

Doctrine - Jesus Christ

Sign Title: Jesus Christ

October 10, 2010

Good to see you this morning! My name is Kurt and I am one of the pastors. If you are new, you need to know we are in the 4th week of a 10 week series called “Doctrine - What Do We Believe?” In this series, I am teaching the basics of the Christian faith. Today, we are talking about *Jesus Christ the person*.

I want to begin with a brief story. After I married Cindy, we waited two years before we started having kids. Those two years flew by and I still remember the shock when Cindy told me she was pregnant. It didn't take long until she was showing. I know I am biased, but I thought she was the cutest pregnant lady. Everything stuck straight ahead. Walking behind her, you had no idea she was pregnant but if she turned around fast in crowd, she took out at least two people. Like most ladies, she had all the pregnancy side-effects. Heart-burn, a hard time sleeping, and waking up in the middle of the night because the baby decided to stomp on one of her internal organs. While I thought she was cute, she thought I was stretching the truth because her body was doing things it had never done before.

Nine months passed quickly and we found ourselves in a hospital delivery room with a epidural that only worked on one side of her body and the doctor pumping her full of pitocin to get stronger contractions going. She will tell you pitocin is really painful when the epidural doesn't work. Of course, you know how the story ends, along came David, our first-born. After he was born I remember him laying on his mother and looking into my eyes. That was a humbling

moment. I was a father. I had this awesome sense of humility and responsibility. This little boy was depending on us.

I was an only child, so I didn't grow up around babies and I didn't even know how to hold David. I was afraid I might break him. He was so vulnerable, so fragile. Everything about his life depended upon Cindy and me. Do any other dads remember that freaky feeling when they first became a father?

What amazes me is every Christmas, we celebrate that God came to us, as a frail, needy, helpless, and vulnerable child. We remember this every Christmas but we don't take time to think about what this really means. Today, we are going to explore the meaning in depth. For some of you, this will be review, that's no excuse to drift off, stick with me. For most of us, this will be an eye opener as we see Christ in a new way. This is something we call, the incarnation.

What does the word *incarnation* mean?

If you go to school and study this they have a big word for Jesus coming in the flesh. It is called incarnation. Just saying the words makes you feel intelligent. What does it mean? To explain it, I want to use chili. You can get chili two ways. Either regular chili, or there is the good stuff my wife makes at home called, chili-con-carne. That's chili with meat. Men, what kind of chili do we like? Con-carne chili, we like it with meat! So *carne* means meat.

Carene is the root word for incarnation. It means *God in the meat*, God in the flesh. So every time you eat chili with meat, you can glorify God by telling

friends how chili reminds you of Jesus. Incarnation means Jesus is God who came in the meat, in history, for us.

We did not say a man became God, that is what the false religions say. They tell us we can become God and if we have a lick of sense we should know that is a lie from the pit of hell. I can barely get myself out of bed in the morning unless Cindy knees me in the ribs, I don't have much of a chance of turning myself into God. Incarnation is totally different. It is saying God became a man.

Why did Jesus become a man?

Last week we learned that as human beings, we are sinners. Sin is quite pervasive and it affects everything about us. It controls our thoughts, our motives, our feelings, even our reasoning is tainted by sin. Kids can't even do their homework at school without sin influencing them.

Sin, in essence, is rebellion against God and placing ourselves in the place God belongs. Since God is just, rebellion against God must be punished. Because it is rebellion against an infinite God, it deserves an eternal penalty. Even if we were somehow about to take the immense punishment we deserve for one simple sin, we are repeat offenders that heap up mountains of sin against ourselves. There is no way out. Each of us will face the eternal, conscious, never-ending punishment we deserve for our sin.

The good news is that while holiness and justice are part of God's character, so is love. God, in his love, would like to pay the price of our sin but, he can't. He is spirit. The only just punishment for man's sin is that man's blood be shed. A spiritual being isn't the right currency to pay for sin. The only way a

man's sin can be paid for is if one man took the punishment another man deserved. But there is a problem with that. No human being is sinless so no-one could pay the penalty of sin for another, and even if they were, the value of one man's death and eternal punishment, would not be enough to pay for more than one act of sin. If God is to save men from sin, a man must die for their sin, that man must be sinless and that man must be of infinitely more worth than simply another man.

