

# His Promised Presence

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[ 0 : 00 ] this theme in all of these different specials about the true meaning of Christmas. And of course, I think that the highlight, the top of all of these is the Charlie Brown Christmas special, right? Where Charlie Brown all the time is trying to figure out what is the meaning of Christmas. And at the end, Linus reads from the Gospel of Luke and showing us the real answer to that question, just like we were just talking about.

The real answer for the question, what is Christmas all about, is Christmas is about Jesus coming to earth. A joy to the world, the Lord has come, right? But that leads us to another question.

Why did Jesus come? And I think our reflexive answer is, well, Jesus came, he was born to go to the cross and to die and to pay for our sin. Now, I want to be careful how I say this.

And I want you to listen very closely because if you don't, you might hear me saying something that I'm not saying. But I think that that answer, at least in part, is wrong. It has an element of truth in it.

[ 0 : 59 ] But if we boil down the whole purpose of Christmas to just Jesus going to the cross, we miss the depth of what is going on. Now, let me give you an illustration before you kick me off the stage.

Imagine I want to bless my wife. And she's the primary cook in our family for good reason. But I've learned a few meals to prepare to give her a night off.

And let's say that I decided I wanted to go all out. I found someone to babysit the kids. I arranged babysitting. I shipped them off to someone else's house. And I went and I went shopping. And I looked for the highest quality ingredients.

I thought of her favorite meal. And I went and I searched out how to prepare it. And I got all the best ingredients for it. And then I went into the kitchen. I cooked them all down. And, of course, for me, it would take hours more than it would take her to make a delicious meal.

And I take out her china. And I set up the table beautifully. And I light the candles. And then when she comes, I go over and I pull out her chair. And I sit her down. And I go back to the kitchen.

[ 1 : 57 ] And I dish up this beautiful meal. It's all prepared. And I sit it down in front of her. And I say, well, it's the thought that counts. And I take out the plate. And I throw it in the garbage. And I go off.

Would I do that? No. No. Of course, I wouldn't do that. Because the point of the cooking, it's important. You need to, in order to sit down with a nice meal, you need to do the cooking.

You cannot have one without the other. But the point isn't just the preparing of the meal. The point is the eating together. The point is this whole event that we do together.

It's not just that the thought counts. It's that there's something that the action of the cooking leads to, that meal together. And similarly, Jesus' work on the cross is crucial.

His payment for sin is essential. But it does not, in itself, equate everything that Jesus came to the earth to do. It does not, just the cross does not equal everything that Jesus came on earth to do.

[ 2 : 59 ] It doesn't, by itself, explain the reason why we celebrate Christmas. Jesus was not born solely for the cross. If he was, why was he born as a baby at all? Why not just appear and die and leave?

If all he needed was the cross, why didn't he just appear and die and leave? So what is Christmas about? Well, the first clue is how Christmas is talked about in the Christmas narratives, particularly in the book of Matthew.

And if you read through the Christmas narrative in Matthew, you'll always realize that Matthew, when he tells the story, is pointing back to, he's always saying things like, this happened in order to fill what the prophets had spoken.

In other words, Jesus' story is not, the birth of Jesus is not the beginning of a story. It's a new chapter in a story that's been going on for a while.

It's a new chapter in an old story. It's the continuation of something that began long before. In fact, the coming of Jesus is the fulfillment of a promise. And we've spent, actually, the last several months going through aspects of that promise as we walk through the book of Exodus.

[ 4 : 07 ] And it's this promise that drives the entire narrative of the Old Testament. And that promise is that God will be with his people. We've sang it in several songs. Emmanuel, that name literally means God will be with us.

God with us. And Dave talked about that last week as he finished and summarized the book of Exodus. And I just want to trace that story a little bit. Let's trace that promise a little bit. Let's go back all the way to the beginning of the scriptures. What do we see in the beginning? We see that God makes humanity. He makes humanity in his image. We could spend a whole series of sermons talking about what does it mean to be made in God's image.

