

The Mystery of Christmas
Part 3: Jesus—
Our Brother, Our Redeemer

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection

- Every religion has moral teachings, but, as Pastor Doug noted, *"The Christian teaching that God took on human flesh and dwelt among us, distinguishes the Christian faith from any other religion."* **How significant** do you think this uniqueness is—and **exactly why** is it so significant?

Hebrews 2:10 reveals that it was "fitting" (ie. necessary) that our Savior be "perfected" (ie. to reach his goal) through suffering. It was one of those situations that fit the formula: "If you want to accomplish 'x' (eg. *"pass the exam"* or *"meet your sales goal"*, etc.) you're gonna have to _____." Explain in **simple, non-religious** terms **why** Jesus had to suffer as a human in order to redeem.

- Read Hebrews 7:25-27. Our same word ("it was fitting") again appears. As with the question above, "If we want to have a high priest who is able to save us completely (v. 25), he's going to have a **certain sort** of savior." From v. 26b-27, list the **qualities Jesus had to have** in order to be sufficient for the task? To you, which of those qualities are obviously necessary? Which ones confuse you?
- **How do we reconcile** the facts that the devil **already** is "disarmed and triumphed over" (Colossians 2:15) and yet he still is a **current** "adversary, prowling around seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8)? Which elements of the salvation that Jesus accomplished are the **current experience** of believers today? Which elements of the salvation that Jesus accomplished **have not yet been applied** to our lives? Support your answers biblically.
- Read Hebrews 1:1-5. List the ways that "Jesus is better than..."
...Old Testamental revelation (v. 1-2).
...angels (v. 3-5; cf. v. 8, 13).

How does your estimation of Christ need adjustment?

Application-Challenge

- If you have not yet received God's Christmas gift to you, stop waiting. The Bible says, "Today is the Day of Salvation."
- If you have received God's gift—but have walked away from God—it's time to come back home. God is waiting.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

John 1:1, 14 recounts the Christmas story in two verses. God became man and dwelt among us. Theologians call this the incarnation of Christ. The word “incarnate” means “in the flesh.” Jesus is God in the flesh! The doctrine of incarnation distinguishes the Christian faith from any other religion. In no other religion is it claimed that God became man. When Jesus decided to become human, when he decided to add humanity to his divinity, he considered his equality with God something he would not grasp so tightly as to let it hinder his full incarnation. Consequently, he took on the form of a humble servant—here to serve humanity (Philippians 2:6-7). Why would God write the Christmas story this way? One of the deepest biblical answers is that it was “fitting.” In other words, it was consistent with God’s wise purposes for humanity. Hebrews 2:10 says that in achieving our salvation through Christ’s sufferings, God acted “fittingly.” Through his suffering, Jesus became the perfect Savior. It was fitting that he suffered. In fact, the Bible indicates that God must act in accord with his perfect and wise nature. That means that he must do what is fitting. He is self-compelled to do so.

Hebrews 2:14-15 gives us four reasons why it was fitting that Jesus came into this world on that first Christmas as a helpless human baby: “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

Reason #1: Jesus became human because we are human. God desired to have a family of human children in which his eternal Son is one of them, yet supreme over them (Romans 8:29, Hebrews 2: 11, 17). It was fitting for Jesus to become human because we are human. In God’s eyes, it is logical and congruent and beautiful!

Reason #2: Jesus became human in order to die (Hebrews 2:14). God, by his very nature, cannot die. But the God-Man, Jesus Christ, could die. How can this be? Jesus has two natures: (1) a divine nature which cannot die, and (2) a human nature that can die. One person, two natures. On the cross, Jesus’ human nature died. His divine nature did not, because it cannot. It is immortal. It was his divine nature which brought back to life his human nature, in the resurrection. It was “fitting” that Jesus die on the cross. To make that possible, he became human. In the incarnation, a mortal-human nature was joined to Jesus, preexistent, immortal-divine nature.

