

# CREDO

## 7. Incarnation

Tonight we are continuing in our series titled Credo: I Believe. We're working our way through the story line of the Bible. We've been looking very carefully at the mega-themes of Scripture. We began with the doctrine of the Trinity — there is one God who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each fully and equally God. Then we moved to the doctrine of Revelation — God speaks to man. Had He not spoken we would be in the dark about Him. But He has spoken; He's revealed Himself to us. The Bible in your hands is the revelation of God to man. From there we went to the doctrine of Creation; God is the Creator and of the heavens and the earth. Then we looked at the doctrine of Imago Dei — man made in the image and likeness of God. Then we looked at the doctrine of Sin — we saw the original sin of man. Then we looked at the doctrine of Covenant. We saw the response of God when He was rejected and betrayed by man: God relentlessly pursued covenant relationship with man.

For those of you who are joining us for the first time we want say welcome and we are thrilled you are with us tonight. For those who have been with us from the beginning it is really going to pay off as we have seen the Scriptures building and building towards the theme of tonight's study, which is the doctrine of INCARNATION. In it we are going to see God come into human history as the man Jesus Christ.

Our oldest child turned 40 this year. Valerie was 22 years old when she gave birth to our first child. I will never forget seeing Valerie holding Deborah in her arms for the first time! 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. I was overwhelmed at how — frail — fragile — needy — helpless — vulnerable and absolutely dependent she was on her mom and dad. Then it dawned on me: THAT is how God came!

When I was pastoring in Grass Valley I came across something Charles Spurgeon had written about the birth of Jesus. I was so amazed at the word picture he painted about the birth of Jesus. I wrote a tune from his word

picture: *“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.”*

THAT is how God chose to come into this world. The infinite becomes infant! The one who made everything; the one who made man, is now fashioned as man. The one who holds every atom in the universe together was held in the arms of his mother — just like our little girl was held by Valerie and me!

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 really is, as somebody said, 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. There is no other point of any area of ministry here. It doesn't matter if it's in the infant through Pre-K ministry; the K-5<sup>th</sup> grade ministry of Metropolis; Middle School or High School, Young Adults, Young Marrieds, Men's Ministry or Women's Ministry, or right here in this room every Sunday and Monday. JESUS is the point. We exist individually and corporately to exalt HIM!

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 consider in a way that is deeper than ever before — ***How should the truth of the Incarnation change me?***

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 way that is understandable, **what we believe about Jesus and in particular the Doctrine of the Incarnation.**

## **DEFINITION OF INCARNATION —**

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

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

In Christian theology it is used to describe the embodiment of God the Son **in** human flesh. **JESUS is** God coming into human history in a body of flesh. The Bible teaches us that God is Spirit. Yet He was packaged in meat, if-you-would. He was given glands, bone, muscle, skin, teeth, and hair.

**CRUCIAL:** At the Incarnation **nothing** was subtracted from Jesus' divinity — His deity was not diminished in anyway. Instead, in His incarnation rather Jesus *added* to His nature — He added *humanity* to His *deity*. We will see more of that in a bit.

**CRUCIAL:** 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 religious systems 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.

INCARNATION is about a **compassionate** God diving into this mess called humanity.

**A pastor named Sandy Adams** tells the story 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 for them to create a mountain of bones and dirty napkins. 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 dinner tray. Evidently, as they ate his keys got covered with napkins, and were still on the tray when he emptied his trash into the trashcan. 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 pay for a ride home, 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.

I tell the story because the humanity — the INCARNATION — of Jesus tells us of His **infinite humility**. We were lost in the garbage can of our fallen world — with all of its moral and spiritual slime. Jesus dove into our filthy world to pull us out. I say this with total reverence, with the utmost *fear of the Lord* — I am thankful I serve *a dumpster diving God*. And here's **the key** — Jesus loves you and me. He doesn't leave us at the bottom of the can. The Incarnate God *dove into the trash*.