But what is definitely clear is that we're designed to reflect him. When you make something that's an image of something, it's designed to look like that. Now, that doesn't mean that we physically look like God, but how we behave, how we look, that we reflect what God is like.

There's something in us that is built around God. There's something at our core that's defined by who God is.

[ 5 : 13 ] So who God is shapes us because we're made in his image. And God gives humanity a role too, doesn't he? Adam and Eve were told to tend to the garden. They were told to be fruitful and to multiply.

They were told to tend the garden and rule over it. So who is the rightful ruler of the garden? It was God. God created it. God was the rightful ruler of the garden. But he ceded part of that responsibility and that authority to Adam and Eve.

They were to rule the garden underneath him. So he gave them a part of his mission. They were to take the, God enlists them to rule under him and take the raw resources that God created and to bring fruitfulness out of them, to bring goodness out of what God had created.

And God doesn't just give that role to Adam and Eve and then take off. We learn later that he would walk among them in the coolness of the garden. So what we see here is that they have God, humanity has God's image.

They have a part in his mission and then they also have his presence. We also read, you know, in chapter 3 of Genesis that that doesn't last, that doesn't stay because what happens?

[ 6 : 24 ] Sin happens. Adam and Eve take the role and the authority that God has given them and instead of bringing good things out of the garden, they act in a way that is separate from God. They separate themselves from how he ordered creation to operate, to run and to thrive.

And they separate themselves from God. And now this tragic break between humanity and God comes into existence. But even in that tragedy, there's a promise of restitution, that God will make things right again and he will restore that unity.

And if we fast forward a few chapters in Genesis, we're introduced to a man named Abraham. And Abraham is told that that promise of reconciliation between God and man, that promise of God being with his people again will happen through Abraham's family.

And the narrative of Genesis then follows Abraham's family as it grows and grows and grows. And then at the beginning of Exodus, we found out that it's grown so much that it's an entire nation. Well, it would be if they had freedom.

Because now they're large in number, but they're enslaved in Egypt. And so the story of Exodus brings Israel out of Egypt and God adopts them as his people.

[ 7 : 36 ] And he makes a covenant, a promise with them. God rescues them and he makes this audacious promise to them that he will be their God and they will be his people.

And then he gives them laws and they will show the whole world what he is like. We've spent the last, like I said, several months talking about this. And then the coup de grace of that promise of God is that he will dwell with them.

And he gives these instructions that while they live in tents in the wilderness, they are to make a tent for him to dwell in. And God will be in the camp among his people. And they build this tent, the tabernacle.

And we've talked extensively about this, this elaborate system of sacrifices and offerings to bridge the gap between God and man. And there's barriers for Israel as they go to be in the presence of God.

There's laws and limits of how God can dwell with his people. And he dwells inside the tabernacle in a room within a room within a tent. And there's laws of how they can go and they can interact with him.

[ 8 : 36 ] But he's there. But Israel learns that this presence of God is just a shadow of what the promise is supposed to be. They can't uphold the law. They try and they continually fail to live according to how God is asking them to live.

They can't reflect God. And they long for the fullness of the promise that God had made that he will dwell with his people. And they long for this promise to be fulfilled. That longing carries through the entire Old Testament.

And we read the prophets and there's this promise of the one to come and a longing for him. They long for when God will be with them like he was.

They long for that relationship between humanity and God to be designed, that humanity was designed for to be restored. And that's the mood in one of my favorite Christmas carols.

It's a mood in the song we just sang a little bit. But it's a mood in one of my favorite Christmas carols, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Do you know that song? It's very different, I think, than other Christmas carols. Because other Christmas carols, they're very happy and joyful.

[ 9 : 38 ] But this one, it has this element of hope and yet it's also haunting, almost mournful, isn't it?

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. It's hopeful, but it's somber. It certainly isn't that joy to the world and there is no glorias that the kids like to sing.

