

**Message Objective:** While Jesus was human in every way, Jesus was also extraordinarily and miraculously God. Jesus’ birth was unprecedented, as it was celebrated by the wise men.

**Main Scriptures:** Micah 5:2 & Isaiah 9:6-7 & Matthew 2:1-12

# Opening

Welcome back to our message series *XMAS*. This series is all about seeing the Christmas event as something that is relevant and real to our lives right now. Christmas is not just something that happened long ago. Christmas happens each year as a way for us to remember what happened when Jesus was born.

Last week, we talked about how Jesus was born of a woman in a stable. He was born human and completely like us in every way possible.

Before we get going on this week’s lesson, let’s have a little fun first.

[Author Note: Have some fun around the Christmas festivities as you get this message series going. Here are some suggestions:

1. Play a Christmas Screen Game – like “Ridiculous Christmas Traditions” from Download Youth Ministry (<http://www.downloadyouthministry.com/shop/holiday-or-seasonal/christmas/ridiculous-christmas-traditions>)

2. Play a Christmas Mixer Game – like “This Way or That Way – Christmas Edition” from Download Youth Ministry (<http://www.downloadyouthministry.com/shop/holiday-or-seasonal/christmas/this-way-or-that-way-christmas-edition>)

3. Use a discussion question, like the one below.]

Right now, I want each of you to turn to two people and share your favorite Christmas song with each other and why it’s your favorite.

Let’s get going with this week’s lesson. Last week, we discovered that Jesus was human in every way possible. This week, we are going to look at another angle of Jesus’ birth that may seem a bit contradictory or impossible, but I want to encourage you that it is totally possible.

In the Christmas event, we realize that Jesus was extraordinarily divine.

**Prophecy about God Coming to Earth**

Just as we saw last week that Jesus’ earthly birth was prophesied long before it happened, so too do I want you to see that Jesus’ divinity was also predicted long before it actually happened.

While the prophecies we looked at last week spoke about how normal Jesus would be, there is something a little different in these scriptures:

*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clansof Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.* **Micah 5:2 NIV**

This prophecy starts out fairly simple and straightforward. It predicts the city that Jesus would be born in, which, as we will see later, actually happened. This baby to be born is far from normalin at least two ways.

First, this child is to be a ruler over the nation of Israel. From the littlest clans of Judah will come a king to rule over the entire nation. This prophecy is pretty important in the plan of things, since it predicts the birth of a king from a particular lineage.

Second, this passage throws something very interesting into the mix: this child’s “origins are from of old, from ancient time.” That’s a bit different, right? This baby to be born has His origin in a time before His birth. I realize that sounds impossibly complicated. Who is the only one who has an origin in this particular way? The only possible answer is God, but this answer is an impossible answer, since it is unprecedented (meaning it has never happened before). The birth of this child would bring God into the world in a way that had not happened before.

Let’s read another very popular Christmas Scripture that predicts the nature of this child in a little bit of a more familiar way.

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor,Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will make this happen!* **Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT**

These verses start normal and echo what we already know about Jesus, that He is a child and a son, but then things get deep. So, “the government” will be on Him, which means it will be built on Him, or it will rest on Him. Then, this Scripture takes an interesting turn by placing some pretty lofty titles on this child being born.

This child, fulfilled in Jesus, is called a counselor, God, Father, and Prince! These are very lofty titles placed on a baby boy that will be born. This Scripture gives one of the clearest proofs that Jesus is fully God, since two of the titles given to Him are God and Father, meaning God the Father. The next clue to His divine nature is found in the idea that His reign will be “for all eternity.”

So, let’s take this prophetic idea that Jesus is going to be fully God and transport into the Christmas event and Jesus’ birth.

# The Visitation of the Wise Men

Last week, we talked about how the visitation of the shepherds demonstrated how Jesus was a regular baby born into humble and completely human circumstances. This week, we are going to look at a visit from another very different group of people who sought to visit the baby Jesus as well.

These groups are called “wise men” and sometimes, “Magi.” What you need to know immediately is that these men came from outside of the people of Israel. These visitors were not like the shepherds who were common Jewish boys. These wise men were probably local rulers or officials from the Far East, from places like India or China even. These were men who were stargazers and astrologers likely. Their arrival and visitation of Jesus was even more unlikely than the shepherds. Let’s read of their visitation.

