the very first time I saw Valerie holding Deb — It was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen. And then I remember how absolutely blown out I was when she handed Deborah to me for the very first time. In time it began to dawn on me that THIS is how God came — frail, fragile, needy, helpless, and vulnerable. *SONG: “Infinite One, come as an infant. Maker of everything fashioned as man. Holder of heaven now held by His mother. See this is God with us.”*

The Birth of Jesus is the most important birth in the history of the world — so important that History is divided BC and AD, Before Christ and Anno Domini the Year of our Lord. EVERYTHING revolves around the birth of this man, Jesus Christ. History is HIS – Story.

Here at Metro this Jesus is The Object of our adoration and worship — The focal point and exalted One of every sermon — **He is the point** of every area of ministry. We exist individually and corporately to exalt HIM!

It is my sincere prayer that this evening God will truly overlook my inadequacies as a man and a teacher and enable me to **summarize** in a **succinct** way **what we believe about Jesus** and **in particular the Doctrine of the Incarnation**.

For some tonight this may be the first time you have heard about this thing called the Incarnation. For others who have met Jesus — I pray that you will hear it again in a fresh way and ponder the depth.

QUESTION #1 — What does incarnation mean?

I hated taking Latin in High School — But in hindsight I’m glad I did because it is so helpful in regards to the meaning of words.

INCARNATION comes from two latin words — IN (into) and CARNARE (flesh) = Into Flesh

We know that carne means meat. There are two kinds of chili — there is regular chili and there is chili con carne — chili with meat!

In Christian theology it is used to describe the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh as Jesus Christ.

Jesus *is* God coming to human history in flesh. The Bible teaches us that God is Spirit. Yet He was packaged in meat. He was given glands, bone, muscle, skin, teeth, hair.

CRUCIAL: At the Incarnation nothing was subtracted from Jesus' divinity – His deity was not diminished in anyway... but Jesus *added* to His nature. He added *humanity* to His *deity*.

CRUCIAL INSIGHT: The Incarnation does not mean that a human being became God. That is the first lie that Satan told our parents in the garden and some religions like Mormonism still perpetuate that lie. It is not that someone became God

The Incarnation is not about an enlightened humanity graduating or rising to the level of deity. It's about a compassionate God diving into our mess.

ILLUSTRATION: By Sandy Adams — It reminds me of a Decatur man and his friends who visited a barbeque house in North Georgia... They drove over an hour to get there. It was "All you can eat rib night." And it didn't take long for the mound of bones and dirty napkins to pile high. Long after they should have, the men admitted they'd had enough. They paid their bill and started to leave. But the driver couldn't find his car keys... He checked his pockets... *nothing but lint*. He looked through the car window to see if the keys were still in the ignition... *nada*. Suddenly, it hit him. When he sat down to eat he had laid his keys on his tray. Evidently, they got covered with napkins, and were still on the tray when he emptied his trash into the wastebasket. The man's keys were at the bottom of *all you can eat rib night*. It was a long walk home, and none of his friends wanted to hail a cab, so there was only one thing to do... *dive in!* And for the next fifteen, long agonizing minutes this man fished through *rib bones, half-eaten corn cobs, barbeque sauce, baked beans, slushy coleslaw, pools of backwashed tea, and gobs of saliva-soaked napkins*... until finally he grabbed his keys. When he pulled out his arm it was coated with a layer of BBQ slime.

This is what God did at His Incarnation. Jesus' humanity testified of His **humility**.

We were lost in a slime called "*sin*" - yet rather than cry for help, or drive home without us – Jesus dove into our filthy world to pull us out.

I say this with all due respect, I am thankful I serve *a dumpster diving God*. The Incarnate God *dove into the trash*.

And here's **the key**... Jesus loves you and me. He doesn't leave us at the bottom of the can.

Nobody likes to stick their hand into a trash can of scraps, slobber, and spit. Your hand becomes vulnerable. *Along with a set of keys, who knows what else you'll find!*

In the INCARNATION we get an amazing insight into the heart of God. The Incarnation made Him vulnerable. We cannot begin to fathom the infinite **SELFLESSNESS and LOVE** of Jesus to leave the glory of heaven and dive into the dumpster of a fallen world.