It's almost a lament. Why? Because it's a song that expresses this longing of God's people for God to be with them again.

It expresses a longing of the restoration of God's people to God in everything that that means. And it's a longing that is fulfilled in Jesus. So this morning, I want to dig into that a little bit by looking in John chapter 1.

I invite you to turn there. And we're going to, we read the whole passage before. We're just going to focus in on one verse. And we're going to dig into what I think is probably one of the most pregnant, the most full verses in the entirety of the scripture.

[ 10 : 42 ] So we're not even going to be able to come close to unpacking it all. We're actually just going to look at three words in it this morning. But I'll read John 1, John chapter 1, verse 14.

We'll read that together and then we'll dig into it. Let's pray before we read the scriptures. Father, in the busyness of our lives, we often lose sight of what is going on around us and what you are doing. And we ask that as we look into your word this morning, that you open our eyes to see the fullness of what you have accomplished on our behalf.

That we see you with unveiled faces so that we can be drawn to you and drawn to your glory as we understand who you are and who your son is and what his coming has done for us.

We pray this in your name. Amen. John 1, 14. The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

[ 11 : 58 ] And we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. The first word that we want to look at here is the word that we translate word.

Some of you might know that the Greek word that we translate into word, the word is logos. Have you guys heard of that word before? So in this whole passage, when John's talking about the word, even in verse 1 when he says, in the beginning was the word, that's the word logos.

So what does it mean that Jesus is the word? If you've read this passage, you know that John is talking about Jesus. He's saying Jesus is the word. So what does it mean that Jesus is the word, the logos? Well, first of all, it means that it shows us that Jesus is the clear revelation of God.

Okay? We see God revealed all around us. We see him revealed in creation. The creation is his handiwork. We can see aspects of God's nature and his character. In creation, we see God revealed throughout history.

We can see how he operates and we can learn about God from those ways. But words are a much clearer revelation. They show much clearer what somebody is like and what they want.

[ 13 : 06 ] Maybe you're feeling this. Maybe you're almost done your Christmas shopping, but there's one person on your list that you keep skipping over because you have no idea what to get them.

Right? And you look at their lives. You're like, hey, what do they like? What would give them joy? What can I give them? And you can't figure it out based on looking at them. You know what you

really need is you need them to tell you.

Right? You need them to tell you what they would like for Christmas. My wife does this for me all the time. She tells me what to buy. I hate it. I can say that because she's in the nursery with our daughters. I hate it because I want to come up with a gift on my own.

Then I feel like I've accomplished it instead of just, you know, giving her exactly what she said. But the problem is, is that after almost a decade of bad gift giving, I finally decided that what I need to do is I need to listen to the clear revelation from her of what she wants.

I need to listen to her words when she says, I would like this to go ahead and to get that. Okay? These are words. They do a much better job of telling us what someone is like and what they would like, for example, for Christmas or who they are.

[14:09] And so Jesus is the word. He isn't just some kind of demonstration of God, though he did demonstrate God, but he is the word of God, meaning that he's the clear revelation of who God is.

We can see who God is much more clearly in him than we can in creation or in history. Okay?

That's part of what John is saying here by calling Jesus the word.

Even later on, he says, no one has seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, he has made them known. So Jesus makes God known because he is the word of God, the clear revelation of God.

But this word *logos* that John uses goes even deeper. John could have used other words to mean the clear revelation, but he uses this word *logos*. And John's readers would have immediately heard this word and knew what he was talking about.

You know, that word *logos*. You hear how similar it is to the English word *logic*? It's because we get our English word *logic* from that Greek word *logos*. And the reason why we made the word *logic* like that is because it stems from this conversation that was happening in the Greek speaking world that John was writing into, you know, the centuries before Jesus was born and before John wrote this down.

[15:22] And what that conversation was, was that people were thinking about, well, what is humanity? What is our purpose? What is the reason behind the world? How should we think about what it is that we're supposed to be doing here?

