



## **The Mega Christmas Message**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, how Christmassy does this look up here, huh? We got trees, we got lights. There's garland. You know, you got people in your neighborhood with stuff out, inflatable snowmen. And there's reindeer and sleigh and eggnog and portly men in red fuzzy suits. There are all kinds of stuff that I think if you were to be transported from the first century to the 21st century, you'd say, what are you guys doing? Right? I mean, you could be a preacher in the first century, "Like what? This is about Christ? What are you talking about?"

Now, in saying that I'm not trying to rain on your, you know, modern accouterments of the festivities parade. I mean, I'm all for that because most of them you can draw a line back to some doctrinal truth. And there's some symbolism in that. I mean, Rudolph notwithstanding, I suppose. But there are exceptions. But the idea of us having all of this stuff around Christmas, you know, is fine, I suppose as long as you, of all people, a Christian, if you claim to be a follower of Christ, you know exactly what this is about. You should know precisely what this is about. I mean, you ought to be a pro at knowing what Christmas is all about. And if said, what's Christmas all about? And you just rattle off some line, "it's about the birth of Jesus," right? You ought to know more than that, right? You ought to know more.

What you need to solve the problem, perhaps, of shoring up your understanding so that you can clearly explain Christmas not only to yourself but to anyone else, you know, who asks you why you're stringing lights up on your house. Listen, you ought to be able to be an expert at it and what you need is a mega message. And I don't mean my sermon, although when you saw that bulletin, I wonder what you thought. You said mega Christmas, man. You may have looked at the worksheets and said there are six points, this is a mega message. It's going to be too long. You should have skipped Sunday at Compass Bible Church. Listen, it's not a mega Christmas message meaning my sermon. That was not trying to be a descriptive of my sermon. It's obviously a descriptive, well not obviously, I'm trying to make it obvious now to you. It's a descriptive about THE Christmas message, right? There is a message associated with Christmas that clearly we ought to understand and it's big.

Which, by the way, the reason I chose the word mega is because the passage that's going to help us leave the parking lot today with a more shored-up and articulate expression of what Christmas is all about, uses the Greek word "mega" in it. Which is no big deal in the sense that the word mega is everywhere in the New Testament. The New Testament is written in Greek. And Greek, if you look at any other page, you could look twice on every page, you'll find the word mega. It is just transliterated into our English vocabulary now, 242 times we have the word mega in the New Testament. And we've gotten used to kind of putting it on as a prefix to words now. It's about megaphone and, you know, our computers are megabytes and, you know, we're talking about mega stores or a mega sale or a mega-church or, you know, you thought it was going to be a mega sermon this morning. But the idea is you know what it means.



And it's not a deep word in terms of its translation. Now, usually it's translated in the New Testament as "great." We transliterated it and we just kind of all know what it means. Mega, it means great. And it means great either in terms of quantity of something or quality of something, or in this case today, the depth of something. And I want you to turn to First Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16 for us to get today, you know, kind of a briefing before we go out into the world on what Christmas is about. It's Christmas week, believe it or not. If that's news to you, I'm sorry. It's almost. It's here, right? Pastor PJ told you that it's Christmas week. And you are going to go into this week and every reminder of Christmas I want you to have a mega understanding of the mega message of what Christmas is all about. It is a Mega Christmas message. It's not my message, it's the message of Christmas and we want to talk about it from this particular text.

And if you look at it, did you find it? First Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16. This is Compass Bible Church. We study the Bible here. It's very importantly that you have a Bible. You look it up on your phone, your iPad, your computer, whatever, a printed Bible. Look at Chapter 3 verse 16, there it comes. First Timothy 3:16. What's the first word in that verse? Mega. That's the Greek word. Mega. Great, right? "Great..." I just love the way it's put, "Great indeed." Right? Great indeed. Big. Now big in terms of what? We're about to find out. "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness." Right? Now that's a bit of a mystery itself when we say, "Great, indeed is the mystery of godliness." Godliness.