In the incarnation we are given such a tremendous insight into the heart of God. Nobody likes to stick their hand into a trash can of scraps, slobber, and spit. I almost throw up in my mouth thinking about it. You become really vulnerable when you stick your arm into a pile of trash — *Along with the thing you want to find, who knows what else you'll find!*

In the INCARNATION God 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: Tim Keller** — *"At Christmas God moved into a very bad neighborhood and began rehabilitating it."*

**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! Jesus dove IN to the human predicament to make a way OUT of it for you and me. So the doctrine of 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 in human flesh accommodating us — in the same way that a good mom accommodates her kids. Valerie is such an amazing mom! Raising our four children she was so intentional in the ways

she accommodated our kids. From the way she organized our home, to our kids' schedules — she was all about accommodating our kids. When Deborah and Sean were little we went for walks at Newport Beach. She always walked at their pace. She picked the path that best accommodated their age and balance. As a parent one of the ways that you accommodate your infant/toddlers is to get down on the floor — get on their level — eye to eye — speak to them and relate to them in ways that help them learn how to communicate.

INFINITELY MORE SO — God as creator, in His infinite wisdom, sees the need to work within our limitations and our parameters. Jesus is God who came in human flesh to do THAT! God became man so He could get down on the floor with us — look in our eyes — meet us in our human predicament — meet us in our weariness and say, *If you're weary come ME and I will give you rest.* In order to save us from the sin and idolatry that runs us into the ground, He became a man and got on the ground — so He could look us in the eye, speak to us — and ultimately be nailed to a Roman cross at eye level — and die in our place for our sins.

**We need to start with a little historical groundwork**

### **THE PROMISE AND ANTICIPATION OF THE INCARNATION**

God let mankind know that He was going to come into the world as a man.

Throughout the Old Testament there was a longing — an anticipation — an expectation of God coming as man. (**recommend Christopher Wright book — p. 16**) It all started in **Genesis 3**. That's the beauty of this series. Trinity, Revelation, Creation. In **Genesis 1** and **2** we looked at the fact that God created everyone and God created everything — then in **Genesis 3** man sinned against God, separating himself from God — immediately experiencing spiritual death (separation from God) and in time, the cessation of biological life .

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**. 4,000 years before the birth of Christ — the Incarnation — God preached the Gospel to our first parents. In that

proclamation He begins by speaking 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 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.*

Once again — in preparing for tonight I was struck by how AWESOME the Bible is. Right there in **Genesis 3** we are getting the first inference of the virgin birth of Jesus.

In the rest of Genesis, and throughout the Old Testament, the genealogies are given in a way that is patriarchal. This *man* had these *sons*; these *sons* had these *sons*; and so on. 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 — beginning in Genesis 3 — we are waiting for a particular son to be born of a woman, independent of man who will crush Satan — overcome sin and death — and right everything that went wrong with Adam.**

The Old Testament then moves forward. We have additional light shed on the incarnation in **Isaiah 7:14**. IT SAYS — *therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign*. (By the way: We looked at this promise in our verse by verse study in the book of Isaiah — check out the notes).

A SIGN IS something people look for. A SIGN points to something beyond itself. *therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign — Behold the virgin shall conceive*. THAT IS BEYOND UNUSUAL! That's absolutely miraculous and POINTS us to something supernatural about the one birthed in such a miraculous way. Isaiah goes on — *you shall call his name Immanuel which means God with us*.

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

**The second clue — we are looking for** — the mother to be a young virgin.

**The third clue** comes in **Micah 5:2** — written about 700 years before the birth of Christ — before the incarnation. This prophecy shows how God is sovereign over history — *but you oh Bethlehem*. Bethlehem is a dinky little town in a dinky strip of land in the middle east. *but you oh Bethlehem Ephratah who are too little to be among the clans of Judah 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** comes in **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 would be the New Covenant each of the Covenants God had made with man was leading to the next and each building upon and adding to the others until the New Covenant established in Christ) *in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts*. This is a hugely important historical **time stamp!** When was the temple destroyed? 70AD! There has been no temple in Jerusalem for almost 2,000 years. That means that this man that they were waiting for **had to have come** before 70AD.

SO — FOUR C LUES / FACTS about the Incarnation

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. There are a couple of responses to be made.

**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 refer them to a man named **Jacob Neusner**, a very influential scholar in Orthodox Judaism. He is an orthodox Jew. He does not worship Jesus as God. But he wrote a book called *“The Incarnation of God.”* In it he says that the Old Testament **does** speak of God entering human history. 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, God coming in human flesh. He also says that many rabbis in the era of the Old Testament moving towards the time of Jesus did teach that God was coming in human history as a man. He says that is why there were religious leaders in Israel who did worship Jesus as God come into human history born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem before the destruction of the Temple.

