

# REDISCOVER THE MIRACULOUS EVENT

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By Pastor Stan  
Matthew 1:18-25

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## INTRO.

-- Intro. Song / Intro. Video / Video: Christmas Epic

-- The Bible is full of miracles. God miraculously creates the entire universe out of nothing with just the spoken command, "Let there be&hellip;," There's the miraculous parting of the waters of the Red Sea and the miraculous provision of manna in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus performed many miracles during His ministry: feeding the multitudes, walking on the stormy sea, healing the lame and the blind and the lepers, and even raising the dead. Yet all of those miracles pale in comparison to the Christmas miracle, the miracle of Jesus' birth, the miracle of the event called the Incarnation.

-- Matthew tells about that greatest of miracles in the first chapter of his Gospel.

Matthew 1:18-25

## I. THE INCARNATION: WHAT IT IS

### A. GOD BECAME MAN.

-- The word "incarnation" means, literally, in flesh or in a body. The Incarnation, then, refers to the historic event of God coming to earth in human flesh, in a human body, in the person of Jesus. As Matthew says, Jesus is "God with us."

-- In his classic book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer says that the accounts of the Christmas story in the Gospels give us two important truths about the baby whose birth was announced by the angels.

#### 1. The Baby Born in Bethlehem Was God.

a. This is the truth that was prophesied by Isaiah over 600 years before Jesus' birth. Concerning the promised Messiah, Isaiah writes:

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

b. John affirms the fulfillment of this prophecy in the first chapter of his Gospel, where he explains what happened in the Christmas story.

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.

(1) What we see here are the first two persons of the Trinity - God the Father and God the Son. What God reveals to us about Himself in the New Testament is that He is a tri-unity, one God who exists eternally in three persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three share fully and equally in the divine essence. None is more or less God than the other. They are three distinct persons: the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Father or the Spirit. The Spirit is not the Father or the Son. They are three distinct persons who share the indivisible essence divine essence so that there are three divine persons but one divine being. While the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate persons, they are not three gods. There is one God who exists in three persons.

(2) So these first two verses of John's Gospel are telling about the first two persons of the Trinity, generally referred to as God the Father and God the Son. We need to understand that God the Son possesses fully and equally all the attributes of God. The Son is eternal (without beginning or ending), omnipotent (possessing all power), omniscient (knowing all things), and omnipresent (fully present in all places simultaneously).

Consider, for example, the description of God in Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:1-10 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. 5 You hem me in - behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

This description of God is equally true of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son.

-- The fact that the Son shares fully in the attributes of deity means that He is also holy. He is set apart and separate from His creation in two ways:

(1) The Son, like the Father and Holy Spirit, is sovereignly exalted above us and majestically reigns over us.

Psalm 104:1-4 Praise the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. 2 He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent 3 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. 4 He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.

(2) And God's holiness means that the Son is separate in regards to moral purity, that He is unable to accept or embrace anything or anyone that is sinful.

1 Timothy 6:15b-16a God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

-- So the first important truth that we need to understand about the Christmas story is that the baby born in Bethlehem was God, fully God, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, and holy God. But that's not the most amazing part of the Christmas story. Here's the most amazing thing:

## 2. The Baby Born at Bethlehem Was God Who Became Man.

-- After describing the Son of God as "the Word" who has been eternally with the Father, John goes on to say this:

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

-- This astounding truth that God came to earth as a man is the heart of the Christmas story and is repeated throughout the NT.

Philippians 2:5-7 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Jesus] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil

1 Timothy 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

-- As Paul indicates here, the event we call the Incarnation (the Christmas event of God coming in human flesh as a baby born in Bethlehem), that event is a great mystery. It is the most mysterious of mysteries and the most miraculous of miracles. If you could somehow rank order miracles in regards to how miraculous they are, on a scale of 1-100, the Christmas Incarnation would be 100, and all the other miracles would be a 1. This mysterious miracle cannot be explained only proclaimed.

Think of what happened in the miracle of the Incarnation:

The eternal God became a newborn baby.

The transcendent, majestic creator and ruler of the universe was wrapped in strips of ordinary cloth and lying in a manger.

The infinite, omnipresent God was confined to the helpless body of a baby.

The omnipotent God couldn't walk.

The omniscient God couldn't talk.

The holy God who couldn't look on sin came into a world darkened by the pollution of sin, a world filled with nothing but sinners, a world ruled over by Satan, the prince of darkness.

-- The baby born in Bethlehem was really human and really divine, fully God and fully man.

## B. THE INCARNATION AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

-- As the account in Matthew 1:18-25 indicates, there is a vital connection between the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth of Jesus. The fact that Mary was the biological mother of Jesus, but Joseph was not the biological father is stressed repeatedly in this short passage.

v. 18a, Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph "came together" as husband and wife;

v. 18b, Mary was "with child through the Holy Spirit";

v. 20b, The angel tells Joseph that "what is conceived in [Mary] is from the Holy Spirit."

vv. 22-23, Matthew tells us that Mary's pregnancy was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that a virgin would be with child and give birth to a son.

v. 25, Finally, just in case we hadn't got it yet, Matthew concludes this account by saying in verse 25 that Joseph and Mary did not have any sexual relations until after Jesus was born.

-- To be clear, Mary's egg was fertilized not in the natural way by a human father but in a supernatural way by an act of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:34-35 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

## II. THE INCARNATION : WHY IT (AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH) HAPPENED (V. 21)

-- The reason for all this (the reason for the Incarnation and the reason why the Virgin Birth was an essential part of it) is found in verse 21.

v. 21

-- The reason for the Incarnation, the reason for God's coming to earth as the baby born in Bethlehem, the reason for the Christmas story is found in the name to be given to the baby, the name "Jesus," which in Hebrew is the name "Joshua," which means "Yahweh saves." The angel explains that the baby is to be given this name because He is the One who will "save his people from their sins." When the angel says "his people," he's referring not to the Jewish nation but to those whom God has chosen, to those who will respond to God's call to turn to and trust in Jesus.

-- This is why the Virgin Birth is necessary. If Jesus had been a natural descendant of Adam and Eve (in other words, if both Mary and Joseph had been Jesus' biological parents), Jesus would have been born like all of us with a fallen, sinful nature. But the Virgin Birth was the means by which Jesus could be born fully human but without a sin nature.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.

Hebrews 7:26-27 Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

-- Here's why Christmas happened, why Jesus was born - to offer Himself as the sacrifice for our sins in His death on the cross, but in order to take our place and to pay the judgment cost for our sins He had to be without any sin of His own.

2 Corinthians 5:19, 21 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. &hellip; 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

## CONCLUSION

Charles Wesley expresses the wonderful truth of the miracle of the Incarnation in the Christmas hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

Hark the herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim:  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"  
Christ by highest heav'n adored  
Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come

Offspring of a Virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"  
Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings  
Ris'n with healing in His wings  
Mild He lays His glory by  
Born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

(Video: YouTube, Chris Tomlin / Philip Scott Johnson / London St. Paul's Cathedral)