Reason #3: Jesus became human that by dying, he might destroy the one who has power of death, that is, the devil. Jesus did not come to wipe the devil out of existence, but to abolish his ability to make death damning. The devil damns people to hell with one weapon: unforgiven sin. If he can accuse us in God’s court successfully and get a guilty verdict, we are condemned. As a result of Jesus’ death on the cross, God “cancelled the record of debt that stood against us” (Colossians 2:14-15). It was nailed to the cross. In doing so, he disarmed the rulers and authorities” — that is, the devil and his cohorts. Satan was disarmed in that the weapon of successful accusation was taken out of his hand. It was gloriously fitting that he be destroyed in this way.

Reason #4: Jesus became human to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. As a result of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, when God’s children look into the dark face of death, they say, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). We no longer have to fear what lies on the other side of death. We know what lies ahead because Jesus has told us. A great family reunion awaits us in heaven. Our dead human bodies will be replaced with eternal resurrection bodies. We will be resurrected to a life of purpose and meaning and service to the King of the Universe! Many non-Christians today fear that on the other side of death lies nothing. That erroneous conviction is enslaving. If death ends our existence, you might as well live it up while you are alive. You might as well live to satisfy your own selfish motives, and many people do. This worldview leads us to behave in ways that ignore God’s purpose and plan for humanity and causes us to live in bondage to our own selfishness. Satan loves that. Furthermore, this shortsighted thinking condemns us to judgment, because we have not looked to Jesus as our Savior. We have missed the meaning of Christmas.

When God first pondered how to write the story of the universe, he made his choices according to how all things “fit” into a design that would best reveal his love, grace, wisdom and mercy. Christmas happened because it was “fitting.” It was wise and beautiful in God’s eyes. On this Christmas Eve and in the coming year, make it your aim to see the wisdom of God’s way of salvation, in sending Jesus to die for us, that we might be delivered from fear and bondage.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

We tend to think of the gospel as a limited message, applicable only to those who are not yet saved. But Paul, writing to the believers in Rome, Paul said: "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also." Now why would Paul want to preach the gospel to people who'd already heard and believed it?

The following forty points cover the span of the "wide angle" gospel—from eternity past to our final glorification—not just simply how one can be saved. Study each point, plus any associated passages. Take time to understand and appreciate each—and to worship and thank God for the glorious gospel!

