

## Sunday, March 20, 2022 | The Immutable Characteristics of God

John 14:4-11 | "The Incarnate God"

### Announcements:

- VBS Wednesdays July 20<sup>th</sup>-August 10<sup>th</sup> with a church-wide picnic on August 14.
  - Easter Sunday is April 17. There'll be two services, 9:30am and 11:00am. There will be no bible fellowship that morning.
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This series is intended to give you a crash course into, exactly, God is. After all, it's pretty difficult to follow someone if you don't know who they are. During the first week, we spoke about how God does not change. He is immutable. And this attribute is the nail upon which all the others hang. Without his immutability, the rest of God's characteristics would be meaningless. Thus, **God's immutability means we have everlasting stability.**

In the second week, we spoke about God's "allness." There is no knowledge my God does not already know. There is no place where my God will not be found. And there is nothing my God cannot do. **God's "allness"—omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence—means that He is all we'll ever need.**

In the third week, we tried to wrap our heads around the idea of God's timelessness. When we say that God is "eternal," we mean that he is without beginning or end. He was before the "befores." And, just as he begins beginnings, the Almighty ends endings. This is what we mean when we say we know who holds tomorrow. As vast as existence may seem, it is but a speck in the palm of our timeless God. Therefore, if time's days are numbered, so, too, are the days of our life numbered. **God's timelessness means we should not waste the time given to us.**

Last week we talked about God's communicable attributes, which are how he communicates to us (i.e., knowledge, grace, joy, anger, patience, sadness, righteousness, etc.). We only had time to address the topic of God's love, but the point was that while our feelings have validity, they are **not** the standard. Just because we feel that something is right doesn't mean that they're right. Only when we compare ourselves to the tuning fork of God's word will we know if our personalities are in harmony with God's relational attributes. **God's relational—communicable—attributes give us the standards by which our own personalities are judged.**

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Today, we will unpack what it means when we say that God is incarnate. And, as I've said for the past four weeks, let me say again, like all of the other attributes, the incarnation defies

reason. It simply cannot be explained; it must only be believed. The great mystery of the Gospels is that, somehow, without compromising his nature, God became man. This is who Jesus is.

#### Definition of the **incarnation**:

From the Latin, "incarno," which is itself the combination of prefix *in-* ("**in**") with the noun *-caro* ("**flesh**"), the term "**incarnation**" refers to the "**in-flesh-ment**" of God (cf. Jn. 1:14). The incarnate God is his self-disclosure to us in the person of his Son. Simply put, Jesus Christ was 100% man and 100% God 100% of the time.

Odds are you know this already. For instance, when we sing that ol' Christmas carol, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* and we say of Jesus, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see / Hail, the incarnate deity / Pleased as Man with men to dwell / Jesus, our Emmanuel," we're saying that if we want to see God, we **must** look to Jesus. Jesus is God "veiled" by humanity's flesh. And while it defies all reason to say this, the Bible tells us that just as God is God, our Lord Jesus Christ is the "incarnate deity." God did not cease to be God. And Jesus did not become God in Bethlehem on Christmas day. God has always been and so, too, has Jesus.

To talk about God's attributes, as we've done in this series, we're treading ground we cannot fully understand. It's there. We can read it. We can believe it. We can put our feet on it. We can feel that it's solid. But we can no more understand it than fully explain our own universe. **And God knows this.** This is part of the reason why he sent Jesus. The Lord wanted us to know him and be fully known by him. We can talk for weeks about the immutable characteristics of God and never exhaust the study. There's not enough time in the world for us to fully know God, with one exception: **only through knowing Christ is God fully known.**

Even after we get our glorified sinless bodies and we're living for all eternity, basking in the perfect light of our heavenly Father, the only **actual being** we will be able to see is **Jesus**. We cannot and will not ever see God because, as the Scriptures tell us, once we've seen the Son of God, we will have seen God Himself.

#### **READ:** John 14:4-11 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup>And you know the way to where I am going." <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.<sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

### SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

While studying God's attributes can be fruitful, one that does not draw you, ultimately, to Jesus becomes fruitless. Because, as I said in my introduction, only through knowing Christ is God fully known.