**Read from Christopher Wright page 16**

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE INCARNATION**

### **Matthew Chapter 1**

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.

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*



Mary is a teenage girl maybe 14-17 years of age. She loves God. She is a virgin. She is betrothed to a man named Joseph. Have you ever wondered what Mary was thinking when these things transpired? She was probably thinking the same things that any of you young women would be thinking as your wedding day approached: Thinking about her wedding day — thinking about all of the preparations — probably overwhelmed by the same things you would be overwhelmed by.

So this young lady is coming up on her wedding and like any young lady in her shoes would have been so excited.

*<sup>18</sup> ...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 for MARY **and** for JOSEPH.

Betrothal was not like engagement in our time and culture. In that day, betrothal was legally like marriage. Betrothal was so legally binding that to extricate yourself required a legal divorce. If you had sex before the wedding you would not only be disgraced — you could be put to death

*<sup>19</sup>And 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 now he discovers that she is pregnant!** I'm sure he felt betrayed — 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.

*<sup>20</sup>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 that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.*

Joseph — you are in the middle of the miraculous! You are part of God's plan to step into humanity! 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.

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

No sexual intimacy until Jesus was born

*And he called his name Jesus.*

Joseph stood up as a man of God — a man of faith. He married this woman — who would be the subject of accusation and insults over this pregnancy (30 years later Jesus would be called illegitimate by the religious leaders).

Joseph endured the scorn of being thought of as a man who married a harlot — 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 of 70 miles through the Jordan Valley down to Bethlehem? Imagine that men. Your wife is in her 9<sup>th</sup> month and you say — *Hey love — I have a super idea. Let's load up the donkey and go to Bethlehem!*

It seems like God has a problem! But 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 — by the power of the Holy Spirit — has 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.

But this is 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

THAT BRINGS US TO THE

## **THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF INCARNATION**

**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 — which means "house of Bread"*". The Jews understood that Heaven is God's domain — Jesus was saying: *Heaven is My 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 were thinking, "[Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?](#)" They were right on the theology of forgiveness — but they were wrong concerning how the theology related to Jesus. They knew the implications! They knew Jesus had 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 the Hebrew mind processed the term "son of God": The son of a cow is a cow — the son of a man is a man — thus, the Son of God is God.

In the mind of a 1<sup>st</sup> century 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. (Arabic inscription around the Dome of the Rock: Allah does not beget — neither is he begotten)

**Hebrews 1:3** calls Him *“the express image of God’s person.”* He’s the 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. 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* with God.

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 years in the past. Jesus answered, *“Before Abraham was, I am.”* **“I am”** was the name for God given to Moses at the burning bush. (Who shall I say sent me? Tell them that *I AM* sent you.)

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. They had connected all the dots! They understood that Jesus was claiming to be God. But they refused to bow the knee to Him.

**Jesus was a man who claimed to be God.** Yet almost every year around Christmas and Easter 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 is. **(recommend Gordon Fee’s book – p.25)**

In fact, Jesus is the only leader of a world religion to make such a claim. Buddha, Krishna, and Mohammed never said they were divine. **JESUS DID!** And we believe Jesus — that's why we worship Jesus as God.

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

Fast-forward from Matthew 1 about 300 years from the birth of Jesus. 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. The Church historian, 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. These men weathered decades of persecution. But recently the tide shifted. Emperor Constantine had made Christianity not just legal — but the official the state religion. Official hostility had ended. Overnight Christians had gone from *persecuted* to *privileged*. Christians were now praying in public - pastors could teach the Bible openly – suddenly, all of Rome was abuzz about Christianity.

In the midst of all of this new found liberty a man named Arius was teaching that Jesus was less than God – he was teaching that Jesus was created by God. Arius was a powerful communicator and a lot of people were listening to him!

The men at that council had suffered for Jesus sake. These men endured persecution, but now in a time of unprecedented 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 in 325 AD didn't create new doctrine.** It recognized what the first Christians taught; what the first Christians believed to be true about Jesus — and died for believing it. 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 successful in supporting the deity of Jesus — but then the theological pendulum shifted, and people began to diminish the humanity of Jesus. 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 — divinity and humanity — fully God and fully man — joined together in the person of Jesus

**Historical Christianity** knows nothing of a Jesus who is not God Incarnate. Jesus is God — and the reason that an estimated 2-3 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**.