The only way for God's love to be displayed to many and God's just wrath against sin to be appeased is if God became a man and died in our place. That way God's justice would be served and God's love would be displayed. That is Christ. In Mary's womb, the second person of the Trinity combined himself fully and permanently with flesh. He became God *in the meat*. We are going to learn about that this morning. I am going to unpack what *God in the meat* means from a very familiar passage, Philippians 2:5-11. We will see what changed about Jesus when he became a man in the womb of Mary.

How did Jesus change in the incarnation?

There are three descriptions of Jesus in this passage I want us to notice.

Jesus changed his role.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV)

Have you done something humbling recently? Something you felt was beneath you? Some of us feel under employed. We are capable of much more

than we are doing and it is humbling to have a low paying, low skill job. No matter what form of humiliation we face, nothing compares to the humiliation of Christ. He is in very nature God; that means his essence is God, not sub-God, not a created being like the Jehovah's Witnesses say. As part of the Trinity, Jesus is God.

He didn't hold on to his rights. That is what it means when it says *his equality with God was not something to be grasped*. We hold on to our jobs and our rights with white fisted knuckles. Christ willingly made himself nothing, taking on the nature of a servant.

Now there is something very important to understand here. Many people get this wrong. Jesus didn't change his nature or his identity, he just changed his role. What role did Christ have before Bethlehem? What was he doing? Let me show you.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:1–3 (NIV)

I know some of you will say, wait a minute pastor, that is talking about God the father. We were talking about Jesus! In the gospel of John who does John say Isaiah saw?

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. John 12:41 (NIV)

John says Isaiah saw Jesus! That is Jesus before Bethlehem. Remember, Jesus is God, he is not applying for the job. Before Bethlehem,

Jesus enjoyed the glory and worship of heaven which went to Christ and the Father. Since Jesus is the one who carried out the father's decree to make all of the created being places of the universe, it doesn't get any higher than Jesus. Jesus didn't hold on to that position, it was not something he grasped with white fisted knuckles. Rather, in love for the father and for us, he made himself nothing. He poured all of himself into the womb of Mary and was born on a manure laden stable floor.

There is a phrase in this verse that many people have misunderstood. When it says, *he made himself nothing*, what does that mean? There are two answers, one is false. I will give you the false one first.

What does *made himself nothing* mean?

Some say for Jesus to *make himself nothing*, means he left part of his divinity behind. What do you think? Did Jesus cease to be himself when he went into Mary's womb? Think about this. If Jesus were to give up part of himself, he would cease to be God. God cannot cease to be who he is.

Jesus never left something behind or he would no longer be God. It wasn't his identity he gave up, it was his role. Instead of being worshipped on the throne in heaven, as he deserved, because he is the creator of the world, he took on the role of a servant. When humanity was fused with divinity in the womb of Mary, Jesus still had all of his attributes, but as a man, he chose not to depend on those attributes.

Jesus Voluntarily limited the free exercise of his attributes while on earth.

Think of it this way. Imagine you decide to go to the streets of Chicago and purposefully leave behind all forms of identity and power so you can live as a street beggar. For a week, you beg with the other beggars, your clothes are dirty, you sleep under a cardboard box, you are herded into a shelter to survive the bitter cold of winter. At any time, you could call a friend who would bring your wallet, cell phone and Lexus; but you choose to limit yourself for a period of time and not avail yourself of any of your attributes.

This is Jesus. That is why Jesus is all powerful, but we see him at the side of a well tired from his journey. Jesus even limited his knowledge! That is why Jesus knows everything, but when asked about when the Son of Man will return he says...

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Mark 13:32 (NIV)

As God, Jesus is everywhere present, but he limits himself to time and space so he is not able to get to Lazarus before he dies. This is Jesus leaving the role he played as God to take on the role of a servant while retaining his identity as God.