QUOTE: GK Chesterton — “Alone of all creeds, Christianity adds courage to the virtues of the Creator.” Jesus didn’t have to enter our madness - but He did!

SO — The Incarnation means that God became someone — God became a human being.

John Calvin — a very famous theologian — says that in the Incarnation **God accommodated us**. Jesus is God accommodating us in the same way that a good mom accommodates her kids. Valerie accommodates our kids from how our home is organized to our schedule to our diet to the kind of vehicle. Valerie is all about accommodating our kids. When our kids were little and we went for walks at Newport Beach she would walk at their pace. She picked the path that best accommodated their age and balance. **INFINITELY MORE SO** — God as creator, needs to accommodate us. In His infinite wisdom He sees the need to work within our limitations and our parameters. **HE DOES THAT** by coming as Jesus Christ.

As a parent one of the ways that you accommodate your infant/toddlers is to get down on the floor — be at their eye level, speak to them and relate to them in a language they can understand.

INFINITELY MORE SO — God does that for us in Jesus Christ! **THAT** is what incarnation means.

Let’s do a little bit of historical exercise,

QUESTION # 2 — How did people know God was coming?

There was a longing — an anticipation — an expectation.

It all started in **Genesis 3**. In **Genesis 1** and **2** we looked at the fact that God created everyone and God created everything — and we sinned against God separating ourselves from God — experiencing physical and spiritual death.

Amazingly — following this absolute and utter betrayal and rejection God comes in **Genesis 3.15** and makes the first Gospel proclamation! This is called the **Proto-Evangelion**. 4000 years before the birth of Christ — the Incarnation — God preaches the Gospel to our first parents. He speaks to Satan who was the one who instigated the original sin. *I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring, he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.*

God says — *Someone is coming, a male son. He will come through the line of the first woman Eve and He will do battle with Satan. Satan will physically hurt him but He will ultimately destroy Satan.*

Furthermore — in this, we are getting the first inference of the Virgin birth. In the rest of Genesis, in the Old Testament, the genealogies are given in a way that is

patriarchal. This man had these sons, this man had these sons. But here in Genesis 3 there is no mention of a father — instead there is this sudden inference of the virgin birth — God only mentions the mother.

So now we are waiting for a particular son to be born of a woman who will crush Satan — overcome sin and death — and right everything that went wrong with Adam.

The Old Testament moves forward.

Isaiah 7:14 sheds additional light on the coming of Jesus — the incarnation.

IT SAYS — *therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.* A SIGN IS something people look for. *Behold the virgin shall conceive.* THAT IS BEYOND UNUSUAL! WE call that a miracle when a virgin conceives and bears a son. Isaiah goes on —*you shall call his name Immanuel which means God with us.*

So the first clue is we are looking for — a male child

The second clue we are looking — the mother would be a young virgin woman.

The third clue comes in **Micah 5:2** written about 700 years before the birth of Christ — before the incarnation. This prophecy is given showing that God is sovereign over history — *but you oh Bethlehem.* Bethlehem is a small rural town not a big deal — think Browns Valley — but not too long because you will be sad. *but you oh Bethlehem Ephratah who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,* little tiny dumpy rural hick town doesn't even have a fair not even that big, *from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler or king over Israel whose origin is from old from ancient days* — in the Hebrew it literally means *from eternity past.* **So we are looking for a son — born of a virgin** — and He is to be **born in the town of Bethlehem.**

Finally — the fourth clue — Malachi 3:1

The final book of the Old Testament. This prophecy is given 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ — the incarnation. *Behold I send my messenger* — that will be John the baptizer the very odd cousin of Jesus *and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek (that's the Lord Jesus Christ) will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant* (that's the new covenant which we dealt with in our last Credo Study) *in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.* This is an hugely important historical **time stamp!** When was the temple destroyed? 70AD! There has been no temple for almost 2000 years since 70AD. That means that this man that they were waiting for **had to have come** before 70AD.

SO — FOUR FACTS —

A son

born of a virgin

in the town of Bethlehem

before 70AD.