And the prevailing thought was that there was some kind of purpose in the world. There's some sort of underlying principle that once you understood it, life would make sense.

There was something that unified all of life together. And once you understood that, then you could figure out what you were supposed to do, what humanity was about, what everything was about. It kind of was this hidden mystery that connected everything together so that it made sense.

And that word, that underlying principle was given the name *logos*. It was the *logos*, the logic behind the universe, the reason behind the universe.

And the idea was that if you could figure out this purpose, this secret formula of life, this *logos*, then you would be able to really live. Then you would understand what life was really about. And John steps into this conversation and he says, yeah, you're part right.

[16:25] There is a reason behind the universe. There is some sort of purpose to life. There is order to everything around us. There is meaning, but it isn't an underlying principle. It's a person.

It isn't some secret. It's a man. You see how revolutionary this is? John says, do you want to know what life is about? Look to Jesus.

Do you want to see what human life is supposed to be? Look to Jesus. This is actually an idea that the Apostle Paul picks up on when talking about the nature of who Jesus is.

And he says this in Colossians chapter 1, talking about Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him, all things were created, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers, rulers or authorities.

All things were created by him and for him. All things were created by him. So Jesus is the source of all creation. And all things were created for him.

[17:33] He's the purpose of all creation. And Jesus phrases this in a little bit of a different way. You know what the most common words out of the mouth of Jesus that are recorded by the gospel writers.

Do you know what those words are? The words that the gospel writers record most often from Jesus. Other than like at or the. The kingdom of heaven.

Or the kingdom of God, depending on which gospel writer you're reading. The kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. Well, what is that? Again, we could spend a whole series of sermons on the kingdom of heaven. The short form is that Jesus is describing and modeling what humanity is supposed to be like.

A kingdom is where people do the will of a king. And Jesus is saying, I'm living out and I'm talking about and I'm teaching and I'm modeling what life is supposed to be lived out when you are underneath the king.

The kingdom of heaven. And how we should act and live according to our king. Who isn't just our ruler, but he's our creator. And Jesus is living out. He's a living case study of the will of the king.

[18:39] So again, a few months ago we looked at the law and the ten commandments. Well, Jesus shows us what it looks like to live those out. Not just as laws to restrict us, but as expression of how humanity was designed to work best.

And this is how Jesus lived. He showed us this is how God has made us to be and to live. And he shows that to us.

And he makes it clear how God has made us. You see, if Jesus just came to die on the cross, if going back to my earlier illustration, he just came to cook the meal but not to eat with us, then none of this matters.

All that matters is that he died to forgive our sin, past, present, and future, so that we can just go and live. But he does more than that in that he shows us how we should live.

Not just should in that kind of law type of way, but should as in this is what is best for us. And he demonstrates how we are created to be. He came to show us the logic, the purpose, the reason behind life.

[19:44] He came to show us the Father in whose image we're made. And that image shows us how we live. In a lot of ways, Jesus demonstrated an upside-down kingdom, right?

A lot of the things he taught were sort of counterintuitive. The last shall be first. The weak are made strong. None of this makes sense unless we see it in Jesus. We see how Jesus put it into practice and how he lived it out and how he demonstrated the meaning behind creation.

Not just to save us from sin, but to save us to the kingdom. Do you know what I mean? Sometimes we get so focused on what we're saved from that we forget why we are saved.

Why are we liberated? We focus so much on the meal that we don't actually partake of it. We don't actually eat it. What does it mean to eat the meal that Jesus gave us?

What does it mean to eat that meal of freedom from sin that Jesus gave us? I hope I'm not confusing you with the metaphors too much. That freedom from sin that Jesus won on the cross, what does it mean to live out that? It means we reflect the values of the kingdom that Jesus taught and demonstrated.

[20:52] It means we live like him and become the very image of the father. The very image of who we were created to be as humanity. Now if you've lived it all, you realize that we fall short of that a lot.

