

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY THREE

Deity in Diapers

Selected Scriptures

Unlike the Christmas carols we sing, there was nothing calm or bright about the world in which the Lord Jesus entered as a little baby.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DURING World War II, a chaplain decided to accompany the crew of an Army Air Force bomber on a raid into Germany. The B-17 encountered heavy resistance when enemy fighter planes swarmed the plane and antiaircraft artillery peppered the sky. To steady the men, the chaplain activated the intercom and said, “It’s all right, men. Have no fear. God is with you.”

The tail gunner, who was frantically firing his weapon, shouted back, “God may be with you guys up front, but He’s not back here!” Within a few seconds, an enemy shell passed through the tail of the plane and out the top, leaving gaping holes but not detonating! After a moment of stunned silence over what appeared to be a miracle, the tail gunner added, “Correction. *God just walked in!*”¹

Jesus was born at an equally turbulent time. A power-mad Roman dictator occupied the throne. Violence erupted without warning. Public executions were commonplace. Oppressive taxation bled the people dry, and everyone lived on the edge of desperation. Then suddenly, angels lit up the sky with praise to announce that God had entered His creation as a baby born in Bethlehem. *God walked in!*



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

We need God's peace now, just as much as when Jesus was born. Pray for peace as you open His Word.

Father, in some ways, nothing has changed since the first century. Senseless violence, moral decay, and terrible abuses still darken our world. We need Your peace. I need Your peace. As I study Your Word, may the light of Christ's hope fill my world. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When Jesus was born, heavenly glory broke through the dark night and an angel of the Lord declared:

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" (Luke 2:10–11).

For generations, the Jews had been awaiting the coming of the messiah, and the ones who first heard the news were lowly shepherds. Let's examine three aspects of that history-shaping event: the prophecy that was fulfilled, the circumstances of Jesus' birth, and the significance of God becoming flesh.



Observation: Prophecy, Birth, and Incarnation

Observation involves looking closely at the verses to see every aspect of what the biblical writer was saying. It's important to lay a good foundation of observations before discerning the interpretation. Read carefully each word and phrase as you take notes.



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Prophecy—Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7

In *Isaiah 7:14*, Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would give birth to a son, and his name would be “Immanuel (which means “God is with us”).” Read this verse from Isaiah, and then compare it to its fulfillment according to the angel’s message in *Matthew 1:20–23*. What key facts do you observe in this prophecy?

Isaiah also described the roles and responsibilities of the coming Son in *Isaiah 9:6–7*. Write down who the Son would be and what He would do.

The shepherds must have thought Isaiah’s prophecies were a million miles from reality, but then God just walked in. Within a matter of minutes, they found themselves in the stable, looking into the face of deity. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Birth—Luke 2:1–7

In what ways was God orchestrating world events leading up to the birth of Jesus, according to *Luke 2:1–4*? What was the prophetic significance of Bethlehem (see *Micah 5:2*)?

What details about Jesus' birth do you observe in *Luke 2:5–7*?

A member of the Trinity blinked human eyes and cried in a manger. This little infant, who held the universe in place, was dependent on His mother's milk to survive.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Incarnation—John 1:14; Philippians 2:1–7

If it hadn't been for Caesar's imperial decree that a census be taken, Joseph and Mary would have never gone to Bethlehem. Caesar may have had great power, but he wasn't really the one in charge. *God* was steering the wheel of world affairs, just as the prophets foretold, to enter His creation through the birth of Jesus. The theological term for God becoming flesh is *incarnation*.



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How did John describe the purpose of the incarnation in *John 1:14*?

In *Philippians 2:6–8*, Paul explained Christ’s descent from deity to humanity. Write down the key words that describe what the Son of God did to become human.

Joseph and Mary knew in their hearts something no one else imagined, that she was carrying the one Isaiah had prophesied would come. She had God in her womb.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Meaning of “Emptied Himself”

Interpretation tackles the issues that our observations raise. Jesus “existed in the form of God,” Paul declared, affirming that Jesus was God (Philippians 2:6 NASB). In Philippians 5:7, however, Paul wrote that Jesus “emptied Himself” (NASB). The Greek word used to describe this act of “emptying” is *kenosis*. What does this word mean? Let’s take a closer look.



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Of what did Jesus empty Himself? Did He shed His deity when He became a baby? How can a baby be God? Do a little digging in your Bible-study resources to find some answers. Read *The Message* paraphrase and *J. B. Phillips* translation of *Philippians 2:7*. Also, a helpful online article is “*What is the kenosis? What does it mean that Jesus emptied Himself?*” at gotquestions.org. Use the space below to summarize your findings.

Through the incarnation, the Son of God took on a human nature while remaining God. He was God, and yet He was human in every way. He hurt. He laughed. He hungered. He even wept, and in His tears, people saw the compassion of God.

Why did God become human? Write down the reason for the incarnation in [2:8](#).

Four key words trace Jesus’ journey from the throne room to the cross: “existed,” “emptied,” “humbled,” “death” (2:6–8 NASB). Use these words to explain what the incarnation means to you and why it is an essential doctrine of the faith.



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The one who was with the Father and the Spirit, eternally existing as Creator, Lord, and Savior, was reduced to the infinitesimal size of a human embryo. He deliberately emptied Himself of the voluntary use of His divine attributes and pitched His tent on earth. It's a mind-boggling truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Virgin Birth

Correlation enhances our interpretation by examining related passages. A key element of the incarnation is the virgin birth. Jesus was fully human . . . yet without sin. His sinlessness was possible in part because He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What vital facts regarding Joseph's relationship with Mary did Matthew include in *Matthew 1:18 and 25*?

Adam's sin spread to every human and with sin came death (*Romans 5:12*). Sin's power, however, didn't affect Jesus because He was not humanly conceived. Reflect on *1 Peter 1:18–20* and explain the reason the virgin birth was necessary for Jesus to redeem humanity.

Jesus is the unique God-man. The One who had power over death submitted Himself to the power of death for our sake. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: God Became Flesh for You

As we close our study, take a moment to ponder the deeper meaning of Christmas. Gaze on the Christ child nestling in Mary's arms and hear these truths ringing like bells on Christmas Eve.

First, *God can do anything*. If He can shape history and move the mind of Caesar, spark life in the womb of a virgin, and clothe Himself in an infant's body, then imagine the great things He can do in your life.

Second, *God can change anyone*. Through His Son's death and resurrection, God transformed death into life. Think of the ways He might change your heartache into hope, your turmoil into peace, your fear into trust.

Third, *God can lead anywhere*. He led Christ from heaven to the cross and back to glory. Through our dark valleys, He can lead us as well.

Which of these implications of Christ's birth encourages you most?

What does it mean to you that God "walked in" and became human for your sake?



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Conclude by allowing the truth of the incarnation to sink into your soul. Don't hide your emotions as you express your gratitude to the Lord of the universe, the Babe in the manger, the Lamb on the cross, the Savior seated on the throne.



A FINAL PRAYER

Use the following space to write your final prayer of adoration to the Lord.

ENDNOTE

1. Jane Polley, ed., "God Just Walked In," in *American Folklore and Legend* (Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest, 1978), 393.