Now godliness is a word if you were to study the word as it's originally given to us in the Greek New Testament, and you think, well, how is that word used? It's used broadly. When you think of godliness, what do you think of? We'll think about fighting temptation on a Thursday afternoon. You think about a guy who's lived a pattern of Christianity where it's like, wow, they're living, you know, a sanctified Christian life. I don't think that's the essence of what we're dealing with here. Matter of fact, look back at the verse that precedes this, verse 15, and we're talking about the Church. Paul setting it up with "I might be delayed, but I want you to know how to behave in the Church, the household of God." And it calls the Church "the pillar and the buttress the thing that upholds the truth." Do you see the word truth there? And that concept of truth, we're thinking now about the truth of Christianity that the Church is supposed to be upholding, holding out to the world. Make sure you come to church. You hear the truth. We're the pillar and the foundation of the truth in this society.

After that statement, then he just stops and he's admittedly great. Right? "Great indeed is the mystery of," and then here's this word, "godliness." Godliness. This word sometimes is translated in extra biblical literature as "religion." Sometimes it's translated as "piety." It has to do with, even the word religion, we often misunderstand it. The word religion, it's not a bad word, and I know it's a bad word today, you know, for cool memes and stuff about Christianity, "it's about relationship, not religion." Religion just simply means that we are bound, we are binding ourselves to this doctrine, to this information. As Paul said to the Romans, like this form of teaching "to which we are committed." As Paul said to Timothy, in terms of this trust that's been deposited in you, hang on to it, don't lose it. There's nothing wrong with the concept of religion. We're hanging on to these truths. The Church is the pillar and foundation, the buttress of the truth.



And then we as Christians, for us holding on to that, it's such a deep thing. "Great is the mystery." By the way, the word "mega" has been transliterated into English as a prefix on a lot of words. The word mystery is really a transliterated word from the Greek New Testament. "Mysterion" is the word. Mysterion, just transliterated "mystery," is the idea not of something that we don't quite, you know, understand or it's not comprehensible, it's not understandable. That's not the point. We talk about mystery religions or if you know anything about church history and the problem of Gnosticism. There were people that thought about the truth of God and godly things, like you can't understand them, they're not known or they're not able to be known. There are some things we can't understand, obviously, but Christianity is meant to be a comprehensible, logical, rational thing. Paul spoke that way. "These are reasonable and rational things." They correspond, as Francis Schaeffer says, to reality, they are true truth. And so it's not meant to be like we can't understand it.

But great indeed is the mysterion, the profundity of truth, the depth of it. Where if you just glance at it, you don't get it. You've got to dig deeper. It's not that it's unknowable, but you've got to work to know it. There's a great word in the Greek New Testament. As long as we're talking about Greek this morning, and you got me started on this. *Kataphreneo*. I use that word sometimes because the New Testament uses that word "Kata" which means "down" *phreneo*. means "think upon." The Christian life is about contemplating and thinking down on things and focusing our attention on things and thinking. And the thing about Christianity is you can't just say, you know, "Well, it's just about Jesus. It's about the love of Christ." There's more to it. It's deep. There's something profound about it.

The New English Translation Bible, if some of you are Bible nerds, you know the Bible translations, these guys from Dallas Seminary, primarily, put this translation out. And I think in this passage, they translate it this way, "Amazing is the revelation of our religion," or something like that. That's not bad. They're catching the concept. It's just amazing truth. It's amazing revelation from God. It's profound. That's the word I like. It's got a sense of depth to it. And you've got to stop and you got to think about it from several angles. There are lots of facets to the truth of Christianity, of our religion, of the thing we have bound ourselves to, of the truth that we're proclaiming.

Then, look what comes next. Six very short statements and all these verbs carefully correspond in the syntax of this passage. It clearly is a very unique set of short and pithy statements about our Christianity. And it starts with something where you might say, "Well, now I know why Pastor Mike chose this passage for a Christmas sermon." I mean, just look at that first statement and let's look at it. What's the first statement he uses here? "He was manifested in the flesh." Now, in the text, just like we have here in our English text, there's no antecedent to "he." Right? It's actually the relative pronoun "who." Right? "Who was manifested in the flesh."

