

# It All Comes Down to Jesus

*From Man in the Mirror VP, Brett Clemmer*

*Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:45-47; John 1:1*

Good morning! It's Christmas time! How many of you have done any shopping whatsoever? That's pretty good, about a third of you. It's great to be with you this morning! I actually realized today that this is the second year in a row that I've gotten to do the Christmas message. It's cool to come be with you at this time of year and talk about little baby Jesus. As I was thinking of what I wanted to talk about this morning, I decided that I wanted to talk about Jesus. I thought this will be great! We'll talk about this great story of Mary and Joseph on the donkey, walking all this way, and then they get to the stable. There's no room at the inn, and Mary has the baby Jesus in the manger... and that's about all of the Christmas story I'm going to cover today. When I was thinking of what Christmas is all about I became overwhelmed with the miracle that it is that God would walk among us. That God would actually take on human form and experience everything that we would experience and walk among us.

So the Christmas story is a great narrative, a great historical event, but I think sometimes we get caught up in the little kids' pageants. They knock on the door and the inn keeper says we have no room, and then when they start to walk away, the little kid says no no you can have my room! Remember that version? Isn't that sweet? But that's just not how it happened! To gloss over what really happened when Jesus came here is an injustice to our beliefs. So I started thinking where could I go with the Christmas story? I found this big book, I read the whole thing last night. Not really, but this book is called *Systematic Theology*. It's a crazy book to even think about, but hopefully next year when they show this video on the web they'll still have this offer. You can actually get this on Amazon for nine dollars for your Kindle. It's *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem. If you have any interest in really diving deep into any topic of theology, this is a great book to get! The reason I'm even showing you this is because a lot of what I'm going to say to you today came out of the chapter in this book on the person of Jesus Christ. In going through this, looking at who Jesus is, it sort of renewed in me a wonder for who Jesus is and why he's so important to the Christian faith, why he's so important to me and to you and why it's so personal.

So here's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about how our faith all comes down to Jesus. Why the virgin birth, why was that important? Then we're going to talk about Jesus' humanity and his deity; perhaps one of the most difficult things to understand about Jesus is that he was fully human and fully God. We'll talk about that and why it was so important. Then, we'll talk about following Jesus. So here's our Big Idea for the day: **Christianity is not a belief system, it's belief in a person.**

## **Why The Virgin Birth?**

We're going to discuss that as we go, but let's start by talking about why the virgin birth? We're going to read the story in Matthew and the story in Luke, but before we do that, let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask him to speak to us this morning. Lord, we just come this morning and we're so excited! Some of us are so excited about the Christmas season, it's a time of joy, of laughter, of family. Lord, for some of us, Christmas is a time of memories. Of childhood gifts that we dreamed about getting. Of the red ryder bb gun, of the puppy, of grandparents and extended family visiting. All those wonderful memories! But for some of us Lord, Christmas can be a time of grieving, a time of bad memories, of things not going well,

of crazy families, dysfunction, and so Christmas may be a thing we do not look forward to. Lord, there may be people listening to this message where this will be their first Christmas without a loved one, and so they're feeling the pain and sorrow of that. Lord, I would ask for us this morning and this season that the story of Christmas, the story of a God who loves his people so much that he would send his son down to earth to be born as a baby, to live a life of a normal person two thousand years ago in the dirt, the culture, the occupation and the normalcy of the human condition; a God who loves us that much, Lord, would really fill our hearts. Help us to overcome the temporary grief and sorrow that we feel, that we would realize belief in you has eternal significance. Lord, bring back the joy and the wonder for all of us. Not in the pretty lights or the fun TV movies, but instead in the truth of a loving God. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!

So let's read these two accounts and then we'll talk about the virgin birth. I want to read both of them because we're going to refer back to them, so let's start with Matthew 1:18-25.

It's happened, by the way. I'm wearing reading glasses, though I'm not happy about it! All the older guys in the room are like na na na na na! All right:

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Now turn over to Luke 1 and let's look at verse 26 and we'll read the story here:

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on 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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

So in both of these stories you can see how important that is, how the writers, both Matthew and Luke emphasize the fact that Mary was a virgin. Over and over again they say Joseph and Mary had not been together. Mary says how can this be? I am a virgin. So this is a fact, they didn't gloss this over; Jesus was born to a woman who was a virgin and so his father on earth was Joseph but the cause of his pregnancy was God, the Holy Spirit. It says that he overshadowed her, whatever biological action had to take place to cause Mary to be with child happened because of the Holy Spirit.