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: “‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”* **Matthew 2:1-6 ESV**

So immediately, you should hear echoes of Micah and the prophecy of the birth in Bethlehem. These wise men travel to King Herod, who was the king over Israel at the time of Jesus’ birth. The news of the birth of a new king was not happy news for Herod. The wise men came to visit the new king, deliver gifts, and to worship the new king baby.

Did you catch how the wise men knew where to journey to see this royal baby? It is by the direction of a star that these men knew where to find God. God directed a star to lead the way. That’s pretty miraculous and extraordinary. Let’s keep reading.

*Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.* **Matthew 2:7-12 ESV**

These wise men, after having been led by a star from a very far distance away, journey again to Bethlehem to find the baby king. God again directed them by the movement of a starlight to where the baby was. Upon seeing the baby Jesus, these wise men worshipped Jesus and presented extravagant gifts of rare spices and even gold. These were royal gifts that a neighboring kingdom would historically give upon the birth of a new royal baby. Their gift was ordinary only if this baby were born to royalty in a palace.

The wise men knew something that many others did not know: they knew that this baby would one day be a king. They followed the signs God had placed in the sky as a way to say that something very historic and out of the ordinary was happening in the birth of Jesus.

# An Extraordinarily Divine Gift

Without us getting too philosophical and technical, I want us to realize a simple truth and take a step a faith together right now. The truth is Jesus was 100 percent human AND Jesus was 100 percent divine. I know it is not something that I can easily explain to you, but we, as followers of this same Jesus, hold this as faith that in Jesus the fullness of what it was to be human AND the fullness of God dwelled in this single person. I want to invite you back next week as we will talk about how this union of humanity and divinity was possible through Jesus.

Jesus was completely God in every way possible, as well. While Jesus was born as a human, Jesus was “from of old” and the “mighty God.” The birth of this boy was met with extraordinary events like the prophetic connection between Micah/Isaiah and royal visitors from the Far East. It would have been quite the surprise for Mary and Joseph after having been visited by simple shepherds to then entertain visitors of the sort like these Wise Men. While it is true that many did not understand exactly who this baby would become, it is clear as we gaze into this Christmas event that in Jesus the fullness of God was present.

If we take this idea of Jesus being the Son, fully given by God, the Father, we can see how Jesus is God’s perfect gift into the world. God gave this gift to humanity in the form of a Son, a baby, born of Mary just as He prophesied hundreds of years before the birth of this Son. This gift, which was fully God, is God’s perfect gift, since the gift itself is God.

Last week, we talked about how Jesus was completely and fully human. This week, the main point is that Jesus was also fully and extraordinarily divine. If his human birth connected Jesus to the simplicity of what it meant to be human, Jesus’ divine fullness made him extraordinary in a way that no other baby had been before or would ever be again.

# Closing Challenge

Last week, I challenged you to live beyond your selfishness for an entire week. The point of this series called *XMAS* is to help us begin to re-understand not only the history, but the point, of Christmas for our own lives right now. Instead of missing Jesus in Christmas by covering Him up with our cultural traditions, *XMAS* moves us to see Jesus in the way that God wants us to see Him here and now. This Christmas event is way more than a moment of history that we commemorate and celebrate with traditions. God sent Jesus, His Son, into the world, which is why Christmas continues to be relevant in our lives today.

This week, I want to challenge you, in the spirit and tradition of Christmas, to give someone a gift this week. Before you think you understand what I am talking about, let me give you some guidelines.

* Give a gift anonymously (without someone knowing it was you).
* The person cannot be family or someone you are romantically interested in being with.
* The gift must not cost anything.

We are going to talk about this gift in our next small group session, so be sure to complete this challenge before then.

[Author Note: Feel free to tailor this challenge and its deadline to be more appropriate for your group.]

Jesus was God’s ultimate gift to the world. As God’s Son, Jesus was God’s closest and most prized treasure that He could possibly give to the world. In a sense, when we give gifts at Christmas, we are participating in the gift-giving that God first did through the birth of Jesus into the world. When we give gifts, we should give the same way that God gave.