Now it kind of answers itself because we know the rest of Christianity. The second person of the Godhead was manifested in the flesh. But it's not listed here. It really gets to the depth of the truth of Christianity. The pillar of the truth is the Church holding up the truth of Christianity



revealed from God and it's all about a person. And that person, as we adhere to it, that the depth of our adhering to this is deep and it starts with the depth of this first statement, and that is that this one that Christianity's all about "has been manifested in the flesh." I'm just trying to read it clearly. "You're not reading it Pastor Mike. You're preaching it." Well, let me keep reading, "manifest in the flesh."

Secondly, "Vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." Now, I said, these are pithy statements and the syntax of all these verbs carefully correspond. And it was so interesting and unique to the flow of Paul's statement here that most commentators say, well, this must be some preexisting like hymn or some kind of, you know, catechetical statement that would teach people what the Christian life was about or maybe this was sung or... We don't know. I mean, a lot of theories on it.

But the point is, it's stuck in here as a summary of kind of the depth, the mega nature of Christianity, which all starts with something, the reason I'm preaching it at Christmas, is with the fact that the one who it's all about was "manifested in the flesh," that he was brought into this world. Okay. So let's try to understand the six things. Mega sermon, mega outline. The point was a mega message about Christmas. We want to understand what this is all about. And if you want to clarify Christmas, which you should, you are called to be clear about these things in your thinking and in our communication, we ought to know to our world as we hold up the truth of Christianity that yes, this is great, confessedly great. It is not simple. If you say Christmas is all about Jesus being born in Bethlehem, that's simple. We got to go deeper than that. We've got to look at this and dig a few layers deep. Okay?

Well, it starts with this, which is much deeper than we might think. Jesus is born in Bethlehem. What does that mean? This one is "manifested in the flesh." In the flesh. Now, there's a great Christian word in our theology. We talk about the incarnation, which we ought to inject into our discussions about Christmas, if you haven't already. We talk about the incarnation of Christ, the incarnation. Which is a good English word, and it does help us because you're use to it in Spanish. Like, if you're going to have a little chili, it'd be good for you, I would recommend and vote for, chili con carne. Right? Carne. What does that mean? Right? You know what it means. You don't want to say it. Meat, right? Meat, you bilingual scholars. Meat. It means flesh. Right? So chili con carne, chili with meat, that's a good thing. That makes, in my book, chili much better. Right? Chili con carne. Let's have some meat on that chili.

Well, when it comes to what this is all about, it doesn't make it better. Matter of fact, it is mind-blowingly demoting to think about God, because we're not talking about a person just hanging out as a person in heaven like he shot down into Bethlehem. That's not how this works. We're talking about the Triune God. Right? The understanding of the infinite God beyond time and space, a transcendent God "who was and is and is to come," the Almighty God, the God of hosts, the God who's in charge of all things. Right? And he now is born in Bethlehem as a baby. He was put inside the body of a girl from Nazareth. And God takes on humanity, takes on flesh, in a young girl's womb. That's just like... That is a mind-boggling thing. And if you think about it, that is the first thing Christmas is all about. And we ought to start to really



articulate that and clearly understand that and be willing to speak about the depth, the mega message of that simple truth.

So, let's put it that way. Number one, if you're taking notes, we need to "Be Clear, Christmas is About the Incarnate God." The incarnate God. Good word, incarnate. God, when you say becomes a man, be careful with that because he doesn't stop being God. That's the mystery that the Church has tried to make sure we don't ever mess up on the articulation of that Christological truth. He's not diminished in his deity. He still continues to be God. But as it says that this God, who is formless, right? "He dwells in unapproachable light," though "he existed in the form of God," to quote Philippians Chapter 2, that infinitely uncontainable, as Isaiah 66 says, you cannot put God in a box. Right? "Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain him."

