

## Implications of the Incarnation

Message 2 of 6 in the series: "Hidden Gems: Things You've Never Noticed About Christmas"

### A. The Christmas story is the story of how the Son of God came into our world as a baby.

"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him... **So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.**"

John 1:1-3 & 14 (NLT)

"Joseph, son of David,' the angel said, 'do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. **And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.**' All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: 'Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and **they will call him Immanuel, which means "God is with us."**'" Matthew 1:20b-23 (NLT) (*Isaiah 7:14*)

### B. The name "Immanuel" helps us understand the Christian doctrine of the incarnation and some important implications it has for us.

#### 1. Jesus is fully God.

- Jesus claimed to be God. "It was now winter, and Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication. He was in the Temple, walking through the section known as Solomon's Colonnade. The people surrounded him and asked, 'How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus replied, 'I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father's name... **The Father and I are one.**' Once again the people picked up stones to kill him. Jesus said, 'At my Father's direction I have done many good works. For which one are you going to stone me?' They replied, '**We're stoning you not for any good work, but for blasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God.**'" John 10:22-25 & 30-33 (NLT)
- Jesus did things only God can do. "Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, '**Young man, your sins are forgiven.**' But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, 'Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy! **Only God can forgive sins!**' **Jesus knew what they were thinking**, so he asked them, 'Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say "Your sins are forgiven," or "Stand up and walk"? **So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.**' Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, '**Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!**' **And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God.** Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, 'We have seen amazing things today!'" Luke 5:18-26 (NLT)

**Important Implication:** We must make up our minds about Jesus. Since He claimed to be God, Jesus is either who He said He is, or He's a liar or a lunatic. "Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.' The Jews answered him, '**Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?**'" John 8:47-48 (NIV)

**Important Implication:** If we believe Jesus is God, we must surrender every part of our lives to His control. "Then he said to the crowd, '**If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.** If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?'" Luke 9:23-25 (NLT)

#### 2. Jesus is fully human.

"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, who had the power of death... 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.**"

Hebrews 2:14 & 17 (NLT)

**Important Implication:** We can confidently bring our problems to Jesus because He was born and raised in our fallen world and faced all the temptations we face. He understands us and knows how to help us. “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted... **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.** Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 2:18 & 4:15-16 (NIV)

**Important Implication:** Only Jesus can pay the penalty for our sins. “There is salvation in **no one else!** God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12 (NLT)

**Important Implication:** Becoming like Jesus means thinking less about what others should be doing for us and more about what we can do for them. “**Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.** Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.”  
Philippians 2:3-8 (NLT)

3. Jesus came to be with us.

“The Word became flesh and **made his dwelling among us.**” John 1:14a (NIV)

**Important Implication:** God’s love for us is outrageous. “This is real love—**not that we loved God, but that he loved us** and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” 1 John 4:10 (NLT)

**Important Implication:** Jesus came to be with us to make it possible for us to be with Him...

...as members of His family. “But **to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn**—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.” John 1:12-13 (NLT)

...as tabernacles filled with the Holy Spirit. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. **He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.** The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later **will be in you.**” John 14:16-17 (NLT) “For **we are the temple of the living God.** As God said: ‘**I will live in them and walk among them.** I will be their God, and they will be my people.’” 2 Corinthians 6:16b (NLT)

...as citizens of heaven forever. “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? **When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.**” John 14:1-3 (NLT)

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**Connect Group Questions:**

1. What will you do to keep Jesus’ birth as a meaningful part of your Christmas celebrations this year?
2. Read Matthew 1:18-23. Then discuss the following theological ideas contained in the name “Immanuel” given to Jesus.
  - Jesus is fully God. (Luke 5:18-26, John 10:22-33, Colossians 2:9) Why does this matter? (Luke 9:23-24, John 1:12-14)
  - Jesus is fully man. (Hebrews 2:14-17) Why does this matter? (Hebrews 2:18 & 4:15-16, Acts 4:12, Philippians 2:3-11)
  - Jesus came to be with us. (John 1:14) Why does this matter? (1 John 4:10, John 14:1-3)
3. How does it make you feel to know that as a Christian, you are a tabernacle of the Holy Spirit who is always with you? (John 14:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16)

4. Discuss the following statement: "We must make up our minds about Jesus. Since He claimed to be God, Jesus is either who He said He is, or He's a liar or a lunatic." What's wrong with believing that Jesus was just a good moral teacher?
5. Spend some time as a group praying for our Sunday morning and candlelight worship services this December. Ask God to give us the desire and the power to invite people who are far from Him to come with us. Ask God to powerfully proclaim the Good News of Jesus through the music, the messages, and the interactions these people have with us.
6. Some quotes from Tim Keller worth considering:

"The incarnation did not happen merely to let us know that God exists. It happened to bring Him near, so He can be with us and we with Him."

"When you come to Christ, you must drop your conditions. What does that mean? It means you have to give up the right to say, 'I will obey you if . . . I will do this if . . .' As soon as you say, 'I will obey you if,' that is not obedience at all. You are saying: 'You are my adviser, not my Lord. I will be happy to take your recommendations. And I might even do some of them.' No. If you want Jesus with you, you have to give up the right to self-determination."

**Great Resource:** *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ* by Tim Keller, Penguin Books, 2018.