Why is this so important? There's three things I want you to think about. First of all, the Bible says salvation comes from God, so if Jesus is just a guy with an earthly father and mother, then he's just a man. Salvation cannot come to us from somebody who's just a man, salvation has to come from us through God. Genesis 3:15 says as part of the curse is this promise that the seed of your off spring will crush the head of the serpent. Jonah says salvation comes from the Lord, and so there is this theological truth that if we're going to be saved, only God can save us. We can't save ourselves, and so the virgin birth is important because it reinforces that salvation came from God. If you turn over to Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5 says this:

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

So God sent his son! Salvation didn't come from a man who was just walking around, salvation came from God.

The other reason the virgin birth is so important is because the only way that Jesus could be fully God and fully man was through this process. How else could he have done it? God could have created a man in heaven and sent him down, but none of us then would have looked at him and said Jesus was one of us! We would think him more an angel or something. He could have taken a man and united his divine nature into that man, but that doesn't really work either. What we have in the virgin birth is from the start, Jesus had God for his father and Mary for his mother. He was fully God and fully man, but the most important thing that this birth does is that it breaks the lineage from Adam. Sin entered the world through Adam, and so Jesus by not being what C.S. Lewis calls a son of Adam breaks the lineage of Adam's original sin, and yet maintained his humanity by being born of a virgin mother.

I know, you're thinking this is supposed to be a Christmas message, and this is getting kind of deep. But this is so important! This is the core of our belief system as Christians, that Jesus was born of a virgin, that God broke the track record of sin. So when Jesus was born, he did not have something that the rest of us have and that was Jesus did not inherit that original sin. So that's why the virgin birth is so important. Again, we're not just talking about faith in a belief system, but in a person.

### **Jesus' Humanity And His Deity**

So let's talk about Jesus' humanity and deity. We're going to go through a lot very quickly. First, let's talk about the fact that Jesus was a man. He was born, the Bible makes it clear he was a regular baby, they wrapped him in swaddling clothes. He grew; in Luke 2 it talks about how he grew in strength and stature. It talks about how he grew in wisdom and knowledge, he developed as a normal human being, and he died. He did all the stuff that we do as men. We know that he got tired and weary. He was so tired once that he almost slept through a storm. Remember that? How they had to wake him up? He got weary, he got hungry; it talks about how he was in the desert and he was tempted by the devil for forty days. He experienced thirst, he had a human soul, he had emotions; the Bible says he looked on the crowds and felt compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless. He got ticked off! Remember when he walked into the temple courts and they were taking advantage of the sacrifice system to charge people for animals to sacrifice, overcharging, and exchanging money at unfair rates. He got angry! He sat down and braided a whip! He experienced grief! When his friend Lazarus died, John 11:35, it says Jesus wept. He experienced grief, he had friends! Friends that took care of him, that loved him! At the end of his ministry in that last week of his life, you may not realize this but he was living just outside of Jerusalem at Lazarus, Mary and Martha's house. He would walk into Jerusalem every day and teach at the temple courts, then walk back to stay at his buddies' house. He even experience fear. In the garden he was crying because he knew what was coming and he was scared! This is Jesus!

But it doesn't stop with this. What makes Jesus different from the rest of us, even in all his humanity and his normal biological processes and his normal emotional and mental processes, is that as a human he was sinless. Guys, this is the key for Jesus is that he was sinless. Let me give you a few passages:

If you look at Hebrews 4:15, it says 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.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin

1 Peter 1:19 Peter calls Jesus the lamb without blemish or defect.

1 John 3:5 John says in him there was no sin.

So here we have the writer of Hebrews, Paul, Peter and John. Four guys that knew Jesus, experienced him personally at various times of his life, and they're all very clear that Jesus was sinless. Even with Satan tempting him, the Pharisees making him angry, and so much more, he was sinless! He called his best friend Satan once, but even in all that he was sinless.