By saying He is God, Jesus was either telling the truth or He was a blasphemous liar who should be put to death — because the first of the Ten Commandments is that there is only one God, and you should worship no one or nothing other than Him.

**John Chapter 1** is another very important section of Scripture relative to the INCARNATION.

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. They understood that 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 not theological — it was philosophical. 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 Greek coin of the day — not unlike the way we have the faces of some of our presidents on our currency. He said that the most essential and powerful thing in the world was the *logos* — which means **word**. 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 uses this concept of *the logos* — *the word* — and in so doing he take the essence of Jewish theology and the essence of Greek philosophy and he brings it all together in Jesus Christ.

## **John 1:1 <sup>1</sup>In the beginning**

An echo of [Genesis 1:1](#)

### **<sup>1</sup>In 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



Then John blows the minds of the Jewish theologians and the Greek philosophers and says

**and the word was God**

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

**<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God.**

We are beginning to get the picture of the Trinity. Jesus was in the beginning with God

**<sup>3</sup>All 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 God Himself who **made everything**.

**<sup>4</sup>In 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. <sup>5</sup>The 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 in the physical universe. Here, John is talking about the moral and spiritual darkness that is the result of the Fall — the result of the world being filled with sin.

This light refers to the coming of Jesus to **illuminate** this fallen world about God — **illuminate** this fallen world about truth — **illuminate** this fallen world about 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) who is the fulfillment of **Malachi 3:1**

Then in **verse 9**

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

God the Creator came into creation in human flesh — and the world He created did not know Him. What do you think that was like for Jesus? To have created the world — and the world didn't know when the creator came

**<sup>11</sup>He came to his own,**

That is the Jewish people

**And His own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who 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. We NEED this second birth. We NEED to be born again

— receive from God a new heart — new life — new passions — a new nature.

## **14 And 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.

**DON'T MISS THIS** — There is no right knowledge of God apart from the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that God shined into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus! Apart from Jesus we know NOTHING of God — we know nothing of the God of glory!

**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 the baptist says — He is eternal, He is God, he pre-exists me.

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

**This is so wonderful!** God took on flesh — became INCARNATE — so that we could receive from Him *grace upon grace* — unmerited favor upon unmerited favor — undeserved love upon underserved love.

**17 For the law was given through Moses;**

As we read the law — God’s Law — we have to acknowledge that we have all failed to keep His Law — we have all sinned and 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.

### **<sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God;**

No one has ever seen God! THE WHOLE POINT of the incarnation is that God didn’t want to be hidden! God said — I will show Myself to you — reveal Myself to you. 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 were living in the time of Jesus He would have looked like any other Jewish man. He didn’t glow in the dark! There wasn’t a halo over His head like so many of the old paintings of Jesus. He just 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. Believe it or not, Jesus even 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 than what we're looking at. Paul put it like this — *1 Tim. 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,*

For all the Bible says to us about the incarnation — we're still left facing mystery of it.

Now let's look at the

### **DIVINE CONDESCENSION** involved in the incarnation **AND THE MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF INCARNATION**

**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 for the Mission of 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** His incarnation was beyond comprehension different from the culture of the fallen world He stepped into. 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 700 years from **Isaiah 6** to **John 12:41** — There John writes that Isaiah saw the pre-Incarnate glory of Jesus and spoke of His glory. He saw the **majesty** and the **glory of the presence of Jesus seated on His throne, ruling** over all people's, times and places — and **being worshipped as God** before His incarnation! THAT is the culture Jesus lived in BEFORE His incarnation.

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 the culture of heaven to the culture of a fallen world.** Here is the infinite and incomprehensible condescension of the incarnation — Jesus went **from** glory **to** humility — he went **from** a throne **to** a manger and a cross — He went **from** honor **to** dishonor — He went **from** extravagance **to** poverty! Jesus entered into human history as a missionary.

I pray this is breaking open a new, fresh, personal and radical understanding of why God would put it into our heart to go to some place that is far different than we're used to! (Mike Westover — quintessential “preppie” growing up in upper class O.C. — in his senior year of high school Jesus grabbed this guy's heart. He went to Cal Poly SLO and majored in architecture. Got really involved in Campus Crusade — after he graduated got married and he and his wife left everything they knew — left every comfort and moved to Kazakhstan to tell Muslims that Jesus is the only begotten son of God who came to save us!)