He was the divine son of God and we're just people. Well if you read through the gospels, everything Jesus did, he did not on the power of his own divinity, but on the power of the spirit. The same spirit that he gives us.

But still, it's true. We live in a fallen world and we're fallen people and we experience that daily. And that brings us to the second word that I want to dig into. This word flesh. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

What does that mean? What are the implications of Jesus becoming flesh? What does it even mean for Jesus to become flesh? Well it means that he became human with all of the limitations that that means.

It doesn't mean he sinned, but it means he took on the limitations of humanity. That he became tired and sick, that he was weary, that he was sad. You know for many that John was writing to, this idea of God becoming flesh was deeply controversial.

[22:00] For them, there were spiritual things and there were fleshly things. And there was a great divide between them. They were opposites. And the point of life was to crawl out of your fleshly shell and to seek after just the spiritual things.

To leave behind everything that was fleshly. And so there was a whole movement of asceticism that looked to deny pleasure in thinking that in denying the things of the material world, we would be

able to move ourselves into the spiritual world.

And this idea of a spiritual being, of God himself coming and taking flesh was revolting to them. It broke all of their categories of the point of life being to separate these two. And what it shows us is it shows us that the material world, although it was corrupt and sinful, that it was not only that. Although it was fallen, it was designed to be good. And Jesus' incarnation, which literally means his taking on flesh, his enfleshiness, that's not a word.

[ 23 : 10 ] I don't know. His incarnation showed us that there isn't a great divide between the material and the spiritual. After all, God created the material world.

He created it to be good. Now there's much more we could say about the implications of that, but like I said, this is a very pregnant passage. We need to move on to another idea, another thing that happens when we look at Jesus becoming flesh.

It points us to something else. And what it points us to is the fact that Jesus suffered with us. Though he had no sin, he entered into a world that was sinful. And he felt the effects of that, not just on the cross, but throughout his life.

One of my favorite movies, not really a Christmas movie, not at all a Christmas movie, is *The Princess Bride*. And I love it because it's so eminently quotable.

And one of the great quotes from that is, at one point the hero says, Life is pain, highness. Anyone who tells you anything else is selling something. It's probably a bit of a sarcastic look on life, but there's a certain amount of truth in it that you can't go through life without pain.

[ 24 : 12 ] If you live on earth, you're going to experience pain. And you know what? Sometimes this holiday season, although it's great and joyous, somehow that joy helps us to see and it puts in front of our face how painful life is.

And maybe you've lost a loved one this year, and this is your first holiday not celebrating with them in present. And we feel the pain of life.

But because the word was made flesh, he can empathize with us. He knows pain. Maybe you were betrayed. You know, a close friend turns against you, but we look and Jesus' friend was paid money to give him up.

Jesus' lost loved ones. He wept. When he began to teach, his family thought he was crazy, and they tried to kidnap him and take him away so they wouldn't embarrass him.

Even his closest disciples didn't understand what in the world he was saying most of the time, even though he was pouring out his life to them. He was adored, and then he was rejected. He was falsely accused.

[ 25 : 22 ] He was spat upon. He was mocked. He was beaten. He was crucified. And on the cross, the father had to turn his face away from his son as the sin of the world was put upon his shoulders.

Jesus understands pain. Maybe you listen to this, and inside you think, but I went to God. I've prayed for him to rescue me, and he didn't.

This year was about me praying to God, God, rescue me from this pain, and he didn't. I feel like God abandoned me. You don't understand.

Jesus was one with the father, and yet in Gethsemane, he prayed, Father, if there's any way that this cup can go, be passed from me. If there's any way that you can accomplish your plan without me having to suffer this agony, please do it.

And he was turned down. See, Christmas means that when you're struggling, when you have problems, when you feel like God isn't listening, and in fact that God is not answering your prayers, don't you realize that Jesus, the wonderful counselor, has been there?

[ 26 : 32 ] That he's walked through that. He was made flesh. He voluntarily took upon himself pain and suffering. And Christmas means we can't just rail at God. We can't just say, God, why are you allowing the suffering?

