

THE INCARNATION

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 17 | 12.19.2021

[Teaching today: Pastor John Lawley]

How we doing – good? You guys well rested? Well, hey, I'm privileged to bring you the Word of God this morning, my name is John Lawley, I'm one of the pastors here, and we are wrapping up our DOCTRINE series today and so I'm really excited to do that. But before we do that I just want to kind of highlight just a lot of the things that happened over the past couple months here at Calvary. So if you're willing I'm just going to give you a couple things that really got accomplished and just to celebrate with you, so I'm going to share some things and you're welcome to celebrate because you did these things and we just want to celebrate all that God's done. And we recognize that sometimes the church has these big things that they do and then you guys don't hear about them, you don't hear what happens, and so we want to make sure you guys hear about the celebrations of all that God did through what we did this past fall and into the summer.

So with that being said let me just first off talk about Operation Christmas Child. So for those that don't know in the months of October and November we collected boxes; Samaritan's Purse has this organization called Operation Christmas Child where you pack these boxes up with toys and toothbrushes and all these good things and then they send them all around the world, and they send to the kids for Christmas. And so that's why we do it a little bit earlier so that they can get there in time. And we are tracking our boxes, our boxes are going all over the world, I mean, *all* over the world. And with that being said we packed 1,814 boxes this year [CHEERS/APPLAUSE] so congratulations. Yeah. And that is a new record total for us as a church and so amazing thing. And our Operation Christmas Child team that does a lot of the behind the scenes just did an amazing job this year. And they mentioned it's about, remember we talked about one to five, we said about one kid comes to the Lord every five boxes, and so that's about 362 decisions for Jesus because of those boxes, [CHEERS/APPLAUSE] and so that's amazing. If anybody asks you what you did this year that's a pretty good answer, you know, at the dinner table that's a pretty awesome answer.

And we also want to just highlight our coat drives, you know, we've got our young adults every year, our young adults kind of allowed us as a church to partner with them to collect coats and we collected 283 coats over the past two weeks. [APPLAUSE] It gets a little bit, a little bit better. So 41 scarves, 71 pairs of gloves, that's 71, that's interesting, and 136 hats, and so that's amazing. And so we partner with Rock Ministry in downtown Philadelphia and their distributor nodes all throughout the city and, yeah, 283 souls that you warmed this winter – congratulations, that's an awesome thing. [APPLAUSE] Yeah, praise God.

We also want to highlight our church and Senegal partnership. I know for many of you you've heard over the last couple weeks we asked you to partner with us. Senegal is one of the specific locations in our church that we love on globally and we asked if you would help us build churches. They have pastors and people ready to go and they need buildings, they need churches, and you guys responded and it's amazing. In fact, we collected over the last couple weeks \$33,539 thus far for that effort. [CHEERS/APPLAUSE] Yeah, and that is equivalent to one church fully being built and half of another one being built, and so you just planted a church, congratulations, [APPLAUSE] awesome, awesome. Thank you for your generosity. That is an amazing gift and we hope that you continue to give towards the end of the year to that effort.

And we also want to just take a moment and just say thank you for those that are helping us meet our end of the year budget. Every year we pray for a budget that God would be able to answer so that we could do the work of ministry and He's always faithful through you. And so thank you for those that are giving, appreciate you guys continuing to give as we try to hit our budget this year, and we know He's so faithful and we are a debt-free church. This is a paid off building [APPLAUSE] praise God, yeah, that's because of you. And because of that we want to meet our budget and our budget is meant to build the Kingdom.

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And so whether it's the things we do for the next generation, our communities locally, the things that we do globally, the things we do, all of that giving goes to hopefully Kingdom work and we thank you for that. We know you could give to a lot of things, we appreciate that you give to your church family, and so, yeah, I just wanted to highlight a couple of those things.

So this is an awesome, awesome church. If you're new with us, this is an awesome church and we do a lot of cool things for the Lord and because we love Jesus. That's why we do it. We don't love ourselves, we don't want to build each other up to make ourselves more than what we are, we are saved by grace through faith and we love Jesus. And we want to make sure that the Kingdom of God expands all throughout the world and that's what we're about, we're about growing in our knowledge and intimacy with the Lord, helping each other do the same, and we just want to celebrate all that God has done. So great job, appreciate you all, and so we're going to shift to our DOCTRINE series.