Most Jews today say that Christianity takes these prophecies and change their meaning to fit Jesus — They say that the Jewish people never understood that that God was coming in human flesh. Our response to that is twofold.

First — Who else was a **man — born of a virgin — in Bethlehem — before 70AD?**

If it's not Jesus, who else is there?

Secondly — You can reference a man named Jacob Neusner, considered by many to be the leading scholar in Judaism today. He does not worship Jesus as God, he is an orthodox Jew. He wrote a book called *“The Incarnation of God.”* He says that the Old Testament **does** speak of God entering human history as a human being. When asked about the implications, he will basically admit in the book that this does crack the door open for belief in Jesus as the one everyone was waiting for and God was promising, God coming in the human flesh. He also says that many rabbis in the era of the Old Testament did teach that God was coming in human history as a man. That’s why when Jesus came, many did worship Him as God and as the one they had been waiting for — God come into human history born of a woman who was a virgin in the town of Bethlehem before the destruction of the Temple.

QUESTION #3 — HOW did God come in human flesh?

A word to those who have been Christians for a while — Sometimes we can become so familiar with this great passage that we cease to be amazed by what God has done. As we revisit these verses that are familiar to us — I pray that we will reconsider them and remember the extraordinary nature of what the Bible says about Jesus.

Matthew Chapter 1 — For those of who are not Christians, this is account of the birth of Jesus. We love you — we are glad to have you with us — we are really excited to tell you about this man Jesus.

Matthew Chapter 1:18 *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his Mother Mary*

Ladies — I need you to try go there with me as only you women can. Mary is a teenage girl maybe 14, 15, 16 years of age. She loves God. She is a virgin. She saved herself for marriage. She is engaged — betrothed to a man named Joseph. Have you ever wondered what she was thinking? She was just like any of you would be — Thinking of her wedding day — making all of the same preparations that you would make — probably overwhelmed by the same things you would be overwhelmed by.

Mary's at that day where her wedding day is imminent and approaching and she is excited.

¹⁸...When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together

she was still a virgin.

In fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14

she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Imagine how shocking that was — to MARY and to JOSEPH.

In that day — betrothal was legally like marriage. If you had sex before the wedding you would be disgraced, maybe even put to death

Betrothal was so legally binding that to extricate yourself required a legal divorce.

¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Over in **Luke 2** we are given details that compliment Matthew's account. We see clearly that she loves God — She worships God — She trusts God

You men need to try to put yourselves in Joseph's place.

Joseph loves God — He loves Mary. He believes Mary to be a virgin. He has probably never even kissed her at this point — **and she is pregnant!** He feels utter betrayal — the girl of his dreams has now become his worst nightmare! Imagine — Mary comes to you and says — *Joseph honey — I have some BAD news and some GOOD news. Bad news is — I'm pregnant! What could possibly be good news? Well the good news is — I didn't have sex with anyone — God is the dad!*

Rather than putting her to shame or potentially putting her to death, he resolves to divorce her quietly, to leave her dignity intact and find a way just to get out of this very painful situation.

²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

It's a miracle! You are part of God's plan! The Old Testament is being fulfilled in the womb of your teenage fiancé.

Imagine the FAITH exercised by Joseph!

Imagine the pressure on Joseph! He is going to need to adopt God!

BY THE WAY — If you are adopted you are in good company — you are in the company of Jesus.

It goes on.

²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: (Isaiah Chapter 7:14) ²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

No sexual intimacy until she had given birth to a son

And he called his name Jesus.

Joseph stood up as a man of God — a man of faith.

He was a bit of an earthly savior to Mary and Jesus. He married this woman, who would be the subject of accusation and insults over this pregnancy (Jesus would even be called illegitimate by the religious leaders)

No doubt Joseph was scorned throughout the course of his life as well — *oh you married her, you think she is a good gal, you are a fool.*

He endured that scorn — he served God faithfully — **he married the single mother, he adopted Jesus, raised him**

REMEMBER — God had declared that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. HOW do you get a woman in her late term of pregnancy to make a donkey ride 70 miles through the Jordan Valley to Browns Valley — I mean Bethlehem?

