

"O, Come All Ye Faithful"

Video Clip
Welcome & Prayer

Birth of Christ from Matthew

Scripture Reading — John 1:1-5

Narrator

In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. 4 Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. 5 The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

Jesus the Divine-The Son of God

Dan

He had power beyond our imagination. With mere words He called our universe into existence. Every tree, every flower, every animal from the highest flying bird to the most mysterious creatures in the dark depths of the oceans leapt into existence at the sound of his voice. There is no place in this universe you could go where He was not. From the furthest supernova to the most impenetrable black hole, His presence is there. Everything that can be known, He knows. There is no truth He does not understand. His judgments are unsearchable, His paths beyond tracing out. He is beyond definition, beyond comprehension, always better, always more, always greater than anyone could say. As soon as you put your period on your description, you have fallen short.

How could we ever reflect His glory? How could we ever symbolize his majesty? How could our praise ever be worthy of Him? Heaven is His throne. Earth is His footstool. He belongs in the throne of the universe, surrounded by magnificent beings created for no other reason than to surround his throne glorifying his name. He is the King of Kings. The Lord of Lords. There is nothing on earth befitting the splendor of His glory.

Scripture Reading — John 1:17

Narrator

14 So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us.

Jesus the human — The Son of Man

Kelly

He was given the name Jesus. It was one of the most common names in 1st Century Israel. In school there would have been 2 or 3 others in his class with the same name. If Jesus came today he would have been Joe, or Mike, or David.

The word become flesh was touchable, approachable, reachable, and what's more, he was ordinary. If he were here today you probably wouldn't notice him as he walked through a shopping mall. He would turn heads by the clothes he wore or the jewelry he flashed.

Think about the implication. When God chose to reveal himself to mankind, what medium did he use? A book? No, that was secondary. A church? No. That was came later. A moral code? No. To limit God's revelation to a cold list of do's and don'ts is as tragic as looking at a Colorado roadmap and saying that you'd seen the Rockies. When God chose to reveal himself, he did so (surprise of surprises) through a human body.

For thirty-three years he would feel everything you and I have ever felt. He felt weak. He

grew weary. He was afraid of failure. He was susceptible to wooing women. He got colds, burped, and had body odor. His feelings got hurt. His feet got tired. And his head ached.

To think of Jesus in such a light is- well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It is much easier to keep the humanity out of the incarnation. Clean the manure from around the manger. Wipe the sweat out of his eyes. Pretend he never snored or blew his nose or hit his thumb with a hammer.

He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping him divine that keeps him distant, packaged, predictable.

But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't Let Him be as human as he intend to be. Het him into the mire and muck of our world. For only if we let him in can he pull us out.

Narrator-

How can you put everywhere and everything into one place at one time? How can a human body ever contain God himself? How do you put forever in the fraction of a second? But the Apostle Paul says in Colossians 2:9, "For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body."

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

"Away in A Manger"

Jesus the Human — Birth

Kelly

It looks like anything but the coming of a king. It was a birth fitting of livestock, not a human child, let alone the Son of God. Imagine the creator of Adam and Eve being knit cell by cell in Mary's womb. His face is punish and red. The powerful voice that called the universe into existence cannot express itself beyond a coo or a cry. His throne is a feeding trough on the dirt floor of a stable. It is surrounded by straw and manure and animals that stink. God in diapers! The One who had once fashioned Adam out of dirt, would now live as Adam, and spend the next 33 years walking on and living on that dirt. That is how the king came among us. He came into a world of military occupation, tax collections, shepherds, and hills and stables. He came with little fanfare or recognition. There were no parades, no proclamation from Rome. No holidays were declared. He was the Son of Man. Few took no more notice of him than they would a hired hand at the farm or a shift worker at the factory, or the data entry employee shuffled away amongst a hundred cubicles.

Jesus the Divine — Birth

Dan

Amongst the shepherds, the hills, the taxes and the swaddling cloths were a couple of clues to the true magnificence of this event. To those few that were willing to pay attention there were signs declaring this glorious arrival.