You want to think about God for a while, let's think about that. Think about that image in Isaiah 6. "He's seated on a throne and the train of his robe it just," fills everything, "fills the temple." That God, "though he exists in the form of God, Christ did not regard equality with God a thing to be hung on to." That image of the God, the infinite transcendental God, I don't have to grasp that. Right? "But he emptied himself." In doctrine, you know, if you've been through this, we call this the "Kenosis," because that's the Greek word "empty," which we think, "Oh, man, what does that mean?" Right? It means certainly something humbling. Right? "Deity con carne" is a humbling thing. That's a terrible phrase, but it's a humbling thing. It's not good. Like, "Hey, that made it better." It's like, "You're kidding. How could that even happen?" He kenosis, he humbled, he emptied himself. Right? "And being found in the appearance as a man." Being found in the appearance as a man? God, man? That's just absolute craziness. It's craziness. I mean, that's just incomprehensible. To think that God, the infinite God, now is contained in a body.

I was over to a friend's house on Friday night, went into the washroom, washing my hands there. And of course, this great, you know, hostess and great house, they always decorate for Christmas. And here was this tiny little very appropriate decoration next to the sink in the guest bathroom of a nativity scene. And it was probably, it was like four inches. And it was the nativity. It was a little shelter there and it had a tiny little Joseph and a tiny little Mary and then like a microscopic Jesus in a tiny little, you know, manger. And I'm washing my hands. And it was pretty cool. It looked cool. It was all tiny and miniature. Jesus was like a 1/32 of an inch, right? He was just tiny and I'm washing my hands and I'm looking at it and I'm thinking about it, I wanted to touch it. It looked like it was made of metal, it was painted. It was cool. Maybe it's paper. I didn't want to touch it and risk that it would melt. So I just watched it and I thought that is amazing, right? That is what we're talking about. That here is this tiny little package that God then puts himself inside of.

Now you're so inoculated to that concept, you're just fine with that. But you shouldn't be fine with that. This is a mega truth. A mega truth. This is a deep and profound truth. If I said God is here today, right? You might envision some, you know, invisible spirit in the room. No, no, no. He's here. He's in the toddler room. Right? He's two and a half years old. He's eating Cheerios right now. And he's cutting a couple of molars so he's slobbering on himself. So he's



down there, over there, down the hall, second door on the left, God is there, right? Would you believe me? You would not believe me. I believe a demon is there. But you would not believe that God is there. Sorry. Sorry. See those... Filter. Filter Pastor Mike.

You might believe supernatural things. You would not believe that God is in our nursery. You would not believe it. You'd say, I don't believe that. God, the infinite God who I prayed to this morning. The God who I worship, the God who I think about as this transcendent God, this God, that is First Timothy Chapter 4, that "dwells in unapproachable light." You know, that God? Second Timothy 4. You would say that's impossible. He's not slobbering down in our toddler room right now. There's no way. It is not possible.

See that is what we are proclaiming. We're proclaiming, as I look at that little tiny nativity scene, we are proclaiming that in that little baby, in a manger in Bethlehem, so far away, so long ago, that God put on flesh. That's just mind-boggling. It's mind-boggling. But it is precisely what is envisioned, that Philippians 2 verse that I just quoted for you is the reflection of Daniel 7. I quoted that last week from this platform, that the Ancient of Days, the father is there, and here comes "the one who is like a son of man, and he's presented before the Ancient of Days. And given to him is all dominion and all honor and all authority and all power. And a kingdom is granted him. And a kingdom that will never go away." Right? "One like a son of man." Jesus' favorite title for himself in the gospels. "I am the Son of Man" when he talks about himself in the third person, the Son of Man.