Imagine that men. Your wife is in her 9th month and you say — *Hey love — I have a super idea. Let’s load up the donkey and go to Bethlehem!*

Seems like God has a problem! Not really.

In **Luke 2** we are told that Augustus Caesar gave the command that the whole world was to be registered for the purpose of taxes. Everyone had to go to the town of his ancestors to register. Because Joseph was from the family line of David he had to go to the town of Bethlehem to register. Caesar speaks and the world moves! POWER!!

DON’T MISS THIS — God had foretold that the world would be saved by a son, born of a virgin IN BETHLEHEM before 70 AD.

Mary has now — by the power of the Holy Spirit — conceived a son without sexual relations. God needs to move this couple 70 miles south at a time when no expecting

couple in their right mind would travel 70 steps from their front door — let alone 70 miles on the back of a donkey.

No Problem for God — He gets his little puppet, Augustus Caesar to command them to travel to Bethlehem.

Mary gave birth to Jesus in the town of Bethlehem at **just the right time** — Fulfilling all of the Old Testament prophecies that pointed to the Incarnation

QUESTION #4 — Is Jesus fully God and fully man?

Christianity's critics like to suggest that *the deity of Jesus* is an invention of the Church. This is the thesis of Dan Brown's hugely popular movie and novel, "[The Da Vinci Code](#)." *Jesus was a mere man – with a wife and kid. Never in His wildest dreams did Jesus intend to be worshipped as God.*

Yet that's not the picture we glean from the Bible or from history.

Jesus was condemned to death not because of His pithy parables, or even His scathing rebuke of the religious leaders of His day. Jesus was executed for one reason - **He claimed to be** the one, true God to a people that were **fiercely monotheistic!**

Jesus made statements like, "**I am the bread come down from heaven.**" He didn't say, "*I'm the bread come from Nazareth... or from Bethlehem (His birthplace)...*" Heaven, God's domain, was Jesus' home address.

Jesus' favorite name for Himself was "*Son of Man.*" This was a Hebrew label for the Messiah. **Daniel 7:13** says *the Son of Man* has dominion over all people and nations. He rules forever over a kingdom that will never end. For Jesus to be the "*Son of Man*" made Him more than mere human.

When Jesus told the lame man, "*Your sins are forgiven you*" — The Pharisees were appalled. They whispered, "*Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?*" They knew the implications. Jesus claimed to be God. And it was difficult to argue with Him when He backed it up by healing the man's paralysis.

Jesus also called Himself the "*Son of God.*" Actually, lots of people called Him by this name. Disciples, demons, the Devil, even a Roman Centurion recognized Jesus as "*the Son of God.*" Here's how this works from a Hebrew mindset... the son of a cow is a cow... the son of a man is a man... thus, the Son of God is God... For a Jew to be *Son of God* was to be God Himself.

John 3:16 takes it further. Jesus is "*the only begotten Son of God.*" The Jews understood that to be the *the only begotten son of God* meant that Jesus possesses **the nature** of His Father.

Hebrews 1:3 calls Him "*the express image of God's person.*" He's an exact imprint of God –

not just *in shape* — but *in substance*. Jesus isn't just a look-a-like. He doesn't just reflect God, He is God in essence. As we'll see in a moment, the Christian Creeds made a big deal out of Jesus not just being in the *form* of God, but being the same *substance*.

And, there were many occasions when Jesus came right out — made no bones about it — and said very matter-of-factly that He was God. Once, He told the Pharisees that He had personally seen Abraham. They scoffed. How can a 30 year old claim to have seen a man who lived 2000 in the past. Jesus answered, "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" "*I am*" was the name for God given to Moses at the burning bush.

In **John 10:30** Jesus said, "*I and My Father are one.*" And His audience knew what He meant. **Verse 31** reads "*The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.'*" These people weren't dense.

Jesus was a man who claimed to be God. Yet ever so often the History Channel runs a program that suggests Jesus never made such claims. They say His deity was a myth — an exaggeration promoted by Christendom long after His death.

The Church believes Jesus is God because He said He was.

In fact, Jesus is the only leader of a world religion to make such a claim. Buddha, Krishna, and Muhammed never said they were divine. Jesus did — and we believe Jesus — that's why we worship Him as God.