Jesus changed of appearance.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:8 (ESV)

When it says *human form*, don't get the impression Jesus only appeared human. Some ancient and modern heresies believe Jesus was nothing more than a high order ghost. In the incarnation, Jesus did not become a

schizophrenic. The divine and human nature were combined not just in body, but in mind.

He is God and man but one person. Because of that, he put up with all kinds of things, even though he was God. When he was in heaven, nobody wondered about his identity, on earth, people shouted, "Get out of my way." On earth he put up with the treachery of Judas, the abuse of Herod and his soldiers. He didn't have to put up with that. When Jesus humbled himself, it was voluntary to become the perfect sacrifice for our sin but a sacrifice that has infinite value. He didn't get laid off from heaven. This was a voluntary decision he made to honor the father and to redeem us. The love of Jesus for the father and for us is seen in his humility and is simply beyond comprehension.

Micah 5:2 says Christ's is from of old, from ancient day. His feet had walked up and down the corridors of the universe from eternity past but now they would have to learn to walk again in the Judean dirt. The hands that created all things would grasp the rough carpenter fingers of Joseph, his earthly father, who would supply his daily needs. The eyes who pierced through everything and saw everything in the universe would now have to adjust to the light of a dimly lit stable. The ears that heard everything would have to learn the Aramaic language. The mind that knew everything would now grow in wisdom. Many men in history have tried to be God. It is only in Jesus that we have God who became a man.

Jesus changed his mission.

Before Bethlehem, Jesus was running the world. Who ran the world when Jesus was in the manger? God the Father. Jesus voluntarily gave up that right and substituted his crown for a cross. He was obedient even to the point of death, death in the most excruciating way, death on a cross. Christ's death on the cross was not an accident, it was God the Father's plan to have him die for sin.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; ... Isaiah 53:10 (ESV)

Yes, those who put him to death are still responsible for their sin but it was the Lord's will that he die for our sin. For three hours he suffered at the hand of men and for three hours he suffered under the hand of God and in those three hours were compressed an eternity of hells as Jesus was made sin for us. Personally innocent but legally guilty of all the sins you and I committed this past week.

The only reason you and I can be in heaven is because Christ died for us. He suffered in our place to bring us to God. If you have received Jesus as your savior, when you die, you will be welcomed into heaven *as if you are Jesus* because you are going on the basis of his perfect life. He stands in our place all the way into eternity. That is the good news.

What happened when Jesus completed his mission?

The news gets even better. We move from Christmas to Easter. In Christmas we see Christ in the meat, in Easter we see Christ rose from the dead and ascended back to the Father. Some of you wish Christ hadn't returned back

to the Father. You think that if you saw him now you would finally believe. Let me tell you why Christ is ascended back to the Father. It is because the Father approved of what Jesus did.

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. John 17:4–5 (ESV)

Jesus goes back into heaven and resumes the responsibilities he had before Bethlehem but the Father highly exalts the son for what he accomplished.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9–11 (ESV)

Jesus gets it all back but along with it he gets a company of redeemed people for whom he died. Did the incarnation end when Jesus returned to heaven? No! Once Jesus assumed humanity, that will continue forever. Those of us who have Christ as the king of our lives will see Christ's actual body. A glorified body to be sure, but Jesus will have that forever and all of his responsibilities are back and the Father has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name

How much does God think of Jesus and what he did? God is totally pumped about Jesus. Notice it says in Philippians 2 that when we worship Jesus, God gets glory. That is why Jesus is such a big deal around here. Jesus is God's master plan to save us from what we deserve. God's plan to send Jesus to save us from our sins is God's greatest idea. Jesus' perfect execution of his father's plan is the greatest event of the universe. God wants us to worship Jesus and when we do, the Father gets the glory. Too few churches

understand our worship is all about Jesus. They think he is some kind of salvation accessory like power windows in your car. He is the main event!

Notice this, there is not a single tongue that has ever been created from the tongue of Adam till the last baby born upon this planet that will not acknowledge Jesus as Lord because God will get glory for his son and his son will get glory for what he accomplished.