On the hills outside Bethlehem that night there was a light show beyond what Las Vegas or any concert tour has ever been able to muster. All of the special effects prowess of Industrial Light and Magic could not compare with the brilliant display witnessed by only a handful of shepherds. Luke 2 tells us about the appearance of angels announcing the birth of the Messiah, not to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, nor to those with the reins of power in Rome, but to a group of "ordinary Joes." The heavenly brilliance of just one of these creatures

was overwhelming to the shepherds. They were terrified and trembling. Only with the angel's calm assurance could they bear to hear the good news of great joy.

But none of this compares to what happens next. Suddenly a great company of angels appears. We don't know exactly how many appeared. Romans used a similar phrase to refer to Roman army legions that contained 6,000 men. Hebrews used it to refer to the stars in the sky. Doubtless, though, it was a glorious and brilliant display fitting the king of kings and lord of lords. Earth may have taken little notice of the birth of Christ, but heaven could not remain silent. Not since the creation of the world had an event so significant taken place, and never in all of earth's history had so many of these heavenly creatures appeared in one time and one place. Certainly, this was the Son of God.

Jesus the Human - Tired

Kelly

Human flesh was more than just clever packaging. It was more than a facade that disguised his true reality. Humanity was a part of his true essence. He was as much man as anything else. All of the same limitations of flesh, which we must endure, afflicted him as well. Jesus performed many miracles, but he performed none of them for his own selfish benefit. Jesus himself said that he could, if he wanted, call on 72,000 angels to come to his aid, but he never did.

On a hot day, he got sweaty. After a long walk, He got tired. This is what happened in John 4. Early in his ministry, Jesus' popularity was on the rise. Great crowds of people followed him wherever he went. Because of the crowds he could not stay in a town. Many came to him for miracles and healing. The multitudes were making increasing demands on him. At the same time, though, the jealousy and opposition of the religious leaders was also on the rise.

Because of this Jesus left Judea and was on his way back to Galilee. He had no plane or car. He didn't even have a horse or a donkey. It was an 80 plus mile journey he had to make on foot. About 40 miles into this journey, after another full day of walking, he was passing through the desert of Samaria. His bones throbbed. His muscles ached. His feet were swollen. The fluid of popped blisters mixed with the dirt of the road to cake his feet in mud. The hot, Palestinian sun baked his shoulders.

He came at last to Jacob's well on land bought by the great Patriarch thousands of years before for only 100 pieces of silver. For many centuries this well had quenched the thirst of God's people. Now the Son of Man wanted its waters to satisfy his parched lips, and so he asks the woman there at the well, "Will you give me a drink?"

Jesus the Divine — Water for a Thirsty Soul

Dan

Jesus was tired. He was thirsty. He arrived at that well longing for a tall cold one. But he was still the Son of God, and there was someone else at the well more thirsty than He. She was not thirsting for water from the well for her parched lips, but living water for her parched soul. As the Son of God, only he could give her the water that would satisfy the deepest thirsting of her heart.

It was more than a mere man who crossed every cultural divide to reach this woman everyone said was untouchable. Racial barriers were shattered before him. The judgmentalism of a misogynistic culture disappeared like a fog in the morning sun. Religious boundaries melted away. Jesus crossed these dividing lines as only the Son of God could.

But this was not the greatest miracle the Son of God performed at the well. This miracle may not have been as apparent as calming the angry sea or giving sight to the blind, but it is no

less divine. Jesus, the Son of God, peered deeply into this woman's heart and mind. He understood every thought, every memory, and every desire. Every evaporated hope, every broken dream, every disappointment was laid bare before Him. There isn't one compromise, not one lowered standard, and none of the cheap substitutes with which she's filled her life that Jesus does not know.