ERRORS COME when you say that Jesus is only God or only man.

Fast-forward with me about 300 years from the time of Christ. It's May 20, 325 AD,

300 Christian leaders have gathered together at Emperor Constantine's lake house near the Turkish town of Nicaea. If we could have been in that room we would have seen giants of the faith. Many of the men present at the council, carried in their bodies proof of the great sufferings that they had endured during the years of persecution. Eusebius tells of a pastor from Egypt with one-eye. The Romans plucked it out of its socket when he refused to deny his loyalty to Jesus. A few of the pastors limp on one leg. Most everyone in the room has lost an arm, a hand, a finger, an ear. A lot of the pastors have burn marks from scalding hot oil. And there's probably not a man in the room whose back isn't a crisscross of scars. These men have weathered decades of persecution. Members of their church were slaughtered by the gladiators and fed to the lions. Funerals were their frequent duty. They were constantly ducking Roman tribunals. But recently the tide shifted. Emperor Constantine had made Christianity the official the state religion. Official hostility had ended. Overnight Christians had gone from *persecuted* to *privileged*. Christians were now praying in public — pastors teaching — Bible Studies in the streets — suddenly, all of Rome was abuzz about Christianity.

In the midst of all of this a man named Arius was teaching that Jesus was less than God — that he was created by God. And this Arius was a gifted communicator. Folks liked to

listen to him.

The men at that council had suffered for Jesus sake. These men endured persecution, but now in a time of peace they face a greater danger... **And *these men* are not about to allow anyone to steal the truth for which they and their friends had sacrificed so much to protect.**

The council of Nicaea didn't create new doctrine. It **recognized** what the NT had taught, the Church believed, and the saints died to maintain.

The participants at Nicaea constructed a statement of faith that has endured the test of time. To this day all three branches of Christianity Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant - adhere to the Nicene Creed. Here's the statement the church fathers drew up, "*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of His Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.*"

Of the 300 bishops who attended the council only three refused to sign the creed... *Arius, and two of his buddies — They were excommunicated.*

INTERESTING — The Nicene Creed was so successful in supporting the deity of Jesus it didn't take long before people began to neglect His humanity. So the church met again, 125 years later, in 451 AD, at Chalcedon to draft another creed which further clarified the nature of Jesus.

They issued something called the Chalcedonian Creed in 451 A.D. They came up with a concept called the Hypostatic Union, hypostasis meaning that Jesus is one person with two natures the humanity, the divinity, fully man, fully God joined together in the person of Jesus Christ.

Historical Christianity knows nothing of a Jesus who is not God Incarnate. Jesus is God and the reason that a few billion Christians on the earth today worship Him as God is because He said He was God. It's not something that we made up it's something that He stated.

And this is important as well because the first of the Ten Commandments is that there is only one God and you should worship no one but the God of the Bible alone. By saying He was God, Jesus was either telling the truth or He was a blasphemous liar who should be put to death.

John Chapter 1 is another very important section of Scripture relative to the INCARNATION. It illuminates the incarnation of Jesus as fully God, fully man. It is written by Jesus' dearest friend, a man named John, who was one of His disciples. John witnessed first hand the miracles, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. John was the last living among the apostles. The others died bloody tortured deaths. They tried to murder John by boiling him in oil. God spared John and they ended up

exiling him to Patmos which is modern day Turkey. He live to a ripe old age and he wrote 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, the Book of Revelation, and the Gospel of John. He too, never recanted that his friend Jesus was God

This man wrote his account of the life of Jesus to tell us that Jesus is God. In what is called the PROLOGUE to John's Gospel, John declares the Incarnation in terms that brought together the Theological culture of the Jews and the Philosophical culture of the Greeks.

The Jewish culture possessed a deeply held conviction concerning the concept of the Word of God — they saw it as preeminent and powerful. They understood that in Genesis 1 alone God spoke 10 times. God's word is so powerful that by it He created the heavens and the earth. They believed from Isaiah 55:11 that God's word accomplishes what He sends it out to do — it does not in any way return to Him void. God's word is powerful, it accomplishes what He desires and decrees.