And the point is the God, the infinite God, who has all authority in the universe and "everyone is supposed to bow to him, every tongue confess to him that Jesus Christ is Lord," is now in the appearance of a man. And he humbled himself to do that, to be found in the form of a bondservant, and to die an ignoble death on a cross of all things. That picture of an incarnate God. And that's where it starts. And I just want us to give some thought when you say to someone, "Christmas is about the incarnate God." You just need to pause on that because most people don't believe it. I mean, they really don't believe it. Most religions don't believe it. It is the point of departure between orthodox Christianity and the cults. It is the distinction between Christianity that teaches the truth on which the Church is supposed to be upholding the "pillar and buttress of the truth." The thing that you bind yourself to, and every other world religion.

I mean, the Muslims. I was sharing the gospel yesterday with a guy talking about Islam, talking about the view of Christ. We talked about Isa within the Koran. And of course, they do not believe he is God. No, that's blasphemy. That's blasphemy. And I'm saying, well, there's our problem. When you deny that he has come in the flesh, as First John says, you've just departed from anything that has any salvific power in your life. Christianity is affirming and has been for 2,000 years since the birth of Christ that God put on flesh, the incarnation of deity. And we need to stop at that and just let our mind grind on that a bit and go, "Wow, that's crazy." That is, it's deep. The mystery of godliness of our religion is deep. And it starts with that.

"Well, I knew that." Okay. Next. "Vindicated by the Spirit." Vindicated by the Spirit. It should be clear that Christmas is about an incarnate God. Vindicated by the Spirit. Do you have an English Standard Version? Most of us carrying an English Standard Version here. Look at your footnote there in the margins. It's got a number next to the word vindicate. What's the marginal reading on that? Just shout it out. What is it? Boy, you shouters, man. At football games you must be a lot of fun to sit next to with that shouting like that. That's crazy talk. What does it say? Do you need your readers for it? What does it say? Justified. There you go. I know you're not going to shout. I had no expectation that anyone was going to shout, but I appreciate you saying it so I could hear it. Justified.

This is the classic word throughout the book of Romans that you'll see translated "to be justified." And when I say, what does it mean to be justified, what would you think? Well, I think about my life as a sinner. If you're a Christian, you think I'm a sinner. Well, before God I am justified by faith in Christ. I'm justified. And what you think of is that I, as a sinner, stand before the tribunal of God in heaven, and I'm counted as righteous, even though I'm not righteous. That I am, as Paul put it in Galatians, I'm clothed in Christ, like the righteousness of Christ, that I'm made right, so that God can look at me as Colossians 1 says, "I'm fully qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." It's as though I am completely righteous, even though I am not.

And you think of that word, though, and the reason the translators chose to translate this "vindicate" is because it doesn't make sense about Christ. Christ was not a sinner. Everything about Christ is clear. I mean, he said, if someone thinks I have sinned, cast the first stone. Right? If anyone has something you want to say, say it. I mean, the whole point is that Jesus was tempted in every way, as we are yet without sin. So we know we're not talking about that kind of justification. What kind of justification are we talking about? I like the word vindication, and it's a great translation. Just like English words, there's a breath of usage. We got to look at the usage of the word, and in this context it must mean vindication. It's a good translation and vindication is a great word. Like if I haven't done something wrong but people think I have done something wrong, and then it's clear that I haven't, now you're vindicated. Do you see that?

The idea of me being guilty, I need to be vindicated. But I'm not vindicated because I've been good, I need to be justified. We use that word because we're thinking about sinners being counted as righteous. Vindication is I'm right and you thought I wasn't right. And now I stand vindicated and I am right. So this is the right idea. And Jesus, who is now God incarnate, the second person of the Godhead, is now incarnate, it says he is vindicated by the third person of the Godhead, the Spirit. Vindicated by the Spirit.

Vindicated in what? Well, what did Jesus come saying? Crazy stuff. It's crazy stuff. Like he said, "If I've forgiven anybody, it's forgiven." "That I can forgive sins against God." "That if you've seen me, you've seen the Father." "The Father and I are one." "That you can worship me and it's not blasphemy," because, of course, Daniel 7, "I'm the one who has all dominion, all authority. And you can worship, you can fall down and call me God." And I'm like cool with that. Why? Because Jews, I mean, that's blasphemy for any Jew unless, of course, we're



talking about God. He is God incarnate, the second person of the Godhead, and he's vindicated in that claim.