So why is that sinless-ness so important? Because without Jesus the man's sinless-ness, he would not be able to pay the penalty for our sins, because his own sins would get in the way. So we have Jesus the man, fully man, but sinless.

Turn to Romans 5:18: Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people (Whose trespass? Adam's, and so this breaks the cycle, the lineage to Adam), so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

When God looks at us, because of Jesus' sinless-ness and because he paid the debt for our sins, he sees Jesus' righteousness. Without Christ, he sees Adam's sinfulness. He sees our sinfulness, but with Jesus,

when you become a follower of not a belief system but a person, the person of Jesus, he sees Jesus' righteousness. The theological term is imputed, it just means we get it! In fact, I like the analogy that Paul uses, he says we are clothed in Christ's righteousness. It's like we have Jesus' skin; God looks at us and he sees Jesus, but it's only because Jesus was sinless that this is possible.

Paul describes it to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. In Jesus' sinless-ness he was able to be our mediator.

Finally, the other thing that Jesus' sinless-ness does is that it gives us an example to follow. 1 John 2:6, John encourages us to walk as Jesus did. Paul says be imitators of me as I am an imitator of Christ. So Jesus' sinless-ness not only fills this sort of cosmic purpose, but it also fills this very temporal purpose, this earthly purpose of an example to follow. We are supposed to be like Jesus, and we have this perfect example to follow. So that's Jesus' humanity.

Now, Jesus also was God. The humanity part is a little easier, for me at least. There's this verse in Philippians, where it says that Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but humbled himself even to death on a cross. When I heard that passage, what I heard in my mind was that Jesus came to earth, he left his deity in heaven and became a man. Sort of left those Godly attributes behind while he was here, and then when he ascended to heaven he took all those Godly attributes back. Obviously he wasn't omnipotent while he was here, he had limitations. He took limitations on, but what I've realized through reading the scriptures and studying books like the big paper weight I showed you is that's not true! Jesus left none of his deity behind! While Jesus walked the earth he was still omnipotent, he was still omniscient, he was still sovereign! He did not leave that stuff behind, and this is the part that for me is sort of the more amazing part of Jesus is his deity.

So what do we see? First we see John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:18 through him, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made. And the word became flesh. So we see that Jesus is eternal, he's been there since the beginning. He calls himself at the end of Revelations the alpha and omega. He's eternal, our creator. In Hebrews 1, the writer of Hebrews goes back to the Psalms and he quotes this, starting at verse 8:

But about the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;  
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.  
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions  
by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

He also says,

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.  
They will perish, but you remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment.  
You will roll them up like a robe;  
like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same,  
and your years will never end.”

To which of the angels did God ever say,

“Sit at my right hand  
until I make your enemies  
a footstool for your feet”?

So the writer of Hebrews is saying look, Jesus is not an angel, Jesus is God. He sits on the throne, he is the creator. The Father calls the son, God. This is sort of the mystery of the trinity, that you could have one God in three persons. We’re talking about two of them here, but Jesus was God. Jesus is God! So he’s eternal, the creator. Jesus’ own words when they were questioning him in John 8, he says this, verse 58:

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Now, I want you to think about this grammatically. That’s not the proper grammar. Before Abraham was born, I was would be proper grammar, but that’s not what Jesus says. Jesus says before Abraham was born, I am. Does I am sound familiar to you? It sounded familiar to the Pharisees! They knew exactly what Jesus was saying. When he said I am, he’s saying I am, God is the Great I Am, he equated himself with God and it almost got him stoned! Almost got him killed! And there were times when people realized man, you’re God! He would say don’t tell anybody! My time hasn’t come yet! And ultimately Jesus’ claims to be God are what got him killed guys. That’s what enraged the religious authorities so much that they had to trump up charges that he was trying to take on Caesar’s role. That’s how they did it; they couldn’t kill him themselves so they got the Romans to do it. But what they were upset about is that he was claiming equality with God, and it ticked them off! He said in Revelation 22:13 in John’s vision, Jesus said to him I am the alpha and omega, I am the beginning and the end. Then in Colossians Paul talks about the fullness of God that Jesus exhibited. Colossians 1:19 says for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. Are you beginning to get the concept? Jesus is God. So what about these things? Was he really omnipotent? Well, he calmed the storm! He multiplied loaves and fish! He turned water into wine! Yes! He was omnipotent! He had all the power of God at his disposal while he was here on earth. Was he omniscient? Well he certainly seemed to know what people were thinking! He saw Nathaniel under a fig tree that he could not have possibly seen, but he knew Nathaniel was sitting there. John 16:30 says that Jesus knew all things. Was he omnipresent? Jesus said I am with you always. The disciples could go do stuff, and even though he had this physical location, he as fully God could be with him. And then he was sovereign! He could look at people and say I say to you your sins are forgiven! The sovereign lord of the universe, even as he was walking on earth. He did not leave his deity in heaven when he came down, he was fully God and fully man at the same time. If you are going I don’t really quite get it, me neither! Isn’t that awesome? Wouldn’t it trouble you if you could fully comprehend who God was? That would trouble me, that would concern me.

I get Buddha, I’ve read stuff about him, and he was a great guy. He thought deep thoughts and said some great things. He was wrong about a lot of stuff, but I get Buddha. I get Mohammad. I get the prophets, I get all these other religious guys that have been out there. I don’t get Jesus. I just can’t quite grasp him. And that’s who came to earth, embodied in that baby. That’s crazy! But it would be crazier still to me if we could fully comprehend it.

Finally, God names him Emanuel, even back in Isaiah. He says his name will be Emanuel which means God with us. Not God is with us, but God with us, in other words this person is God, with us. So this is Jesus, this is humanity, this is his deity. So here's the Big Idea: **Christianity is not a belief system, it's belief in a person.** In the person of Jesus and this person was both fully God and fully man! Why is Jesus' deity necessary, because only an infinite God could bare the penalty for the sins of all men! Remember we said Paul says to Timothy that there was one mediator between God and man? The only way to be the mediator between God and man is if he was God and man, otherwise he couldn't do it! He would be on one side or the other, but he mediates as both God and man.

### **Following Jesus**

So how do we follow Jesus then? Well, here's what I mean when I say this. Let me read this quote to you from Jonathan Edwards in *Religious Affections*: It is doubtless true and evident from the scriptures that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love, and that in this divine affection and a habitual disposition to it and that light which is the foundation of it and those things which are the fruits of it consist the whole of religion. So here's what I want to point out to you. What he's talking about here is holy love, that is divine affection. Sometimes we get caught up in Christianity thinking it's a bunch of rules that we're supposed to follow, but that's not Christianity. Then we go to the next level and we say that Christianity is just believing the right things. That's important, but the demons and Satan believe in God and Jesus, and that's not enough! Otherwise there wouldn't be demons and Satan! This is the key, it's holy love, what Edwards calls divine affection. We don't worship a set of rules or beliefs, we worship a risen savior, a God who took on human form and walked among us! We follow Jesus, not a set of rules or doctrines. Obedience is important, when you love somebody, you do what they say, and you're not going to love somebody that's not worthy of your love. Obedience and beliefs are important, but when it comes down to it guys, it's believing in the person of Jesus, loving Jesus. So that's my challenge to you this Christmas, is that when you're thinking about the baby in the manger that you really pause and let it sink in the fact that this man God Jesus is the core of everything we are as Christian men, and that we would devote our lives to loving him better and to following him where he leads us. To doing and being whom he wants us to be.

If you've not gotten there, if you've not gotten to the place where you're like you know what, I know all the right things and I do all the right things, but I'm not sure I really love Jesus. Talk to somebody. Talk to me! That's the turning point, that's the point where Jesus knows that you're his, that's the point where you know that you're his! Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, thank you for not staying up in heaven and leaving us to our own demise. Thank you that you've had a divine plan before time began that you would be our savior, that you wouldn't just create us and send us off into space, but that you would stay involved and engaged, that we would be your people. That you would love us so much that you would do what you needed to do to maintain your character, and yet to redeem us, to reconcile us to yourself. So Lord, this Christmas, would you please draw us closer? Would you quicken our hearts with love and affection for you, in Jesus' name we pray, amen!