The Greek culture was very philosophical at heart. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great — all traced the history of their philosophy back to a man named Heraclitus. He was so influential that his face was on the coin in the Greek day — not unlike George Washington for us. He said that the most important essential powerful thing in the world was the *word* or the *logos*. He held that the *logos* created and held the world together. He held that the *logos* reconciled the realm of the spirit and the realm of the physical.

John takes this concept of *the logos* — *the word* — and in so doing he take the essence of Jewish thinking and the essence of Greek philosophy and he brings it all together in Jesus Christ. He does so beginning of [John 1](#).

John 1:1 ¹In the beginning

An echo of Genesis 1:1

¹In the beginning was the Word

So before creation — in eternity past — was the word — the logos.

and the word was with God.

So the word is eternal and with God. Literally it means face-to-face with God

and the word was God

So this eternal word — that was from eternity past face-to-face with God — is God.

²He was in the beginning with God.

We are getting a picture here of the Trinity. Jesus was in the beginning with God

³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Now John tells us that the Word is the creator — we are his creation.

This logos — this word — Jesus — was face-to-face with God — is eternal — is creator — and is God.

⁴In him was life,

The Logos — the Word — JESUS — is the source of all life — and apart from him there is no life

and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Again — John harkens back to Genesis 1 where God separates light and darkness. Here he's talking in a moral and spiritual sense ' the moral and spiritual darkness that is the result of the Fall — result of the world being filled with with sin

This light refers to the coming of Jesus to illuminate to this fallen world God — truth — and holiness.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness is not able to overcome the Light of Jesus.

John then goes on to speak of the forerunner of Jesus, the cousin of Jesus named John (John the Baptist) John is the Fulfillment of Malachi 3:1

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John came preaching repentance and pointing to Jesus.

⁹The true light (that is Jesus the logos, the word), which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him

God the Creator came into creation — as the man Jesus Christ — and the world He created did not know Him.

¹¹He came to his own,

That is the Jewish people

And His own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

This is a spiritual birth — being born again. We are born physically but we need to be born again spiritually. We are born physically alive — but spiritually dead. To be born again is to receive from God a new heart — new life — new — new passions.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us

THE INCARNATION! This Logos — eternal — creator — eternally in face-to-face relationship with the Father — who was Himself from eternity Divine — became a human being. He took upon himself 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.

The glory of God is manifested in the person of Jesus. There is no knowledge, no understanding of God apart from Jesus.

Here is the big idea — There is no right knowledge of God apart from the person of Jesus Christ.

¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)

John essentially says — He is eternal, He is God, he pre-exists me.

¹⁶And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

God took on flesh — became INCARNATE — to give *grace upon grace* —unmerited favor — undeserved love.

¹⁷For the law was given through Moses;

As we read the law — God's Law — we have to acknowledge that we have failed to keep His Law — we have sinned and we have fallen short. That sin has created an infinite and absolute distance between us and God. There is NO WAY for us to make ourselves RIGHT before Him. For us to be saved will require God doing for us something that we do not deserve and could not earn! What we need is GRACE!

grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The GRACE that we NEED comes through Jesus.

¹⁸No one has ever seen God;

No one has ever seen God — that's the point of His coming. Apart from Jesus, all we have is philosophical and religious speculation!

the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In Jesus — we have the revelation of God.

John tells us that this revelation of God to man was accomplished in the incarnation — in the birth of Jesus. Jesus is fully God and fully man — coming to human history in human flesh to live a human life without sin.

Jesus was fully human. *Isaiah 53:2 he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.* If you saw Jesus, he looked very normal, very normal. In virtually every movie ever made about Jesus you can always pick Him out — He's the one that looks radioactive or speaks with with an echo! Jesus didn't glow in the dark — there wasn't a halo over his head — he looked like a regular guy. He had a mother, he was born, he had to learn to walk and read and write. **Luke 2:42** says that *he grew in favor and stature and wisdom with men and God.* Jesus had friends. He was betrayed. He was happy. He was sad. He had to go to the bathroom. **He was fully human, and fully God.** And this is the great mystery of our faith! It is a mystery that is revealed to us in the Bible. But it is also a mystery that God has chosen to not further reveal in the Bible. Paul put it like this — **1 Tim. 3:16** *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,*

QUESTION #5 — How could God become a man? How could this work? How could this happen?

