

# GOD BECAME MAN

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Matthew 1:18-25

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## **INTRO.**

-- This Christmas season we've been looking at "Christmas Miracles," the miracles that God performed to make Christmas happen. Each miracle we've looked at this month was announced by an angel and has been in an ascending order of scope and significance.

1. In the first miracle God sent the angel Gabriel to the elderly priest Zechariah to announce that Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were going to have a baby boy, although they had never been able to have children and were well past childbearing age. They were to name their son John; we know him as John the Baptist, the forerunner who would prepare the way for the ministry of the Messiah.

2. In the second miracle God sent Gabriel to Mary, a young virgin living in the Galilean village of Nazareth to announce that she, while remaining a virgin, would conceive a child through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

3. Today we come to the greatest of Christmas miracles, the greatest miracle in the history of the universe, the miracle of God's becoming a man.

## **I. Matthew's Account**

-- Matthew's account of the Christmas story begins with an angel sent by God to confirm to Joseph that Mary's story of the miraculous virgin birth was true.

**Matthew 18:18-20** The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. 19 So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. 20 But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit."

### **A. Confirmation of the Virgin Birth (vv. 18-20)**

#### **1. The Circumstances (vv. 18-19)**

##### **a. "Engaged"**

-- Verse 18 says that Joseph and Mary were "engaged." Some versions translate this "pledged to be married" or "betrothed." This was a legally binding form of engagement that could be broken only by death or divorce.

##### **b. "Before they came together"**

-- The phrase "before they came together" is a reference to the fact that although the engaged couple were legally bound to one another they did not yet live together or have sexual relations with one another, or with anyone else. So, when Joseph realized that Mary was pregnant, he knew that he wasn't the father. Assuming that Mary had been unfaithful. Joseph decided to break their engagement by divorcing Mary.

#### **2. The Angel's Announcement (v. 20)**

-- The angel began his announcement to Joseph by confirming Mary's story that the baby conceived inside of her was not the result of her unfaithfulness but was the result of the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit.

## B. The Significance of the Virgin Birth (vv. 21-23)

-- Then we see the significance of the virgin birth in verses 21-23.

**vv. 21-23**, She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

-- God doesn't perform the miracle of the virgin birth just for the sake of performing a miracle. God always has a purpose or meaning in His miracles. We see the significance of the virgin birth in the 2 names given to Mary's child in these verses.

### 1. "Jesus"

a. In verse 21 the angel instructs Joseph to name the baby "Jesus." This is the Greek version of the Hebrew name "Joshua" (pronounced Yeshua), which means "Yahweh (Jehovah) saves." Mary's child was the One through whom the Lord would bring salvation. But the salvation He would bring was not what they were expecting. They were looking for deliverance from the Romans, for a political and military salvation, but God was sending the Messiah for something much greater and much more important; He was sending a Messiah who would save them, and us, from the judgment on sin.

b. Now, let's think through this. How was Jesus going to save people from sins? By becoming our substitute and taking the judgment for our sins in His death on the Cross. To do that He had to fulfill two requirements:

1. He had to be like us, a descendant of Adam, to be born of a woman.

2. But unlike us He had to be sinless, otherwise He wouldn't be able to take the place and punishment of anyone else. The book of Romans makes abundantly clear that all of Adam's descendants, every one of us, comes into this world with a fallen, sinful nature.

c. So, how could Jesus be a descendant of Adam and still be sinless? Only through the virgin birth. Like all humans Jesus' mother was a descendant of Adam, but unlike all other humans Jesus was not conceived through a human father but through the Holy Spirit. This miraculous conception meant that Jesus entered the world not with a fallen nature but with a nature in intimate harmony with God the Father.

### 2. "Immanuel"

-- There's another significance to the virgin birth, a significance that we can see in the second name for Mary's baby.

**vv. 22-23**, Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

-- What Matthew does here is to give us a second significance to the virgin birth by explaining how it fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14.

**Isaiah 7:14** Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

-- "Immanuel," which means God with us, is not the child's name but more of a title that reveals his identity. In Jesus we have God who has come in human flesh.

It's this glorious truth about Jesus that John focuses on in the opening verses of his Gospel.

## II. John's Account

-- John's account of the Christmas story begins this way:

**John 1:1-2** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.

### A. Jesus' Deity

#### 1. The Declaration of His Deity

-- John starts his gospel with a clear declaration of Jesus' deity. John refers to Jesus

as "the Word," emphasizing Jesus' role as the one who reveals and communicates God's truth to us. Later in the chapter, in verse 18, John says this about Jesus:

**v. 18**, No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son - the One who is at the Father's side - he has revealed him.

**Hebrews 1:1-3a** Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. 2 In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature

-- The Bible is the record of how God has revealed Himself to us through His acts and through the inspired teaching of godly people. Throughout the Bible we have a progressive revelation in which God keeps disclosing more and greater truth about Himself to us, and the climax of that process is Jesus. He is the Mt. Everest of God's self-revelation. You can't get any higher truth about God than what you get in Jesus because Jesus is Himself God.