I mean, think about how the gospels start, John Chapter 1 verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word." This expression of who God is, the second person of the Godhead, the agency of creation. "And the Word was with God," always had eternal fellowship, "and the Word was God." And the crazy thing of verse 14 is, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Now that needs to be vindicated. That's a big claim. And if that claim is going to be made you better vindicate that. You better prove it, you better authenticate it. And Jesus' claim of divinity was vindicated by the Spirit. Vindicated by the Spirit. Okay.

How did that happen? Go with me to Isaiah Chapter 11, Isaiah Chapter 11. The problem with Christ coming from Nazareth and Bethlehem, you know, he's obviously conceived if you want to put it that way in Nazareth, he's born into the world, took his first breath in Bethlehem, grew up back in Galilee after some, you know, running around as you know the story. And then he comes without home as he says in Luke 9, he didn't have a place to "lay his head," he doesn't own any real estate. He doesn't have the degrees from the seminary. It's like this guy, he's supposed to be something? He doesn't have much of a pedigree. He doesn't have much of a resume. As Isaiah 53 says, it's like "one from whom men hide their face." It's like he's nothing special. You turn away from him when you're walking down the street. He has nothing to attract, there's no appearance that we would think he's anything great.

Here's another way to put it in Isaiah Chapter 11 verse 1. Take a look at this text. Isaiah Chapter 11 verse 1 speaks of the promise of what God said he would do, Second Samuel Chapter 7, regarding David, this great king, this eternal messiah, this one who is going to have all power and all authority and the kingdom would be subject to him, right? That's the promise of David or Jesse. That Jesse is David's dad. It says here "there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse." Now, that's a weird thought. What's a stump? Well, it's a big tree that's been cut down. It might be something you would picture in some seventh grader's photo project for class or something. Like here's an old barn in the background and a tractor and weeds growing up and here's a stump. And then out of that stump, here comes a little shoot.

Now, that's an interesting photo. I can envision that. It's like a stump. This tree is dead. It looks dead, but it's not dead. There's life coming out of it. Here comes a little tiny shoot. Now, that's the picture. It looks like after the Babylonian captivity we don't have a king sitting on the throne. I mean, we started with David and the promise and ended in Judah with Babylon gouging his eyes out, Zedekiah, and we have no more kings of Israel. We got governors. We got people in charge. We got officials. You got a high priest, but you don't have a king. It's like, "Oh, the lineage of David is gone." Oh, but here comes this shoot. It doesn't look like anything special.

Next line. "And a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." Oh, this is the line of David. This is the promise of the Davidic covenant. This is what God said would happen. This is the fulfillment. This is the ramping up of the perfection of what David seemed to be prefiguring.





And that's, I guess it's going to happen. It must be him. How do we know? Verse 2, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." So the third person of the Godhead is somehow going to take the anointed Messiah, and he's going to rest upon him.

Which, by the way, it's not hard for us to envision this because you envision it every time we read the gospels. When Jesus in his first act of his public ministry goes out to the Jordan River where John the Baptist is preaching and calling people to repent, he gets in line and he gets baptized. And when he gets baptized, what happens? Think about it. What happened? Right? Hears a voice, everybody hears a voice. Like what is that? "This is my son, my beloved son, in whom I'm well pleased." What? What? Yeah. And then what happens? God does a miracle. It's the beginning of Christ's miracles, at least in the sense that this is happening to him. He's going to perform one in Canaan, but at his baptism here comes this image of something that is depicting in people's minds the Spirit and it settles on him like a dove landing on a branch. And here comes the Spirit of God resting on the Son. And the Spirit of God is going to now start to work through him.