Now, you might be thinking, can God ever be fully known? No. Of course not. If we cannot fully "know" a friend, spouse, or even ourselves, we certainly cannot know everything there is to know about God. But just because we cannot know God fully in the intellectual sense of that word does not mean we cannot know God fully in the relational sense. To know God does not mean memorizing all the various aspects of his character. That's impossible. Instead, honestly knowing God is to have a personal relationship with him through his Son, Jesus Christ. And God's incarnation means that as you grow in your relationship with Christ, you grow in your knowledge of God.

Interestingly, theological intellectual/philosopher/sage Kenzie Smith helped me craft this week's takeaway. Admittedly, Joe helped a little too. But only a little. As is my habit, I like to engage people I respect to help me with my messages from time to time. So, after spouting off a few texts to Joe on Friday where I gave him a few versions of this week's application, he calls me and tells me that Kenzie was in the car with him and that she's fixed the wording for my conclusion. And, I gotta say, Kenzie is right. Doctrine and theology have their place, but they must never take the place of a living/breathing/growing relationship with Jesus Christ. I can see now that whatever good preaching Joe has done has really just been Kenzie speaking through her dad. What's Joe going to do now that she's at college?

Anyways...the point is this:

### SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

God's incarnation means that as you grow in your relationship with Christ, you grow in your knowledge of God.

**Example:** Emory and I celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary last year. Before she and I got married, though, we had dated for nearly 4 years. This means that when we celebrate our 11<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this year, we will have been together in some form for at least 15 years. And, let me just say, you really get to know someone in 15 years. And a big part of that familiarity comes from shared experience.

For instance, we've moved twice out of state for jobs in that time. We lost loved ones such as my mother, an unborn child, and now, most recently, my grandfather. But we were also blessed with two beautiful children. Emory is an avid reader in her own right, but we've read numerous series together, of which *Harry Potter* is our favorite. And while we don't always agree on what to watch on TV, we both love the Lord more than we do each other.

Whether you've been around someone for a year, 15 years, or 50 years, your understanding of that person grows the longer you're around them. And in a way, this is similar to our walk with God. However, the difference is that instead of getting to know one person, God, you're getting to know two, God and Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The longer you walk through life with Jesus, the better you will come to know God. Get closer to Jesus, and you will come to understand God better. The greatest doctrines class is not found in some college or seminary, but in devoting yourself daily to prayer. The best theological study is not found in some commentary but in opening the Scriptures and allowing them to speak for themselves. In this way, you will come to know Christ personally. And to know Christ personally is to know God as thoroughly as he can be known.

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<sup>1</sup> You're also getting to know the Holy Spirit, too. So, technically speaking, that's one relationship with one being with three distinct persons (i.e., the Triune God). But that is a sermon for another day. The starting point is Jesus Christ.

## Video Description

The Immutable Characteristics of God | Week 5 | “The Incarnate God”

TEXT: John 14:4-11

The incarnate God is his self-disclosure to us in the person of his Son. Simply put, Jesus Christ was 100% man and 100% God 100% of the time. And, odds are, you know this already. For instance, when we sing that ol' Christmas carol, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* and we say of Jesus, “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see / Hail, the incarnate deity / Pleased as Man with men to dwell / Jesus, our Emmanuel,” we’re saying that if we want to see God, we **must** look to Jesus. Jesus is God “veiled” by humanity’s flesh. And while it defies all reason to say this, the Bible tells us that just as God is God, our Lord Jesus Christ is the “incarnate deity” (cf. Jn. 1:14). God did not cease to be God. And Jesus did not become God in Bethlehem on Christmas day. God has always been and so, too, has Jesus.

But why bring up the topic of God's incarnation now? We've been studying God's attributes for over a month. And while this sort of investigation can be fruitful, a study that does not ultimately draw you to Jesus becomes fruitless. To know God does not mean memorizing all the various aspects of his character. Doctrine and theology have their place, but they must never take the place of a living/breathing/growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Get closer to the Son of God, and you will come to understand his Father better. And, as you grow in your relationship with Christ, you grow in your knowledge of God.

Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: