

# INCARNATION

By Rev. Will Nelken

---

I imagine that most of you are familiar with the Christmas story. I don't mean the one about dreams of sugarplums and old Saint Nick. I mean the *original* Christmas story—the story about the birth of the Christ of Christmas, the Jewish Messiah, the Savior of the world.

The Jewish elders knew *where* the Messiah was to be born, for they told the Roman governor, “In Bethlehem in Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote: ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’ ”

And the magi—wise men from the East—knew *when* this King of Israel was to be born, for they had seen His star as it rose, and followed it as it guided them to Bethlehem, to the very house where young Jesus and His mother were staying.

Yet, bursting with miracles as that story is—angelic appearances, a miraculous conception, and far-reaching prophecies—you and I have the privilege of a deeper look into the unfolding plan of Almighty God.

It was John—the young fisherman whom Jesus called to become His disciple, one of the so-called “Sons of Thunder,” the disciple whom Jesus loved—who recorded the *hidden* realities of the Christmas story. This ancient story began in ages past, before the world, as we know it, was created.

John carries us back to the very beginning of time...

John 1

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning the Word already existed.*

*The Word was with God,*

*and the Word was God.*

<sup>2</sup> *He existed in the beginning with God.*

<sup>3</sup> *God created everything through Him,  
and nothing was created except through Him.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Word gave life to everything that was created,  
and His life brought light to everyone.*

<sup>5</sup> *The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

<sup>14</sup> *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.*

### **Creator**

When everything that we know of came into being, the Word *already* existed. Uncreated, without beginning, before time, the Word was. *And the Word was God.*

A word is an impersonal thing—an expression. But this Word was a person: *HE existed in the beginning with God.*

And He was an active person, for *God created everything through Him.* In fact, He is responsible for everything that exists, for *nothing was created except through Him.* His fingerprint is on everything that is, from the largest star to the smallest critter. He created everything. Do you get that?

### **Life-Giver**

Even man was formed from the dust of the earth by the hand of God, created in the image of God. Created existence, however, is not pinnacle of God's work. God breathed the Spirit of life into the nostrils of the man (Adam) *and he became a living soul.* He is the Life-Giver.

Before that breath from Heaven, Adam was lifeless. I, too, was lifeless once, though I had existence. But when the Spirit of Life came into me, I came alive in Christ Jesus. He gave me *new life.*

### **Invader of Darkness**

The darkness of my soul gave way to the light of His life, for light is like that: it *penetrates* all darkness. Darkness can never prevent light from shining. A single ray of light can expose and transform the deepest darkness.

The Word (Jesus) brought me out of darkness into His marvelous light. I was then able to see things I had not recognized before. Colors and beauty and shapes and shadows, structure, organization, and intricate unity—what wonder!

When the light of the Word breaks into darkness, it is unconquerable. Darkness cannot extinguish it, cannot put it out, cannot make it go away or dissipate. Light is strong. Light lasts forever.

## Human

All of this is awesome, and fascinating, yet it is pretty much what one would expect of God. But all that humanity would naturally think about God, the Creator and Life-Giver, takes a sudden, unanticipated, and stunning turn in verse 14: *The Word became human and made His home among us.*

Human? Human! God became human, like us. *Immanuel*—not only near us or beside us, but in us, like us, one of us. As Matt Redman so beautifully penned it in the song *The Name of Emmanuel*:

*The same blood, the same flesh—one of us*  
*The same skin, the same breath—one of us*  
*The same dust and dirt,*  
*The same trials and hurts—one of us*

He is altogether righteous, while we are altogether sinful. Yet, He is at home with us. At home. And if you are in Christ today, you, too, are home. Your forever home is with Him.

For He is *full of unfailing love and faithfulness*. Just what we so desperately needed! Who doesn't want to be loved with a love that won't give up? In spite of our own inconsistencies, we all expect others to be faithful. Christ is! Always and without end.

In this, we see *His glory, the glory of the one and only Son of God*. In this, He stands head and shoulders above the rest of the human race. In this, He excels. He is glorious!

What follows in John's record are the accounts of Jesus' victorious confrontations with unbelief, ignorance, misunderstanding, deceit, prejudice, stubborn pride, fear, abuse, disease, demons, and death itself.

In the face of it all, Jesus kept speaking the truth—the ancient, infallible truth—of God's loving plan of salvation:

How God sent His Son, as one of us, to be the sacrifice for our sins, the atonement for our rebelliousness, our peace with God.

How God raised Jesus from the dead to guarantee our freedom from judgment-to-come and to empower our life with God in the here-and-now.

That would almost be enough, but John realized that a story in itself was insufficient. To *assure* us of the story's truthfulness and reliability, John added the collective testimony of his fellow apostles.

You may not have been there to witness the marvelous events that the apostles reported, but their combined eyewitness experiences give assurance to our hope today.

1 John 1

*<sup>1</sup> We proclaim to you the One who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw Him with our own eyes and touched Him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.*

*<sup>2</sup> This One who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen Him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that He is the One who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then He was revealed to us.*

*<sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>4</sup> We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.*

## **No Fable**

As Peter also affirmed, they did not follow clever fables, but were eyewitnesses of God's glory in the person of His Son, Jesus.

John represented them all, the eyewitnesses of the Son of God, when he asserted, *We proclaim to you...*

Together, they *heard* Him, they *saw* Him. With their own ears and eyes. They touched Him with their own hands. This was not hearsay! This was real. They touched the Word of Life!

And, as a result, they could not stay silent! They had to tell what they had seen, what they had heard, what they had handled.

Because the story is so amazing, John emphasized repeatedly that he was an eyewitness, along with the others.

## **Joy**

And their hope was that every reader would see in spirit what they saw with their eyes, and would hear in heart what they heard with their ears, and would touch by faith what they touched with their hands. It was the very reason for which they wrote. It was a story to be shared.

This is what the Christmas story is really about: sharing the joy of our salvation with the world.

Mary sang her joy!  
The angels sang their joy!  
The shepherds shared their joy!  
The wise men carried their joy to the Far East!  
The apostles spread their joy to the rest of the inhabited world!  
Now this gift is in our hands.

If you give no other gift this Christmas, give away the joy of knowing Jesus Christ.

It's the gift that comes back to you every time. The more you give away, the more you have.

*Joy to the world!  
The Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And Heaven and Nature sing  
And Heaven and Nature sing  
And Heaven, and Heaven and Nature sing*

Would you join the song? Will you tell someone the story? Will you show someone how to prepare Him room in their heart? This is your incarnation.