And that's the interesting thing about the kenosis of Christ, the humility of Christ, laying aside his independent divine exercise of his divine attributes, his prerogatives as the second person of the Godhead. As the Spirit comes on him, he now leans and relies on the Spirit of God to now prove his position, right? The works of the Spirit are active in him. Like what? Well, the next line, "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding." Do you think that was clear upon him? How about as a 12-year-old when he's sitting in the temple and his parents can't find him. He's there interacting with the scribes and the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, and all the Levites are gathered around, the priests are leaning over going what's this kid talking about? Yes. The Spirit of God is now through the ministry of Christ vindicating his claim and the claim of everyone around him, including those angels who came and declared that he was the fulfillment of God's promises. And here it is, vindication. Wow. Who can do that? Where did that Spirit come from?

"The Spirit of counsel." Right? That's his teaching. He goes and he speaks things that are wise, "wisdom and understanding" and "counsel" and look at this "and might." It's such a tiny little word in the English language, "and might." "The Spirit and might." Do you know that in Jesus' ministry as he credits and depends on the third person of the Godhead to carry out the vindication of his second person of the Godhead status, the might and power the "Dunamis" they call it in the Greek New Testament is an evidence that he is who he says he is, and it's done through miraculous signs and wonders. He does things like paraplegics, right? They skip home. Blind men who could never see. Now they can see. A dead man decaying in a grave. "Lazarus, come forth." He does those things.

And when John the Baptist doubts this, because he's in a prison in the Transjordan, he sends two people to go talk to Christ and he says, "Of course, I'm the Christ. Tell John what is happening." Look at the Spirit's activity here. Even in Nazareth, when they said you're really the messiah, right? You're just the son of Mary and you got brothers here among us and you grew up here. And he says he picks up the scroll and he starts to read the scroll from Isaiah about the Spirit of God upon him. And he says, look, look, you've got blind people seeing. The



Spirit of God vindicated his claim, even to the people he grew up with. It vindicated his claim by every miraculous sign he ever did.

"The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of God." Of course, always in line with what the Lord, the Father wants. And this is the picture of Jesus. I mean, here are a couple of passages that may help. Luke Chapter 4 verse 14, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and the report went out about him throughout all the surrounding country. And there he taught in their synagogues being glorified by all," because it wasn't just teaching as we know, he's healing all kinds of diseases, he's demonstrating power that human beings don't have because he's not a human being. But the Spirit of God is authenticating that first with a miraculous sign that the Spirit descended upon him and then all these things.

Culminating in the most dramatic of all, the thing that has been the point of investigation that has converted many intelligent people throughout Church history. And that is what? Romans Chapter 1 verses 1 through 3. And the point is and just let me just read this text for you. Here is the ultimate vindication of the Son. "Concerning his Son, who descended from David according to the flesh." Right? Of course he was that. "But he was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness," the holy God, "by his resurrection from the dead." If nothing else, what we see is the Spirit of God saying to the world this is no normal human being.

Do you want to talk about what Christmas is all about? Number two. "Be Clear, Christmas Is About His Proven Divinity." It's about the claim that that little baby in a manger was God incarnate. And then it's about a ministry that followed, including the culmination, the cherry on top of the whole sundae is this: the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Something that cannot be done by yourself. It is not a human act. This is a supernatural act. The transcendent God is proving through the works of the Spirit that his claim is vindicated. He is vindicated by means of the Spirit.

And that little other footnote on the word "by" in, that's no big deal. I don't know why you even put it here. Because epsilon nu, that little preposition "in" is always translated, can be translated "in" "width" or "by," but it's about an instrumentality. How is he vindicated? The instrumentality of that vindication is the Spirit. The Spirit of God is doing miraculous works in Jesus Christ. The ultimate one is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. What does that do? It proved his divinity. And we sit here 2,000 years later, celebrating his birth, not just because someone claimed he was a special kid, but because his life and ministry proved it and his resurrection put an exclamation point on it. And we're still worshiping a living Christ because of what took place 2,000 years ago.