Krishna will say "Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Buddha will say, "Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Mohammed will say, "Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Christians are people who *willingly* bend their knee and say, "Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Jesus's name is what's important, not mine. Jesus' will for my life is what is best, not mine. Jesus' glory is important, not my own. Christians are people who are all about trusting, worshipping, following and giving glory to Jesus, not themselves. Thank God, Jesus came into human history to live the life I couldn't live. Jesus died the death I deserved to die. He took the punishment for sin I deserved to receive. He gave me the gift of eternal life that I could not otherwise obtain. I am totally thrilled with Jesus. I hope you are. I bow my knee to him willingly.

There are others here who will not bow their knee willingly. Here is the cold truth: everyone will bend their knee to Jesus. Some of you will do it in this life for salvation, others of you will do it in the next life while in damnation. Some of you will do it as a friend of Jesus, others of you will do it as a foe of Jesus.

Every knee will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and confess Jesus is Lord. My hope and prayer is that you do it in this life, that you acknowledge the filth of your sin. You understand that God's wrath against our sin is just and his judgment is real but the love and grace and mercy of Jesus is equally real. God went to incredible lengths to come into human history in the form of meat to die for our sins and save us from the judgment and hell we fully deserve.

Since we're all going to bow our knee to Jesus, it seems wise to repent of your sins now and start worshipping Jesus. To look at what Christ endured to save our butts from eternal wrath and to turn a nose up and walk away, it is like slapping Jesus in the face. So today, I invite you to repent and trust in Jesus. Trust me, God will change your life if you do.

What is God teaching me through the life of Jesus?

Maybe this morning, you have already asked Christ to be your Lord. What difference should any of this make? I think that answer comes from looking at Philippians 2 in its context. Paul is challenging the Philippians and he is challenging us that those who are redeemed should strive to look like their redeemer. He gives us two lessons The first lesson he gives is on humility.

Be Humble - God's way up is down.

The Bible says God is opposed to the proud. Maybe you think you don't need a redeemer. Philippians 2:3 tells us we are to strive to consider others better than ourselves. It is not what I want, it is what God wants, it is what others need. Life isn't about my comfort and anybody worshipping me.

This is really hard, especially if you have been hurt. Let's face it, we are hard wired to take care of number one. If you have been cheated or wronged, it is built into us to figure a way to get even. Any question about it, look at our court systems. It is only when we look at the humility of Jesus that we can begin to get the humility God is calling us to have in perspective. The text says, consider others better than yourself, can we do that today?

Suffer Well - God changed the world by suffering, not by miracles.

Jesus did a lot of miracles, but the world wasn't changed by his miracles. Those he healed and even those he rose from the dead, eventually became sick and died. Jesus didn't change the world through miracles, he changed it through suffering. If we are going to attract people to Jesus, we have to become better at suffering. We have to suffer without complaining. We have to suffer but keep the perspective that this world is not our home.

Too many people think that if they come to Jesus, their problems are over. The truth is, your problems have just begun. Christ is no guarantee you will always have a well paying job. He is no guarantee your spouse will not get sick. He is no guarantee your children will get straight A's in school and play on the varsity squad. He is not a promise you will succeed in everything you do. In fact, he says...

**"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
John 16:33 (NIV)**

It is where we turn in our pain, it is who we trust for the answers, it is how we suffer that will change the world.

Conclusion

There is a story of a man who had a dream. In the dream, he had to carry a cross. The cross was heavy. As he was carrying his cross he came across a man with a saw. He asked him to cut off a portion of the cross. The man with the saw gladly cut off a good chunk. The man put the cross on his back and immediately realized it was much lighter. He could walk much faster and without as much pain. As he continued on his journey, he came to a chasm that was part of the trail. The only way he could see to make it across the chasm was to use his cross as a plank to walk across. Then he remembered, his cross was now too short. It was too short by the exact amount the man with the saw cut off. As he sobbed, he wished he still had his heavier cross. He wished he had carried it all of his journey. Thankfully, it was at that point that he awoke and realized it was all a dream and the heavy cross was right there beside him.

I want to leave you with this thought.

The lighter our cross, the weaker our witness.

As those who are redeemed, in our humility and our suffering, let's look like our redeemer. That is how Jesus changed the world, and that is how he will change the world through us.



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