Here at Metro we have stated that we have a passion to reach the World for God. The reason we have that at the heart of who we are is because THAT is the passion we see lived out in Jesus! Jesus came as a missionary! God is a missionary and sends us to be missionaries in culture.

CRUCIAL: The culture Jesus lived in **before** he was born on the earth was very different. We get a glimpse of it in **Isaiah 6** — Isaiah is given a glimpse at the scene around the throne of God in heaven. He says — *I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and*

exulted, the train of his robe filled the temple and around Him were angels crying out holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of his glory.

Fast forward to **John 12:41** — There John writes that Isaiah saw the pre-Incarnate glory of Jesus and spoke of His glory. Isaiah got a glimpse into the **majesty** and the **glory of the presence of Jesus seated on a throne, ruling** over all people's, times and places — and **being worshipped as God**.

In his INCARNATION — Jesus came off his throne — humbled Himself and physically entered into human history through the womb of Mary the young virgin, and He came as a man. **In so doing, he went from one culture to another — He went from glory to humility — he went from a throne to a manger — He went from honor to dishonor — He went from extravagance to poverty — He entered into human history as a missionary.**

He entered into a culture — He came into history into a culture with the people speaking a language, eating certain food, wearing certain clothes, enjoying certain holidays, reading certain books. THAT is God — and He is giving us an example of how we are to live our lives in culture — getting to know the world that we are in to bring the truth of God to the world.

We need to understand that Jesus is a missionary — and when he became a missionary he did not cease to be God. **Augustine** — the Great Church Father — framed it in this way — Christ added to himself, which he was not, He did not lose what he was! Jesus was fully God — He didn't lose His divinity as God. He added to His Divinity humanity and became a human being. **This means that Jesus retained all of His rights and His divine attributes** — but He did not continually avail himself to them. He became very humble.

In fact — **Philippians 2** uses **that specific word** to talk about the incarnation of Jesus. He came in humility not glory — not glory but humility.

Philippians 2:5 have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus.

So we are to think like Jesus, approach life like Jesus, see the purpose of our life as similar to Jesus

“who, though he was in the form of God,

That's Paul's way of saying *He was God* — He was the same as God, He of the same essence and nature as God.

did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Jesus didn't hold on to his rights and his privileges as God to express Himself in all of His divine glory.

but made himself nothing,

Literally — **He emptied Himself** of His right to express His divine majesty. He should have been worshipped not cursed at and spat upon — but He let that go.

He should have been paraded around as a king — not disrespected as He was. Jesus let go of that.

Jesus should have been obeyed — not disobeyed. But He let that go.

taking the form of a servant,

Jesus let go of His rights and He humbled himself but made himself nothing. Jesus was poor, Jesus was homeless, Jesus was single, Jesus did not experience many of the pleasures and possessions that you and I enjoy, He made himself nothing.

He set aside his right to be worshipped and obeyed and took upon Himself the very form of a servant — or literally a slave. **God willingly became a humble slave.**

THIS IS HUGE — Deep down — don't you want a God who's humble, a God who is gracious, a God who will suffer, a God who can relate, a God who has been there, a God who when you are struggling and hurting the most is not far away and un-relatable. Don't you deep down in your heart want a God who emptied Himself to identify — that's Jesus. There is no one like Jesus!

being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form,

He **was** in the form of God. No one could take his rights, take his glory, He gave it in love and came in human form — fully divine, fully man.

he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He came to live without sin — He came to die for sinners. And he speaks here of the cross.

THIS IS HUGE — Jesus did not come not just to be an example for us — but to be a substitute for us. His example did not save us. We will deal with this more thoroughly in the coming weeks but here's what happened.

Our God became a man — Our God lived without sin though, He was tempted in every way that you and I are ([Hebrews 4](#)). He then went to the cross and willingly took upon Himself all of our sins and endured the punishment and penalty that we rightly deserve for all of our sins.

