

**Message Objective:** Through the incarnation, Jesus became Immanuel: God with us. This final message describes the most crucial part of the Christmas event by bringing the first two weeks together to show how God is in the flesh through Jesus.

**Main Scriptures:** Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23 & Luke 1:30-33 & John 1:1-5,14

# Opening

Here we are … week 3 of the series *XMAS*. When you and I put an ‘X’ over something, we are crossing it out and saying that it does not apply or that it is no longer relevant for our lives. An ‘X’ over a sign means no.

Remember, the X that we are placing over Christmas is not saying that Christmas does not matter. Rather, we are recognizing that we may have missed the importance and relevance of what Christmas is all about. Christmas is not about trees or lights. Christmas is about Jesus. In fact, I don’t think I could say it any better than Linus did on *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

[Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CojUP5nRidA]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CojUP5nRidA)

Christmas is all about Jesus. The ‘X’ that we place in XMAS reminds us of Jesus, the Christ. Calling it “XMAS” instead of Christmas may give us just enough of a hint and pause to remember that Christmas is about Jesus.

This week, we are going to conclude this series. As we have done each week, let’s have a little fun as we get going.

[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.]

As we get going, I want each of you to turn to two people and share about your favorite Christmas present you ever received and why it was your favorite.

Here’s a quick review to bring you up to speed to where we are in our series *XMAS*. The first week, we looked at the ordinary birth of Jesus and the visitation of the shepherds to discover that Jesus was completely human. Last week, we looked at the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth, including prophecies related to the convergence of God on this miraculous event and the visitation by the wise men, to see how Jesus was also completely divine as the Son of God come to the Earth.

This week, we are going to talk about the miracle of the Incarnation itself to discover how it is possible that Jesus could be 100 percent human and 100 percent divine.

# Born of a Virgin

There is something miraculous that takes place before the actual birth of Jesus that sets up the whole event itself. To get some context, let’s take a look at a prophecy given to Isaiah hundreds of years before the Christmas event itself. Let’s read together …

*Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.* **Isaiah 7:14 NIV**

In this verse, there are two things that are prophesied, which will become miraculous. First, Isaiah prophesies that a virgin will give birth. Without going too far into how this happened, I think it is clear just how impossible it is for someone to have a child who has not yet been with someone sexually. Are we clear about how this is miraculous? Second, we are given another name for this baby, a name have not encountered yet. This title, Immanuel, has a very important meaning for us and is a miracle in itself. Immanuel means “God with us.” You see, the name itself is a prophecy of the miracle that God will be with us through the birth of this baby.

Now that we know the context of the prophecy given hundreds of years before, let’s turn to the fulfillment of this prophesy through the Christmas event itself.

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.* **Matthew 1:18-25 ESV**

Not only does the prophecy of the virgin birth get fulfilled through Mary, the very fact that Joseph stayed with Mary when he had a right under the law to refuse to wed Mary is a miracle in itself. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and reminds him of the prophecy given through Isaiah so long ago. The angel explains how it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the baby is conceived in Mary. In this angelic dream, the angel gives Joseph a title for the baby, Immanuel, and the actual name they are to call the baby, Jesus, which means Savior.

As an angel appeared to Joseph, an angel had also previously appeared to Mary.

*“Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”* **Luke 1:30-33 NLT**

An angel appears to Mary and comforts her, assuring her that God is with her through the pregnancy and the birth, which will take place very soon. I am not sure about you, but the presence of the appearance of these angels is pretty miraculous, as well. A virgin will give birth to a baby that she is not personally responsible for creating, and an angel appears to this young lady and her fiancé, saying that God has made this thing happen.

The sheer circumstances of this event are miraculous. We have a young, unwed woman of the lineage of David, which was a key part of the prophecy, promised to a man, who is also of the lineage of David. This young woman becomes pregnant before the two are even married, which is a problem since it was required that she be pure before marriage.

Her husband decides not to shame her, but to divorce her quietly. Until an angel appears to both of them in separate circumstances to say that the Holy Spirit has conceived this baby inside of Mary for the purpose of fulfilling a couple of other prophecies predicting that God would dwell among His creation.

# God in the Flesh

I told you at the beginning that we were going to talk about the incarnation of Jesus, and I bet you were wondering what I was talking about. To put it simply, The incarnation is miraculous event that made it possible for Jesus to be completely human and divine. Incarnation means “in the flesh.” Flesh is the physical human stuff that makes up our space in the world. God has none of this human stuff. To put it simply, the incarnation is the “enfleshment” of God as a human through the person of Jesus.

The beginning of John’s Gospel puts it in clearer terms. Let’s read it:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* **John 1:1-5,14 ESV**

The Word, also known as Jesus, “became flesh” at the incarnation, which is what we remember through the Christmas event. The incarnation is what creates the reality of Jesus being completely human and completely divine. God, the Father, uses the Holy Spirit to create in Mary, a virgin, the Son of God, who is Jesus. God manifests Himself in the flesh through the miracle of Christmas. God walks among humanity once again through the person of Jesus.

# God With Us

One final important note that we must realize about the Christmas event is that through Jesus, God really becomes “with us.” This name, Immanuel, which means “God with us,” not only symbolizes, but references the reality that God, the One who was once distant from His creation, because of our own sin, now becomes the One who is with us.

God became “with us” not only in the past through the Christmas event, but through His life, ministry, death, and resurrection, this Jesus is “God with us” now and forever. Through the miracle of the incarnation, God is now approachable and available to us.

The full weight of what would happen at Jesus’ death and resurrection would not be possible without this miraculous conjoining of humanity and divinity. Jesus had to be both fully human and fully divine. Without the full humanity of Jesus, His death would not have paid the price for all of our sins. Without the full divinity of Jesus, His death would not have extended God’s love to humanity. God had to be fully present in Jesus so that God could be among those whom He had created.

God with us, Immanuel, is the One whom we celebrate and remember each year at Christmas.

# Closing Challenge

During this series, I have challenged you to not be selfish and instead serve others, putting them before yourselves, and give presents in the same way that God gave the gift of Jesus. As we close this series, the final challenge I want to give you is to start a new Christmas tradition in your own life. This Christmas tradition has to be something different and not like the traditions of the world. Don’t just do this new tradition as something that is meaningless or without purpose. This new tradition will help you remember what Christmas, or XMAS, is really all about.

Christmas is about Jesus.

Here are a couple of ideas for what this new tradition may look like:

* Read the Christmas story in the first couple chapters of Matthew and Luke on Christmas Day, or on the days leading up to Christmas.
* Set up a manger in your house or room and remember the roles that each of the people represented.
* Make a “Chrismon” tree as a family (a Chrismon tree is a tree that is decorated with ornaments all about Jesus and the real Christmas event. An example is here:<https://www.whychristmas.com/customs/chrismons.shtml>).
* Serve others at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or clothes closet.
* Have a “Happy Birthday, Jesus” party.
* Go caroling as a family.

[Leader Note: Add a couple of more relevant examples that are particular to your group and setting, as well.]

Whatever you do, I want to encourage you to take a step in the direction of remembering that Christmas is all about Jesus. Make this Christmas and every Christmas after this year about Jesus as much as possible.