## 2. The Description of His Deity

-- As he declares Jesus' deity, John also describes some of the aspects of that deity.

### a. His Eternity

-- One attribute John ascribes to Jesus is an attribute possessed only by God: eternal existence (without beginning or ending). Twice in these verses John refers to Jesus as existing "in the beginning." These words, of course, intentionally recall the opening words of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 starts with the same words, "In the beginning God." Here the Bible takes us back before any of creation existed, to when nothing existed except God, who alone is eternal, without beginning as well as without ending. John declares that in the beginning, when only God existed, Jesus the Word was there. Jesus Himself declares the same in Revelation 22:13:

**Revelation 22:13** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

### b. His Equality

-- John also implies Jesus' equality with God the Father in another expression. Twice in these verses John asserts that Jesus "was with God." The word "with" also has the idea of "towards" and suggests that Jesus was in a face-to-face relationship with God. Jesus refers to this intimate equality with the Father in His great prayer in chapter 17.

**John 17:5** And, now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

### c. His Essence

-- John also tells us about the essence of Jesus' nature, declaring that "the Word was God." This is a clear, straight-forward assertion of Jesus deity, that Jesus possesses fully the essence of Godhood.

-- Later in the Gospel Jesus declares:

**John 10:30** "I and the Father are one."

## B. Jesus' Humanity

-- John clearly teaches Jesus' deity, that He is God, and then goes on to teach Jesus' humanity, that He is God who became man.

**v. 14**, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

1. John tells us that the Word (God the Son) "became flesh." In an amazing act of humility and grace the sovereign, majestic, transcendent God willingly became one of us. In the miraculous act we call the Incarnation, the eternal and infinite God subjected Himself to time and space and took on real human form.

**1 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)** Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: Christ was revealed in a human body.

## 2. "And dwelt among us"

-- Literally, John says that Jesus "tabernacled" among us. It's a reference, of course, to the OT tabernacle, the place of worship after the Exodus and the place where God's presence resided.

What John is telling us is that in Jesus God made Himself manifest here on earth.

That's what Charles Wesley declares in his familiar Christmas carol, "Hark, the Herald Angels":

"Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see,  
Hail the Incarnate Deity.  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel."

3. And why did Jesus do all this? In the words of the angel's announcement to Joseph: to save us from our sins.

**Hebrews 2:14, 17 (NLT)** Because God's children are human beings - made of flesh and blood - the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil &hellip; 17 Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.

## CONCLUSION

I'm concluding each sermon in this series with a story from Karen Kingsbury's *A Treasury of Christmas Miracles: True Stories of God's Presence*. Today's story is about Brian and Ann Kramer from New Mexico. That Christmas Ann was pregnant with their third child. They celebrated Christmas at their home and then loaded everyone into their SUV and headed for Brian's parents in the mountains north of Santa Fe. Two days later, as a light snow fell, they started the trip back home. Ann hated driving in snow and prayed for God to protect them and keep them safe.

The further they drove, the heavier it snowed. The final stretch of road from Santa Fe to their home was mostly 2-lane with an occasional passing lane.

As they reached the top of the mountain and started the steep drive down the other side, the roads were snow-covered. Ann was visibly concerned, but Brian was driving slowly and assured everyone that their 4 wheel drive vehicle could handle the conditions.

As they approached a very steep decline, Brian knew they needed to maintain a slower speed and shifted into a lower gear.

Suddenly, the vehicle started to fishtail. Brian tried to steer, but it had no effect. The SUV made a 360-degree circle and headed towards oncoming traffic.

Ann screamed and prayed for God to help them. The vehicle stopped spinning and then began to slide sideways in the opposite direction towards a steep cliff. Brian and Ann knew that if they went over the cliff they would fall several hundred feet and would all be killed.

"God, please help us," Ann yelled, knowing that they were sliding fast and almost at the edge of the cliff.

Then, just as they were about to go over the edge, the SUV slammed to a sudden stop.

With hearts pounding, they sat in silence for a few seconds. "Girls, are you OK?" Brian asked. Everyone was shaken but not seriously hurt.

"We must have hit something very solid," Brian said. "Maybe a tree or a boulder."

"Or maybe a guardrail," Ann added.

Carefully, Brian got out of the vehicle to see what they had hit that had stopped them from sliding over the edge of the cliff.

He stood beside the SUV in disbelief. There wasn't anything there. There was absolutely nothing between the SUV and the steep dropoff - no tree, no boulder, no guardrail. Nothing between them and the cliff with jagged rocks a couple hundred feet below.

Brian looked at the SUV. There were no dents or scrapes. No marks of any kind on their vehicle.

"Ann," Brian said, "It's like the hand of God just reached out and stopped us."

Ann remembered her desperate prayer and knew in her heart that Brian was right. She knew that they had been stopped by the hand of Immanuel - the God who is with us.