Only the piercing eyes of God could search so deeply. Jesus probed that which she thought was secret and hidden. Initially, she tries to run from Jesus' most intimate perception of her life. Calling him a "prophet" she tries to divert his attention to a theological debate between the Jews and the Samaritans. But the Surgeon of the Soul would not be distracted from his divine operation.

After her encounter with Jesus, "The woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?'" She knew very well this was the Son of God. John tells us in vs. 39, "Many Samaritans of that town believed in him, because of the woman's testimony."

Jesus the Human — Tears for a Dead Friend

Kelly

Nothing reminds us of our humanity more than death. There came a time in Jesus life when some of his dearest friends, two sisters and a brother, traveled deep into that valley. Death cast the darkest of shadows into their lives, claiming one of their own.

The home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus was a home where Jesus was always welcome. When he walked through these doors He was loved, and recognized as Lord. We read in John 11 about a time when Lazarus became gravely ill and died. By the time Jesus arrived in Lazarus' hometown of Bethany, he had already been in the tomb for four days. Mary and Martha's home was filled with mourners and comforters as they went through the traditional Jewish time of grieving.

Martha was the first to see Jesus. "If only you'd been here," she cried. Then Mary fell at his feet. In her tears she said the same thing, "If only you'd been here." John tells us in verse 33 that Jesus was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. And when they took him to Lazarus' tomb Jesus could contain himself no longer. He broke down, and as verse 35 tells us, "Jesus wept."

It is the shortest verse in the Bible, but it tells us so much about Jesus. He hurts just like we do. He feels the loss. He knows the pain. He's moved with sympathy. He understands that death steals so much from us. We cry at funerals. He cries at funerals. We grieve. He grieves. He is the Son of Man.

Jesus the Divine — Life for a Dead Friend

Dan

Jesus does feel our pain. He understands our loss. His heart is burdened by our grief. He knows all that death's shadow steals from us. However, unlike us, He is not limited by these things. For Him, tears at a funeral are only a passing stage before the party. He is the Son of God. Death doesn't have the last word.

Even when death's shadow is at its darkest, we can see the light of Jesus' divinity piercing through. Before Lazarus even died, Jesus assured his disciples, "*This sickness will not end in death.*" In midst of Martha's mourning, Jesus assures her, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me, will never die.*"

And when Jesus asked them to roll the stone of the tomb away, they hesitated fearing the odor of the decomposing body. Jesus calms their fears promising that they would see the glory

of God.

The Jews believed the spirit left a body after three days, but here, four days after, Lazarus comes forth. He is alive. Jesus is master not only of the grave, but the spirit world as well. This truly was the glory of God.

Jesus the Human — Fear of Death

Kelly

Perhaps Jesus' most human moment comes at the end of his life, in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is at the threshold of the cross. The shadow of death looms dark and large. What man does not fear his own death? Jesus understood his mission and his purpose, yet still he longs for some other way.

Here in the Garden, in the shadow of his own death, Jesus is filled with fear and anguish. He begs his friends for prayer. He tells Peter, James, and John that his "soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." Yet twice, they fail him by falling asleep.

Jesus pours his own heart out in prayer. He asks God that if there is any way possible that this hour might pass, and this cup be taken away from him. The stress was so great that he sweat drops of blood. Medical science tells us that this can only happen at the heights of human anxiety. The pressure was tremendous. We can almost feel his stomach churn. We can sense the nausea and dizziness that must have accompanied him in his prayer.

Jesus the Divine — Embracing the Father's Will

Dan

Even in his anguish Jesus was not to be turned from his life's mission. He knew his purpose was to give his life as a ransom for many. This is the moment the last three years have been leading to. Though the thought is usually lost in the glitz and glamour of Christmas, this is the reason He was born. For thousands of years, God's unfolding plan has been working its way to this very point in time. This would be the fulcrum on which all of history turns.

Jesus died as a man on the cross. But he also died as the Son of God. Hundreds of people were crucified by Rome every day. Crosses on Golgotha, the place of the skull, were a common sight to passersby outside Jerusalem. But Jesus was not just like any other execution.