And so for those that are new with us or maybe came in the last couple weeks we've been going hard for the last 17-18 weeks on what's called the DOCTRINE series and the goal of that series was to really equip our people with what Christians should believe. And so what are the key teachings of Scripture that are core convictions that we are to know because God says these are the big deal and so we've been doing that. And I was in a Q&A with the women's Bible study on Wednesday, not intimidating at all, [HE LAUGHS] no, I was doing a Q&A at the Wednesday night Bible study and so I just kind of stood up and all the women asked questions about the series and they did good, they were kind to me, I was ready to deflect but no, they were good.

And so one of the questions they had was hey, like, what was something that surprised you about this series? And I remember answering the question, really, anytime we study doctrine, anytime we look at God's Word, the thing that always surprised me is how deep God is. Amen? Like, you may think that you know about God only to discover so much more about who He is and His nature, and that's always surprising for me. Because any time we do the series I'm like, oh, I've read these books and I've studied this and all, and then I have conversations and I'm like that's amazing, I never thought about that but that's true, and it's in the Word and that's an amazing truth of God that I didn't really even think about or contemplate.

And how many of you experienced that this series where you were just enjoying some of the knowledge? How many of you—let's be honest—how many of you maybe felt a little bit betrayed during this series because you were maybe taught something growing up and then as you look at the Word and you study the Word you're like, "It's not there," or maybe it says something different. Anybody? Okay. I know that in this series sometimes it exposes that hey, this is what the Word of God teaches and maybe that's not what you were told growing up, and I know that a lot of us we kind of shared a little bit of this, a little bit of frustration to say, "How didn't I know this until now? And I just want to speak into that a little bit before we get going on our last topic.

I think the gift of this series is not that you may have learned something that you weren't taught in your past, the gift is that God gave you that truth now. And what I mean by that is don't be bitter for what you didn't know, be grateful that God provided that answer now, that He was faithful to you. That maybe you were given wrong information about who God is in your past, or maybe you were taught something that's not in Scripture, but God corrected that in your life by providing this content for you. Praise God, that's an amazing gift.

And so with that being said, our last topic in our DOCTRINE series to wrap it up before we get into Christmas is The Incarnation. And so many of you, you're like, *What in the world does an incarnation*

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mean? And so I'm not going to tell you [HE LAUGHS] no, the incarnation, really, what it is it's the idea, it's the theology of God in flesh. So how can God be fully God and fully man? He was fully man—this is an amazing mystery that I'm not going to be able to answer to you this morning completely because it's a wonderful thing and God is unexplainable in areas because He's God, and yet He's revealed stuff to us that we can know and understand and receive and it's enough.



And so the incarnation is what we're going to talk about, and as a church we use these kind of three phrases to kind of talk through everything we cover as a church. And a lot of people wonder why our doctrinal statement is kind of clean and simple, it's because we believe that there are kind of three categories to Scripture, and really to life.

There are convictions and these are things that we are very confident that the Bible teaches. In fact, Pastor Lee likes to say and I agree with him, if you get these things wrong you might not get to Heaven. These are big deals. Convictions are things that no, no, no, if you disagree with that you don't know this God because He's clearly revealed Himself in these ways. These are convictions.



Persuasions are things that we maybe have an opinion on that are maybe in the Word. We did some research, maybe we have a theological background, we studied these, we've kind of studied commentaries and we think that these things are correct. Maybe the end times, some of the theology that exists there, some theology with the elect, all these things, maybe they're persuasions. Like, I think I'm right but I could be persuaded if I see something in Scripture.

And then there's opinions, you know, like the Eagles are going to win the Super Bowl [LAUGHTER] – right? – like, that's an opinion. And an opinion is one where it's just like I kind of think this is true, I'm not really sure but I think it's right, but it's just my opinion. You could be wrong, it's not really in Scripture, I think this is what God would say. I have a lot of opinions, like, I'm like, well, this is what God says, He doesn't specifically say this, and I think this is what He would mean – that's an opinion. So I want to make something very clear: The incarnation of Christ is a conviction. That Jesus—look at me—Jesus is God; not a prophet though He was a prophet, He's not a teacher but He was a teacher, He is more than those things. He is God in flesh.