Because he's experienced it himself. He even knows what it means, what it feels like to be abandoned by God. Have you thought about that?

Christmas means that we must frame our struggles in the knowledge that the word became flesh. That we can go to him in anything.

Because he knows, because he understands, because he was made flesh, because he's walked here. He's been there. Do we trust him like that? You know, we live in a fallen world, and sometimes it's hard to look around, or even to look at our own lives and to see the suffering and believe in a good God.

Because sin has ravaged this world. But you know what helps? It helps to remember that the author of the universe, the purpose of life, stepped into that brokenness as well.

[ 27 : 42 ] A lot of times we approach a problem or a suffering, and we say, okay, there's got to be a meaning behind it. There's got to be a reason behind it. And there might be. And we might see it later, or we might never see it.

But we continue to walk through it, because we know that in it, we have a comforter. Who isn't just out there, but he's walked it too.

And that what we have experienced, that we are experienced, Jesus has experienced too. Let's deal with the third and final word. Dwelt.

Dwelt. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is an interesting one. Obviously it means that Jesus was with his people.

That's why we started looking at this verse in the first place, this idea of Emmanuel, God with us.

But if you're reading this in Greek, you see something that isn't readily apparent in the English. It's astounding, because John the writer could have chosen a whole host of words, very common words for reside, live, or dwell.

[ 28 : 46 ] The word became flesh and lived among us, dwelt among us, resided among us. Any of these sorts of words, but he didn't choose them. Instead, what it literally says is, the word became flesh and tabernacled among us.

John's deliberately taking the Greek word, that the Greek translation of the Old Testament used to translate the word tabernacle, that we were looking at, this tabernacle of the law of Moses.

And it deliberately uses that word to point to Jesus and make a line between him and the tabernacle that was set up under Moses while Israel was in the desert, in the wilderness.

And just to make it absolutely clear, John ends the verse by saying, the word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and now we beheld his glory. We saw his glory. He's making us to remember this fact that, that Moses went up on the mountain wanting to see the full glory of God, and God said, no, you can't see my glory.

You can't see my face. Otherwise, it'll kill you. Moses was saying, I want to know you. I want to see you, Father.

[ 29 : 53 ] I want to know that intimacy. I want to have that power. I want to have that connection with you. And God says, you can't look at my face because it'll kill you. And so that's a story when Moses put into the rock and God passes by and Moses just sees the back of God.

But God made that promise that to build the tabernacle, a tent, a dwelling place for God. And in there, there'll be sacrifices and priests, but God would dwell in the holy of holies, in that room behind the veil, within the holy place, because God's glory had to be concealed, because we couldn't look at it.

Humanity couldn't look at it directly. They couldn't know it. They couldn't touch it. So it had to be concealed in the tabernacle. And that's exactly the opposite of what we're being told here. We talked about at great length this tabernacle.

Do you remember how the tabernacle was a whole system about moving inward? So you had the outer court where people could go in, and they would make sacrifices. And then the priests could move into the holy place.

And the high priest, once a year, could move into the holy of holies after this elaborate system of purification. And people had to be purified to move closer and closer to the presence of God. But Jesus is doing the opposite.

[ 31 : 06 ] He's moving closer and closer outward. We had to work to move in, and he is doing work to move out to us. He's bringing the glory out from inside this concealed place, out directly to be with his people.

The holy of holies bid the priests to make themselves pure to enter by moving in, but Jesus reversed that, and he moved out. He made himself accessible to us. But in order to do that, he made himself vulnerable.

Tim Keller gives us a little imaginary dialogue between a Christian in the earliest days of the church and a pagan neighbor to kind of get this point across. He says, okay, let's get in our time travel machine, and let's go back and imagine a Christian in the earliest days of the church talking to a pagan neighbor.