When Jesus was hung on the cross, the sky turned dark for three hours in the middle of the day. The earth thundered and shook as an earthquake rattled the city. It was as if all of creation, from the heights of the heavens to the depths of the earth, was mourning the death of its Creator.

Inside the temple, the veil that divided the holy of holies from the holy place was torn in two, from top to bottom. People were allowed in the holy place, but not in the holy of holies. There was a dividing wall between men and God, but when Jesus died, and the veil was torn, heaven itself ripped apart that wall.

One of the more mysterious events surrounding the death of Christ was the fact that as Jesus died, many righteous people were raised from the dead. It was almost as if the grave didn't have enough room for the Son of God, and had to give up many it had already claimed.

But the most divine thing that happened on the cross that day, wasn't as obvious as the blackened sky, or the tremors in the earth, or the suddenly empty tombs, but it is the thing that changed all of human history. It was more than just blood that flowed from Jesus' wounds, it was forgiveness. "*Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.*" But the forgiveness that flowed was for more than just the thief to whom Jesus promised paradise. It flowed for more than the soldiers who pounded the spikes and the crowds that mocked him. It

flowed for every sin, for every person, who ever lived.

This is why, after praising the divinity of Jesus, Paul goes on to say in Colossians 1:

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-

Only God could forgive sins. That is why the Jews wanted to kill Jesus when he forgave someone their sins.

Narrator

Both the Son of Man and the Son of God? Could this be? Could both be true of the same person at the same time? Yes. The Bible tells us that Jesus was both fully man and fully God. That baby born in a manger in Bethlehem, contained all the hope and potential of every man and woman and every boy and girl. He was our Creator. Now He would become our Savior.

“Silent Night”

Narration -

The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 2:14-17

14 Because God's children are human beings--made of flesh and blood--Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. 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. 15 Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying... Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus to be in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.

Jesus became like us, so we could become like Him.

Jesus Became Like Us

Kelly

Jesus became like us. He took on our flesh. He experienced our emotions. He knew our pleasure and our pain. He understands our hopes and our fears. He was tempted in all things just as we are. He went to the cross as one of us. He experienced the penalty for sin we all deserve, for the wages of sin is death. Humanity deserved death, Jesus experienced death. He paid our price.

So We Could Become Like Him -

Dan

Jesus became like us, so we could become like him. He went to the cross as a man, he bore our sin. But He also went as the Son of God. When He died on that cross as a man, he died a perfect man, a sinless man, a man who fulfilled the will of God in his life in every way. The wages of sin is death, but Jesus had no sin. Death had no claim over him. Death had no right, no power to keep him. So Jesus conquered death. He rose from the grave.

With the price of sin paid in full, the righteous demands of all that is right and wrong satisfied completely, death no longer has any claim over us either. The punishment for my sin, and yours, has already been exacted, against Jesus on the cross. Jesus took our death, and now He gives us His life. He gives us His reward. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. *"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*

Communion

(Invite the servers to come forward with the trays.)

Jesus was born to die. He came to give his life as a ransom for many, so it is appropriate that we not only celebrate his birth, but also remember his death. As great as his birth was, it was not his birth that saved us. If Jesus only lived as one of us, he may have been a great teacher, a perfect example, a source of inspiration, but He could not have been our Savior, only in dying on the cross did he pay the price for our sins.

We are going to have a special celebration of the Lord's Supper this morning. We will partake of the bread and the cup together. The servers will pass the trays down each aisle. Please take the bread and the cup, but do not partake until you are directed to do so. We will partake together as a church family. I am going to ask the servers to come forward at this time and pass the trays. We will pray after the trays have been passed.

(Servers will then distribute the communion elements.)

Let us give thanks for Christ's body. *(Pray for the bread)*

Let us give thanks for Christ's blood. *(Pray for the cup)*

Offering & Announcements

Closing Prayer

"Joy to the World"