We're gonna walk through that, we're gonna wrestle through that, but this is a deep conviction that we hold. And we believe that if God had never chosen to reveal Himself to us through Jesus, we would

If God had never chosen to reveal himself to us we would not have known Him.

really truly never know exactly who God is and what He's like. But because of Jesus we can know what God is, what He's like, what His will for us is, what His purpose for us is, and what the end of the world looks like because of Jesus, we can know God. It's not an opinion of God, it is a knowledge of God that He has given us through coming as the person of Jesus – make sense? – God in flesh. And so we're going to dive in.

A couple things just to kind of get your mind thinking and good luck, this was my task here to figure out an illustration for the incarnation. I'm like okay. Well, I thought about that. I'm like this is gonna be crazy because I don't think there's anything that compares, but I remember being in the living room yesterday with my daughter, I have four daughters, I know, pray for me, four daughters, [LAUGHTER] my second youngest one, my second youngest one is curious, she loves chess, she's actually really good at

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chess. I have to start to play because she's starting to beat me, but that's a long story. So she's six years old, she loves to ask questions, she just has this amazing mind, and she was talking about Jesus and Christmas because we have all the decorations and we're talking about it, and my wife and I always talk about how, like, we're going to remind our kids about Jesus, that's the reason for the season. Right? We talk about this a lot, and she was just kind of wondering what, you know, how can Jesus be God?

And so we have a fish tank in our living room, okay, and that's all the pets that we give our children, house fish, you have pet fishies! And, like, that's like the degree in which we can take care, so we have fish and little did I know, we went to PetSmart a long time ago when we got these fish and we got these little orange fishies and they had like a little Mickey Mouse kind of outline ears to their tails and we thought that was cute, so we got a couple of those. The PetSmart employee didn't tell me that there was guys and girls to that order because now we have like thousands of these orange fishes, I mean, like every day there's like a bunch of little orange baby fishes and I'm like, "Oh, you guys just gotta stop!" [LAUGHTER] So on a completely side note, if you ever want fish we're like a PetSmart 2.0, we'll just kind of give you fish. [LAUGHTER] So anyway, the fish is, yeah, this is true, unfortunately, so the tank is just filled with all these orange fishes. Right?



Orange Mickey Mouse
Platy Fish

And so I'm looking, I'm like, okay, maybe I can use this as an example. This certainly is underwhelming when it comes to what it actually is but let me try to paint this for my six-year-old. And I said, "Okay, sweetheart, so you see all these fishies in the fish tank?" She said, "Yeah, daddy." I said, "So these fish don't really know us, they're fish and we're people, and so we are smarter than them and we're more self-aware, they're not self-aware, but they do know that we feed them and that we kind of clean their tank even though they run when I try to clean, they think I'm going to hurt them but I'm not." And I said, "But let me ask you a question, if we would want to tell these fishies that we love them and that we have a plan for them, we love them, how would we be able to do that? We're so much bigger than those fishies."

And we kind of talked about it and she's like, "Well, we would – could we be a fish?" And I said, "Yeah, that's a good idea. That's the only way. In order for us to love these fishies we would actually have to become a fish. So we have to take all the amazing things about being a human and we'd have to kind of humble ourselves and become a little fishy in order for us to speak fishy" – I'm talking to a six-year-old, speak fishy – "and be able to tell them how much we love them. And then if we told them then they wouldn't be afraid of us, they would actually know that we were here to love them and protect them, to provide for them. So we would have to become a fish."

And I said, "That's kind of, sweetheart, what we're celebrating right now in Jesus. That God in His infinite power and might and worthy to be praised, and this massive unbelievable, unknowable Being that created all these things, because you just couldn't... there's just this distance between who God is and who we are, this Creator of all things actually humbled Himself and became a person. What an amazing act of love He had for us. What amazing act of humility. And what would it be like if God became a man?"

And so this was my explanation of the incarnation to my six-year-old and I wanted this to tease it up to say I hope that as we talk about this idea, this theology that is true, that it blows your mind, humbles your heart, because this is true that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Creator of all that we see. And I don't know about you, but when you look around in the world it is daunting, it is huge – that the Creator became a baby. This is an act of love that quite honestly makes anybody think that God is not loving, you just have to deny this truth in order to conclude that. Because the act of love that the incarnation tells us about is just a beautiful picture of God's heart for us.