You and I — we deserve to die, be sentenced, judged, and tormented forever in hell! BUT — through Jesus we get what [John 1](#) calls *grace upon grace*.

HUGE CONCEPT — Religion is about what you do for God — Christianity is about Jesus and what he does for us. It's totally different and it's better because religion always leads to pride or despair. You try hard and if you do good, you are arrogant you are not humble like Jesus and if you fail to live up to the expectations you are grieved and sad because you are not good enough for God.

Jesus alone gives us joy and humility — humility knowing that we cannot save ourselves — joy knowing that when He said it is finished, it was. **That's why we love Jesus so much.** It is not cliché for us to say it's always — solely — only — totally **about Jesus.**

Your sin is real, God's judgment is real, and the cross of Jesus is real.

He takes away sin and He forgives sinners and He reconciles us to God.

That is why Paul continued in **Phil 2:9** *Therefore God has highly exalted him*

HERE IS THE GREAT NEWS — After He died — Jesus rose 3 days later and then He ascended into heaven — **TODAY Jesus is alive and He is highly exalted.** In the Book of Revelation we find time and again the declaration that *seated on a throne ruling and reigning as king of kings and lord of lords* — over all peoples, times and places, over all nations, all genders, all races, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all political parties, all sexual preferences, all employment vocations. **He rules and reins over everyone and everything.**

He is high — He is exalted — He is back in the position that He was prior to His incarnation. He **was** in glory — **came** in **humility** — **now** He is **back in glory.**

and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

The name of Jesus is the most important name in all the world. Your name, my name, the name of Metro — the greatest names in human history are nothing in comparison to the name of Jesus.

The name of Jesus is absolutely what we live for, it is our hope, our goal and our joy to live in such a way that the name of Jesus is made much of.

If you are new, you may notice that at Metro we don't say God a lot — we say Jesus. We believe in God — but we believe He is Jesus and we want you to know that just talking about God is sometimes insufficient because people will misdefine who God is. **God is Jesus — Jesus is God.** So — we **say** Jesus a lot — we **sing** to Jesus — **pray** to Jesus — **love** Jesus — **serve** Jesus — **honor** Jesus — **follow** Jesus, **want to be like** Jesus — **Look forward to seeing** Jesus — and **read the Bible to know more about** Jesus.

If you forget everything but ONE thing tonight — don't forget this one thing — **IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS.**

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There are only TWO kinds of people in the world.

There are those who willingly bend their knee — surrender — submit to Jesus!

Those who not only willingly bends their knee to Jesus — they also and willingly proclaim with their mouth that Jesus is Lord!

Christians are ones who say that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ to live the life I cannot live, to die the death I should have died and to give the gift I cannot otherwise obtain!

I am totally enthralled with this man Jesus.

The other kind of person is one who is **unwillingly** bends their knee to Jesus — **unwillingly** proclaims that He is Lord.

Here's REALITY — ***EVERYONE will bend their knee.*** Some of you will do it in this life for salvation, some of you will do it after this life for damnation, some of you will do it today as a friend of Jesus, some of you will do it eventually as a foe of Jesus.

Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess Jesus is lord.

Our hope, our prayer for you is that you would come to your senses in this life that you acknowledge that your sin is real, that God's just, wrath, and judgment is real and the love and the grace and the mercy of Jesus is equally real and that God has gone to such great lengths to come into human history to save us from our sins and from death and from judgment and from hell.

Since we are all going to bend our knee to Jesus, wouldn't it be wise to do it today, to confess your sins, to repent of them, to give them to Jesus, to have his finished work on the cross be applied to your life so that you can begin your reconciled relationship with God today.

Some of you may say God has no right to judge me and hell seems cruel.

Let me remind you of the depth of love that God has demonstrated.

God promised that He was coming

God came as a man

God was humbled, God became a slave

God endured temptation

God suffered

God died

God is willing to forgive anyone of anything

God is good and only a fool would reject His hand of friendship.

Our hope and our prayer today would be for all of us to meditate on the person and the work of Jesus and to perhaps even literally bend our knee and to raise our voice — to demonstrate with our posture and with our voices proclaim with great passion that Jesus Christ is the Lord — God in human flesh, come to rescue you and me.