WHERE would that come from? Jesus, who left the culture of heaven to enter the culture of this fallen planet in 1 AD. He came into history and into a culture where the people were speaking a specific language, eating certain food, wearing certain clothes, enjoying certain holidays, reading certain books. THAT is God — and He gives 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. Jesus was on a mission — and before He returned to heaven He told His followers that even as the Father sent Him — He is sending us.

THIS HUGE theological concept of Incarnation is PACKED with the truth and the reality of the missionary heart of God — and the truth and reality of what it means to be in His mission!

Having said that — we need to understand that when Jesus came as a missionary in our world 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, turn to **Philippians 2** (this is the last run of Scripture we're going to look to tonight)

**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

**<sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God,**

That's Paul's way of saying *Jesus is God* — Jesus is 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 — His right and privilege to express Himself in all of His divine glory. (The glory Isaiah wrote of in Isaiah 6)

**<sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing,**

Literally — **He emptied Himself** — not of His deity — 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. (Think about Jesus in the Antonia Fortress after He was brutally beaten with the Roman scourge when the Roman soldiers shoved a crown of thorns into His scalp and put a staff in His hand — then spit upon Him and mocked Him)

He should have been paraded around as a king — not disrespected as He was by Herod the Tetrarch the night before His death — Herod and his

soldiers “*set Him at nought!*” — they said “Jesus, you are nothing!” But Jesus let go of that.

Jesus should have been obeyed — not disobeyed. But He let that go. He emptied Himself of it.

### **taking the form of a servant,**

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** — Satan would love to have us believe that God is a coldhearted, arrogant tyrant with infinite power (Richard Dawkins / Christopher Hitchens). But the INCARNATION tells us that God is **humble** — and **gracious** — a God who **will suffer** — a God who **can relate** — a God who, when you are struggling and hurting the most **is not far away** and **un-relatable**. THAT is exactly why we gladly surrender our lives to this God who **emptied Himself** so that He could **identify with us!** **THAT is Jesus. HE HAS NO RIVAL! HE HAS NO EQUAL!**

When someone says: How can you believe in a God of love when there is so much suffering in the world, you can tell them: THIS is the God of love! He emptied Himself and came as a slave and suffered and died for our sin.

### **being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And 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 Paul speaks here of the cross.



**THIS IS HUGE** — Jesus did not come to just be an example for us. His example did not save us. He came to be a substitute for us. His example did not save us. We will deal with this more thoroughly in our next Credo study — CRUCIFIXION (pray — invite).

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. Pride in our few and paltry religious accomplishments. Despair when we fail to live up to the expectations — despair because we 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 He is *seated on a throne ruling and reigning as king of kings and lord of lords* — over all peoples, times and places, over all nations, over gender, over all races, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all political parties, all sexual preferences, all professions/ 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 the Bible says He will come again 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 what we live for, the name of Jesus is our hope. It should be the joy of our lives to live in such a way that the name of Jesus is made great and made known!

If you've been around Metro for a while you've discovered that we don't use the word "God" as much as we say "Jesus." We believe in God — but we believe **He is** Jesus. Far too many times just talking about God is insufficient because people will wrongly define who God is (if you ask people if they believe in God, a good number will say "yes" — but when you ask them who He is, most won't say that He's Jesus. God to Oprah is not the God who became man).

**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. We **read the Bible to know more about** Jesus and we're **looking forward to seeing** Jesus.

We have often asked two diagnostic questions before we start out corporate worship: WHY are we here? Because of Jesus. WHAT HAVE WE BROUGHT? We bring all that we are, all that we have, all that we do to pour

out upon Jesus in worship and adoration because HE is God who came to save us.

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

**<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and 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 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 we cannot live, to die the death we should have died and to give the gift we could never earn or deserve! I pray that when we finish tonight that you are completely and totally enthralled with Jesus

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

Here's REALITY — **EVERYONE will bend his or her knee**. Some of you will do it in this life for salvation, some of you will do it after this life before being sent to hell forever. Some of you will do it today as a friend of Jesus, some of you will do it eventually as a foe of Jesus.

I pray that if you do not love and worship Jesus — God Incarnate — that tonight you would come to your senses and acknowledge that your sin is real, that God's justice, wrath, and judgment is real — and that the love and the grace and the mercy of Jesus is equally real. If justice, wrath, and judgment were not real God would have never entered this world as man. But because they are real — and because His grace and mercy are real — He became man to save us!