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And so what I want to do is I want to start by taking you 4,000 years before the birth of Jesus. Okay, 4,000 years before the birth of Jesus and we're going to look at Genesis Chapter 3, verse 15, and here's what it says:

¹⁵ "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

– GENESIS 3:15 (ESV)



Stop. Okay, for those that, um, remember, a couple weeks ago I had the theology of sin I talked about how we are all part of God's story. For those who miss it let me just summarize it real quick. We are all part of God's story no matter if you want to or not, and this is the story we're all in, it's actually not – you're not in your story, you are in God's story and you have a choice what part of that story you play. But you're in God's story and this is the story – God created the world to be in relationship with Him, this is why you were created, to be in relationship with God. This is why nothing will satisfy your heart except for Him. That's why the house, the relationship, the boy, the girl, the job, the promotion did not satisfy your heart because you're not made to be satisfied in the world, you are made to be in relationship with the Lord, and because He loves you He will not let those things satisfy you. That is why for those who deny Jesus you have a void, there must be something more. This thing inside of you may not even publicly articulate it but it's there and you know it's there. That's why it exists. You are made to be in relationship with God. It is *Him* who satisfies that void. Only Him.

And so what happened? Well, Adam and Eve sinned and so we talked about here's the story. God made us to be in relationship, sin fractured that relationship, this is why we have the world we have. So you want to know the answer, the real answer – not an opinion – the real answer to why there's famine, why there's rape, why there's incest, why there's adultery, why there's wars, why there's greed and power, all of these things that in your heart you're like this is wrong, this is wrong, this isn't right, we need to fix this. Do you want to know why they exist? Sin. Because you have created beings turning from their Creator and in that sin abounds, flesh abounds.

And so this is where we were, we turned our eyes from the Lord and His need to the world and we say we want this, and because of that sin came into the world and you're seeing this in the very beginning. God is saying okay, now you're going to suffer because you've sinned, and so now you're going to have your flesh decay, now you're going to have turmoil, you're going to have tension amongst each other. And He's promising that sin is going to enter in the world. Adam and Eve didn't know about sin until then, so now they cover themselves and they're aware that they're separated from God. And this is a problem that you and I still face today if we don't know Jesus. We're separated so we try to chase the world, we try to figure out how to have it be satisfying to us and it never does. This is what happens and Jesus is in this picture, God is triune.

In Genesis 3:15 what does He say? He says to the world that turns its back and chooses sin – I have a plan – right then. He goes okay, sin is coming, you're going to suffer, you're going to die, you're going to have these things come that I didn't mean to have for you but you chose to turn from Me, and so this is what happens when you do that. But I have a plan to rescue you back – from the very beginning. So what we find is okay, okay, after The Fall Moses says to us God has a plan, we don't know what it is but He has a plan.

By the way, there's actually 2,500 prophecies in Scripture. Did you know 2,000 of them have been fulfilled? So if you struggle to believe in the Lord you gotta deal with that. I mean, that's just, logically, you gotta deal with that. If you think this is just a Book written by a bunch of people in the ancient days,

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you gotta with 2,500 prophecies, over 2,000 have been fulfilled, and I'm going to show you why this will blow your mind. You gotta deal with that reality because it's there.

And so let me take you to 4,000 years before Jesus was born and God says I have a plan. Okay, so let's move forward 700 years before Jesus is born, He has prophets, really, the Bible, and let me just explain really quickly here's what the Bible is, I don't know what you're taught but this is what the Bible is. The Bible is a collection of stories. In fact, the prophets as they prophesied God said write those down. Okay. Write down what I did for you, write down what I told you so that people coming will remember. Okay, that's what the Bible is, these are stories of what God has done to rescue His people back. This is what the Gospel is, this is what the Bible is.

And so what do we see in this story? Well, we see in 4,000 years to 700 years these prophets come about. Prophets were these people that spoke for God, that God gave them revelation and they spoke to the people, and here's what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 7:14:

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

– ISAIAH 7:14 (ESV)

Stop. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born a prophet says okay, we got a little bit more of His plan. Here's what's going to happen—now church, this should blow you away—God says tell them that I will come through a virgin and it will be Me. So God says my plan is I'm coming. I want you to receive that. God sees the brokenness, the hurt, the pain, the horrific cultures, and He says okay, here's the plan because it's the only way I'm coming. **Immanuel is what? God with us.** So Isaiah says okay, it will come through a virgin and it will be God in flesh. His plan is He's coming. And look what Micah says, a prophet of God, Micah 5:2:

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from

— look at this —

of old, from ancient days.

– MICAH 5:2 (ESV)

Okay, what does Micah say? He gives you more of this plan. God says okay, I'm coming, I'm coming to a virgin and I'm going to come in a place called Bethlehem that no one even is going to know and notice. It's off in the corner, it's not really valuable, it's not really noticed, I'm going to come there through a virgin. That's amazing because this is 700 years before Jesus. So what is God doing to His creation? He's saying I have a plan to redeem you and I am the One who's gonna have to do it. I'm gonna be the One who has to become a "fish" – you following me? Isaiah and Micah tell us that God will come from a virgin in Bethlehem and that it will be God Himself.

Now go 400 years with me before Jesus, Malachi Chapter 3, verse 1, here's what he says:

¹ "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."

MALACHI 3:1 (ESV)

Okay, we get a little bit more. What does God say? He says okay, I'm coming and you're gonna know it's

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Me because I'm gonna send a messenger, John the Baptist, my cousin. He doesn't give him specific but that's what He's talking about and he's gonna prepare the way. And when I come – look at it – when I come what am I gonna do? Okay, so now we know that God is coming but what is He going to come, what is He going to do? He says I'm going to come to fulfill the law and establish a new covenant. What in the world does that mean? It means that when we broke our relationship with God sin entered the world – study Scripture – and God creates a covenant with His people and says here are the laws, do these things and you will be right with Me. But what happens? They fail over and over and over again. This is why the sacrificial system exists, they need a blood sacrifice. Why? Because they sinned against God and they need to somehow bridge the gap.

And so we know, okay, what is God doing? He says He's going to come – to what? – bridge the gap, He's going to fulfill the law. So I'm going to stop here and talk a little bit about how this is amazing. But also very relevant, one is this, God in flesh. One thing that's real is this: Because God is and became a man for us He can identify with you in a very intimate way. I mean that, like, think with me here. God wept, He sweated, He had a stubbed toe, He slept, He was tired, He had to go to the bathroom – think with me – that's an amazing thing that He put on all the limitations of the flesh. In fact, do you know Scripture says¹ He grew in wisdom and understanding? I don't know about you but that's crazy. How is He fully God and fully man?

So He put on the limitations of the flesh, He became a child needing to be dependent, all these things, and so when you pray to God and the enemy says He doesn't identify with you, He doesn't care about you, the Gospel says that is not true at all. In fact, He knows those feelings. He knows what it feels like to be betrayed. He knows what it feels like to be lied to. He knows these feelings personally because He became flesh. This is an amazing gift that we have that our God is personable and knowable but also intimate with our trials and our sufferings. This is why we should all long to pray because He knows; He didn't just create, He knows. But listen, that's not why He came, that's just a gift, that's just an extra part.

You know why He came? He came to die for you. He came to finish His work on the cross so that you can have a relationship, because here's the thing is only God can pay the penalty and He knew that, and so He took on flesh meaning He was under the law and He lived a perfect life and He died on the cross. Why? So that you could be in relationship with God. He paid the punishment and here – follow me – this is why He had to come in flesh because the penalty of sin was what? Death. Blood. He needed to have a body in order to shed His blood in order to die on the cross. He came as a sacrifice for you. He didn't just come to reveal Himself to you as a personal intimate God and to reveal His nature and His character and His purpose; He came and took on flesh, the limitation on the flesh, to die for you. And He experienced all of the pain of that limitation on the cross even though He is God and He could have spoke and it could have been over.

So stop, if you think God is not a loving God, the birth of Jesus blows that narrative out of the water. You think God is not a knowable God or identifies with your struggles? Him being a man in flesh blows that out of the water. And if you think God is not a pursuing, loving God, His willingness to die on the cross for you blows that out of the water. It just does. You can deny and reject it but it is a pursuing story of what God has done for you. This is so amazing and so grand to think that what we're talking about here in these prophecies that are 400 years before the birth of Jesus.

By the way, this is why **Jesus is the only way**. This is why Jesus is the only way. And I know for people who think that the world has all of these ideas and they're all equal, your feelings say that's an arrogant thing to say. But the reason Jesus is the only way is **Jesus is the only God in flesh**. Gandhi wasn't,

¹ Luke 2:52 (NIV): **And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.**

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Muhammad wasn't, and they never claimed to be. They were men that died and stayed dead. Why Jesus is the only way is Jesus is God in flesh. He is God pursuing us. Everything else is not the way. Why? Because it's *us* trying to get to God. So we have rules and standards that we don't even get to accomplish, and we have fear that we're not good enough for Him to love us, and we have this idea that God is distant and He's going to judge us, and so we hope that we're good enough so when we're judged He can love us. And every other religion, if you boil it down, it's you gotta earn your right to God. Why Christianity is different is because of this—because it is God pursuing us. [APPLAUSE]

Religion is humans
trying to work
their way to God.

True Christianity is
GOD COMING TO US
through a
personal relationship
with Jesus Christ.

This is why the world needs to know about Jesus because it's not a religion, it's The Way. You want to know God – Jesus. Why? Because He is God. You following me? He's knowable. How? Because He came, I mean this, like, if you want to know what God is like ask me, ask somebody who loves Jesus. I'll tell you what He's like, He's God loving you. Oh, yes, He's loving – look what Jesus did. Is He forgiving? Oh, yes. Look how Jesus acted. Is He merciful? Oh, let me tell you what Jesus did.

Why am I talking about Jesus if you're asking about God? Because **Jesus is God**. He's revealed His nature, He's revealed His character, He's revealed His purpose for your life. You want to know God, you read about Jesus because Jesus is God. Do you get the connection here? He's knowable. This is an amazing, profound truth that Jesus never claimed to be just a man. Guys, this is why they were angry at Him.

And so Malachi tells us that a messenger is going to come, okay, and it will be God in flesh, that will precede Him, and He will be the Messiah and He will establish a new covenant with His people. Okay. So all along – right? – the Bible is just a collection of stories about what God is doing. So we know, okay, from The Fall till now through the prophets that God has a plan and this is what the plan is going to look like, and so now they catch these things, some of them didn't even catch these things but it's written, He's told this world what's going to happen. And here's the amazing thing—it happened. It happened. Here's how, Matthew 1:18:

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

– MATTHEW 1:18 (ESV)

Okay. So you know how hundreds of years before it said it was gonna be through a virgin? Okay, this is the virgin, but how is that gonna happen? Okay, she's gonna be engaged but that's not gonna be how it happens. The Holy Spirit is going to – *okay, okay, okay, I didn't know that before but now we do* – okay, this is how it's gonna happen. You told us it's gonna happen, now we got more clarity here.

Matthew 1:19:

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

– MATTHEW 1:19 (ESV)

Okay. So it's gonna also require a man of great humility in order for this to happen. Okay, that's Joseph. Okay, but how does he? Matthew 1:20:

20 But 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

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that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

– MATTHEW 1:20-22 (ESV)

Okay. So the man is not gonna divorce his wife because an angel is going to come and he's going to tell them that this baby is born of the Holy Spirit. That's how God's going to come. Okay. But wait, remember there's some [INAUDIBLE 0.11:50.0]. Okay. But yeah, but I mean, that could be anything, she could just be dreaming. John 1:19 is the best summary, but before we get to that it says that Joseph, son of David, took Mary as His wife but they weren't intimate until the baby was born. And in fact, he was called for a census so he had to go back to where? Boom. Okay, Bethlehem. [GESTURES BRAIN LAPSE] Okay, you guys aren't paying attention. [LAUGHTER] What I told you earlier, hundreds of years, hundreds of years before this happened. Okay. God, it's happening. And we're gonna stop there because we're talking a little bit more about this on Christmas Eve, you gotta come back to know what happened. [LAUGHTER]

But here's the point, God had a plan and what was the plan? That He was going to come and He was going to rescue the world from their sins. He's going to fulfill the law, set us free, and give us a new covenant; a covenant based on His blood and His sacrifice. This is the plan for God. Remember – relationship, sin, God says I have a plan, and when Jesus came restoration came into the world. It gave everyone in this world an opportunity by the blood of Jesus to be back in relationship with God. And we know how it ends, too. What an amazing gift God has given us to know the story.