1. My God is immense beyond imagination. He measured the entire universe with merely the span of his hand. [Isaiah 40:12]
2. He is unimaginably awesome in all of his perfections, absolutely righteous, holy, and just in all of his ways. [Deuteronomy 32:3-4]
3. He has also been unbelievably good and merciful to me as the Creator and Sustainer of my life.
4. Every breath, every heartbeat, every function of every organ in my body is a gift from him.
5. Every legitimate pleasure I experience is a gift from his loving hand to me. [1 Timothy 6:17; Acts 14:17]
6. All that I am and all that I have I owe to him and to his goodness. [James 1:17]
7. My life in every way is, and will continue to be, utterly dependent upon him in whom I live and move and have my being. [Acts 17:28]
8. This wonderful God is the most supremely worthy object of admiration, honor, and delight in all of the universe. [Psalm 16:11; 96:3-8; Revelation 4:11]
9. And he has created me with the intention that I might glorify him by finding my soul's delight in him and by living in joyful obedience to him in all of my ways. [Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Psalm 37:4; Deuteronomy 5:28-29]
10. Yet I could not have failed this great God more miserably than I have. [Romans 1:21-25; 3:23]
11. Instead of giving thanks to him and humbly submitting to his rule over my life, I have rebelled against him and have actually sought to exalt myself above him.
12. Going my own way and living according to my own wisdom, I have broken countless times either the letter or the spirit of every one of God's Ten Commandments. [Exodus 20:3-17; Colossians 3:5; Matthew 5:27-28; 1 John 3:15]
13. Thinking myself to be wise, I have shown myself to be a fool, and because of my arrogance, God has every right to damn me to the everlasting experience of his terrifying wrath in the Lake of Fire. [Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8; Ephesians 2:3]
14. So as for myself, apart from Christ I am bound by the guilt of my sins and also bound by the power of sin, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures. [Romans 3:19; James 2:10; Titus 3:3; Ephesians 2:3]
15. Apart from Christ, I am also utterly deserving of and destined for eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire, completely unable to save myself or even to make one iota of a contribution to my own salvation. [Romans 5:6]
16. However, what I could not do, God did—and in doing it, he did it all, sending his own Son into the world to die on the cross for my sins, thereby showing me unfathomable love. [Romans 5:6-8; 8:3; 1 Peter 3:18]
17. God loved me so much that he was willing to suffer the loss of his Son, and even more amazingly, he was willing to allow his Son to suffer the loss of him at the cross. [John 3:15; Romans 8:32; Mark 15:34]
18. Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to lay down his life for me. No one could ever love me more or better than Jesus. [John 15:12-14]
19. On the third day after Jesus' death, God raised him from the dead, thereby announcing that his death was completely sufficient to atone for every sin that I have or will commit throughout my lifetime. [1 Corinthians 15:4; Acts 13:30, 38-39]
20. God then exalted Christ to his own right hand, where Christ now reigns from on high, granting salvation and forgiveness to all who call on him by faith. [Ephesians 1:20-21; Acts 5:31; 16:31; Romans 10:13-14]
21. Now when my time came and I placed my faith in Jesus, God instantly granted me a great salvation. He forgave me all of my sins, past, present, and future. [Colossians 2:13; Psalm 103:12]
22. He made me his child, adopting me into his family. [Ephesians 1:5; John 1:12]
23. He gave me the gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives me God's power, who pours out God's love within my heart, and who tenderly communicates to my spirit that I am a child of God and an heir of eternal glory in heaven. [Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:13-14; 3:16; Romans 5:5; 8:16-17]
24. In saving me, God also freed me from slavery to any and all sins. [Romans 6:6-7, 14]
25. I no longer have to sin again, for sin's master over me has been broken!
26. In saving me, God also justified me, and being justified through Christ, I have a peace with God that will endure forever. [Romans 5:1]
27. In justifying me, God declared me innocent of my sins and pronounced me righteous with the very righteousness of Jesus. [Romans 5:18]
28. God also allowed his future and present wrath against me to be completely propitiated by Jesus, who bore it upon himself while on the cross. [1 John 2:2; "propitiation" = appeasement of wrath]
29. Consequently, God now has only love, compassion, and deepest affection for me, and this love is without any admixture of wrath whatsoever.
30. God always looks upon me and treats me with gracious favor, always working all things together for my ultimate and eternal good. [Romans 8:28-30]
31. God's grace abounds to me even through trials.
32. Because I am a justified one, he subjugates every trial and forces it to do good unto me. [Romans 5:1-5]
33. When I sin, God's grace abounds to me all the more as he graciously maintains my justified status. [Romans 5:20-21]
34. When I sin, God feels no wrath in his heart against me. [1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; 1 John 2:2]
35. His heart is filled with nothing but love for me, and he longs for me to repent and confess my sins to him, so that he might show me the gracious and forgiving love that has been in his heart all along. [1 John 1:9]
36. God does not require my confession before he desires to forgive me. [Ephesians 4:30]
37. In his heart, he already has forgiven me, and when I come to him to confess my sins to him, he runs to me—as it were—and is repeatedly embracing and kissing me even before I get the words of my confession out of my mouth! [Luke 15:11-24]
38. God does see my sins, and he is grieved by them. His grief comes partly from the fact that in my moments of sin, I am not receiving the fullness of his love for me.
39. He even sends chastisement into my life, but he does so because he is for me, and he loves me, and he disciplines me for my ultimate good. [Hebrews 12:5-10; Romans 8:31]
40. I don't deserve any of this, even on my best day; but this is my salvation, and herein I stand. Thank you, Jesus! [1 Peter 5:12; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Colossians 1:23]