And the pagan neighbor says, oh, I hear you're a Christian. Great, a new religion. Tell me, where is your temple? What would the Christians say? Well, we don't have any tabernacles or temples because Jesus is our tabernacle.

Jesus is our temple. He came and he dwelt among us. Jesus, oh, says the pagan neighbor. He's getting a little confused. Well, where do your priests go and do their priestly stuff?

[ 32 : 22 ] The Christian says, well, I'm sorry, we don't have any priests. Jesus is our priest. What? Says the neighbor. But where do they do their sacrifice? You know, you have to carry the favor of the gods.

You have to do all these things to get their favors so them to accept you. You have to do these rituals and these observances. Where do, how do you do that? Where do you follow the rules and the regulations of the sacrifices?

Where do you do all that? The Christian says, well, we don't do sacrifices anymore because Jesus is our sacrifice. Finally, the neighbor would say, what kind of religion is this? There's no religion at all.

See, all the other religions, they say, you have to do stuff to move in and then you'll be accepted. And Christianity says the opposite. It says that Jesus has made sacrifice to move out and we do all these things.

Sorry, we don't have to do all these things to be accepted. We're accepted and then so we live according to the way that Jesus lived. The religions say, live this way and you'll be accepted. And the Christians say, no, you're accepted because what Jesus Christ has done and now you will live this way.

[ 33 : 29 ] It's exactly the opposite. All the stuff of religion is gone because Jesus is the tabernacle. He's made himself the end of tabernacles, the end of temples, the end of sacrifices and all that.

He's the end of it. Christmas means the end of religion as we know it. We don't get religion, we get a person. That's the point. But how?

How does Jesus do that? He closes the gap. When we were looking at Exodus, we were constantly running into this idea of there being a gap, a gap between God who is pure and holy and a people who aren't.

And something has to close the gap. There has to be atonement. There has to be covering. There has to be something that closes that gap. We couldn't just go into God's presence.

And the tabernacle was pointing us to that gap because of the sacrifices and the priests. Now when it says here in John that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, the tabernacle is the place of the sacrifice.

[ 34 : 25 ] So here's what we're being told. We're being told, yes, that Jesus did come to earth to be vulnerable. Why? So that he could be killable. Why? So that he could pay the price and could close the gap.

That's why the reason for Christmas is the glory of God become a baby. In the Old Testament, you remember what the glory of God is?

It's the smoking mountains. It's the pillar of fire. It's the consuming fire. But we're being told at Christmas that the immeasurable glory of God is wrapped up in a baby.

Because a baby is accessible. A baby is safe. A baby is embraceable. But a baby is also vulnerable. And what that means is that Jesus has died on the cross and paid the debt and closed the gap.

God came into history so now that the glory of God can come right into our lives. There's a reason for that sacrifice. It's so that the glory of God can come right into our lives.

[ 35 : 26 ] That life transforming glory of God can come into you. That's what Christmas means. That the word became flesh and tabernacled among us so that we are able to behold.

We're able to look at glory that Moses wasn't able to see. Jesus didn't just close that gap so that we are freed from sin. But he closed that gap so that we could be transformed.

That we could be drawn to him as the word, as the logos, as the purpose behind the universe. So we could see in him what humanity was supposed to be. And he humbled himself.

He became flesh so that he could become our counselor. So he can empathize with our suffering. And he came to restore his presence to us. To dwell, to tabernacle among us.

This is what Israel longed for. This is what those songs are about. Emmanuel, God with us. And as we reflect on this truth, it should drive us to treasure God for what he has done for us.

[ 36 : 30 ] And as we treasure him, we dig into what it means that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. It should transform us as we see clearer and clearer who Jesus was. As we see that purpose and that reason that he demonstrated and talked about.

And as we're transformed, we realize in the many ways that we still don't reflect him. And we long for him to finish the good work that he's done in us. Our longing for his presence leads to us seeing his presence and being transformed.

That treasuring and transformation leads us to changing. And that changing leads us to longing for him to complete that work. Let's pray. Let's pray.