But I want to read this, this is one of the shortest most efficient explanations for the incarnation and found in the gospel of John. Again, because what happened was is that Jesus lived His life, the gospels teach us that He tells us what it's like to live and why He made us and what we are to do and how to have relationships and how to find purpose and meaning and joy in this life. God not only came but He taught about who He was and what He made and why He made it, and what our purpose was and why you have that void in your life. He taught us why these things exist. And He taught us how to find Him, how to walk with Him, how to receive the promised Spirit, and to be transformed. He gave us the gift of knowledge, this is how you know Me, this is how you find Me, this is how you find satisfaction. He just gives you the gift of revelation.

Now do we know everything about God? Of course not, He's God, but yet in His love He gave us enough to what? Worship Him and adore Him and to praise Him. He gave us enough to know Him, what a gift. But this is what it says in the gospels as the disciples met God in flesh and saw God in flesh, and as He left they began to talk about what He said and who He was. And this is what John's revelation was, John 1:9:

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

— listen to this —

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 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.

– JOHN 1:9-14 (ESV)

[APPLAUSE] You can clap, that's awesome.

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This is what it means. This is what the birth of Jesus is all about. Guys, I hope you're in awe.

So in your life if you're asking these questions about can I know God? Is there a God? What I'm telling you is yes, and He's revealed Himself to us. And He came down to live amongst us to set us free and He is at the right hand of the LORD in Heaven, the triune nature of God, and He's coming back and every knee will bow, every tongue will confess.

ISAIAH 45:23-24 (ESV)

"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.
By myself I have sworn;
from my mouth has gone out in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
'To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear allegiance.' "

And so this is why – why did we do the DOCTRINE series? Because as a church we need to elevate our view of God. We live in a culture that wants to devalue who God is, His nature, His character. We need to elevate it because every one of us needs to recognize He's worthy. And so our goal with this series was to stir your affections for the Lord, to make you see God as greater than what you came in thinking. To see this and to say, listen, I know you guys have heard the birth story over and over again. Some of you you're in a tradition-rich culture so you hear it every single year. You hear about God coming down in flesh, but maybe for the first time in your life it clicked to you. Oh, my word! How amazing is this?!

And for those that have an intellectual hurdle to the Gospel, that you think that it just needs to make

1 CORINTHIANS 1:21 (NLT)

Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.

sense, I promise you when you dive into Scripture it aligns with logic and reason. But this is a historical event, too, this happened, this isn't wishful thinking, this happened and He proved Himself when He came out of that grave. [APPLAUSE] So in your doubt for some of you—men, look at me, I know you struggle here—in your doubt make sure you put in the prophetic fulfillments; make sure you wrestle with those. In your doubt make sure you put in the resurrection when you

try to make Jesus into some crazy person. Make sure you deal with what He spoke and how it sounded different. Make sure you deal with a Peter who was a coward and then was a bold, courageous man—make sure you deal with that transformation.

What I'm telling you is God came and He made a way back to Him, and when I told you in the very beginning that you were made in relationship with God, what I'm telling you is there's access and the greatest hurdle is you. The greatest hurdle in your life is not that this is true, it's that you want to be God. Step off. He's already Lord. He's already good. He's already made you. He's has a relationship and a plan for you. I'm going to go back to this, this is true whether the enemy doesn't want you to know this or not, even in this holiday season if you say, "You know what, I'm not going to make it about Jesus, I'm going to make it about the family because I love my family and I love the relationships in my family and the feelings of these relationships that are all wonderful." I'm gonna challenge that with this—what I'm telling you is to worship the One who created those feelings. Did you just hear what I said to you?

The One who gave you those feelings in love—okay, I'm gonna make you, I'm gonna give you all these amazing feelings towards each other—the One who gave you that came down and He said all these things that you love I made and I want to offer you Me which is the completeness of all those things. You know why in Heaven we don't marry? Because we have Jesus. Does that mean we're not going to desire relationships? No, no, no, but this [GESTURES VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS] is greater, this is more satisfying. This satisfies. These [GESTURES THINGS ON THE EARTH] are just reflections of – how amazing is that? And so this God is knowable.

This is what incarnation is—He became flesh, He revealed Himself to us, and He saved us. This is the

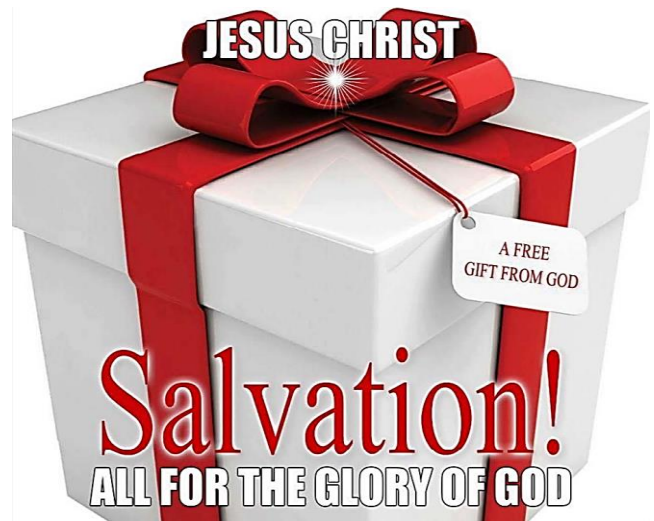
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Gospel, this is why it's different, this is why it's the only thing that saves is because it's God and only God can save us, and this is why we celebrate. And so I hope as you anticipate the next couple weeks here as you go through the Christmas season and post-season that, yeah, you have all these responsibilities and you have all these stresses and I get all those things, but I hope for a moment you stop and you recognize what a gift that already has been given to us. You know that the cheesy, "Oh, there's no greater gift" – it's true.

And so we just want to stop for a moment and think, okay, do we have a right view of God? Do you have a right view of Jesus? Because I would argue that was the point of the DOCTRINE series is to say do you have the right view of Jesus? Do you know who He is? Because if you do you will worship Him, you will give your life to Him, you will seek Him if you truly know who He is. The question of who Jesus is is the

greatest question you're ever going to ask in your life. And in fact, that's the question you're going to be asked on judgment day: Who do you say Jesus is? We know in Scripture Jesus is God, He is the way. Do you recognize that? Do you see that? Did you receive that? Did you ask for that gift to be given to you? Have you received? Or are you just in this place of "maybe"? Because if you're in the place of "maybe" come after church and talk to me. I want to point very clearly to these prophecies and say okay, what do you do with these if you're a "maybe"? This is an amazing revelation that God has given us and it's built on truth and reason and logic and also a person, a little person who came and died and is alive and coming back. And so I'm going to stop there and I'm going to ask the band to come up.



There's a quote that I love, I'm a big Tozer fan, you guys don't need to know who Tozer is, but I'm a big Tozer fan and he writes a bunch of these books. One's called *The Knowledge of the Holy*² and he has this quote that I love in the book and he says this: "To our questions God has provided answers; not all the answers," he says, "certainly, but enough" – listen to what he says here – "to satisfy our intellects and ravish our hearts."

And that was, in the beginning of this message, my goal is that in all of this I pray that you would just understand that God is more than just a distant person. He is an intimate Creator that knows you. Why? Because He came. And also for you just to be kind of ravished to say maybe I don't know this God the way that I need to know; maybe He is knowable and I have access to Him – because you do. And so I pray this series stirred that affection in your heart and made you say you know what, God, if You're knowable I want to know You more. And I pray that as we close here that you worship a little bit deeper as you remind yourself that He came for you, that He became a "fish" – right? What an amazing gift. What an amazing act of love that we celebrate. Let me pray.

² Transcriber edit/correction: In the sermon video the book *The Pursuit of God* was cited, this is incorrect. The quote is from Chapter 3 of A. W. Tozer's book entitled *The Knowledge of the Holy*. It appears on page 24, 2nd paragraph, of the paperback [here](#) (type "ravish" in the search block and the page will appear); or page 12 of the PDF copy [here](#). Accessed 12/21/2021.

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Father,



We love You and, Lord, I thank You that, Lord, You are so unknowable to some areas but yet You've revealed so much in others. So Lord, we may not understand this in full how You can be fully God and fully man but You are, so we just marvel at that. We worship You because of that, Lord, we thank You that You are a pursuing God. I pray right now that everyone recognize that pursuit and receives that gift, and that during this season we are more astonished than ever that You became flesh for us. So Lord, help us to worship You the way You deserve and to remember all that You've done and what You will do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



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