Number three. "Seen by angels." Seen by angels. What do you have on the top of your Christmas tree? You got a Christmas tree at home, decorated it, got lights on? What do you have on top? A star maybe. Some of you have that cute little angel at the top of your tree. Why do you have an angel at the top of your Christmas tree? Some of you who do you have it you would say I guess if you thought about it, well, because Luke Chapter 2 says the angels came down from heaven at the birth of Christ and they gazed at the baby Jesus. Is that what



it says? No. That was asked in a sarcastic tone so that you would say, "No!" That's not why. It's not why. Did the angels come down to look at Christ? No.

Angels came down to do some "angeling." What is angeling? What does the word angel mean? Angel means messenger. Right? An "Angelos" is a messenger. And they are in the presence of God, sometimes in Scripture, very rarely, coming down to bring a message to people. And who did they bring the message to in Luke Chapter 2? Shepherds. What did they say? Well, "born to you this day in the city of David," fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, "is Christ the Lord." Right? Did they peek over their shoulder? Okay. Sure. But whatever. Because they're not human beings. Here's the thing about the angels. I'm just setting you up for an interpretation of this text, the thing that's the right one. Do they have any problem perceiving the second person of the Godhead? They've been perceiving him since they were created, depending on the access and the rank that they have. Of course they have. Of course they know the second person of the Godhead. They know all three persons of the Trinity. Of course they do.

Do they see them? Well they don't see them because you can't see them. Before the incarnation, you couldn't see the second person. You can't see any of the members of the Trinity before the Incarnation. And all you can see after the Incarnation is the second person of the Godhead. You cannot see. "No man has seen or can see." That's what the Bible says about God. And you're thinking about angels. They don't have eyes. They don't have ears. They don't have nerves or skin cells. Well, they appear and they said things, they have to move the air to get the shepherds to hear words. Well, of course, I agree. That's the point. The point of miracles happening in an angelic situation is the miracle of them manifesting themselves so that they can bring a message to people, whether it's Zechariah, who's in the temple and learns about the birth of John the Baptist or whether it's the shepherds in the field in Luke 2 learning about the birth of Christ and that this kid is no normal child. This is the Messiah, Christ, the Lord.

That is their job. They don't have eyes. They don't see things. Not the way you see them. They perceive things. They're spirit beings, they're software. Are they limited? Sure. Are they finite? Yes. Are they created? Yes. Temporal? Yes. But it doesn't mean that they have eyes and they need lights on so they can see things. They don't perceive that way. Angelic beings don't work that way. They only work that way when they have to interact with people in biblical history. And that's it. As far as seeing the incarnate Christ. No. Okay, I've confused you there on that.

Go to the fourth one. What's the next one? He's got to be "proclaimed among the nations." He's proclaimed among the nations. What was the second one? A proven divinity. What's the first one? God becomes a man. God becomes a man. He proves his divinity by the instrumentality of the Spirit. And the fourth one, he's going to be proclaimed among the nations.

Who is going to proclaim him among the nations? Not the angels. The angels, the heavenly beings who live in a software domain, they're not physical. We're the physical ones. Right?



We're supposed to take our software contained and enmeshed in our hardware and go out and talk to people about the gospel. We are the messengers of the message. Well, that word, is it ever used that way? Of course it's used that way. Let me give you an example, Luke Chapter 9 verse 52. Jesus is going to Jerusalem, "and he sent his messengers ahead of him, who went and entered the village of the Samaritans, and they made preparations for him." So Jesus is going to go to Jerusalem. He's coming down from Galilee and he sends messengers. Who are they? His disciples. He sends disciples to the villages and they bring a message saying the Christ is coming and he's passing through and he's going to stay here tonight. "The messengers." Guess what the word is, angelos, messengers. They're bringing a message that Christ dispatched them to give.

If this message is going to be proclaimed among the nations what I need are messengers who know what they're talking about. And here's the emphasis throughout the New Testament when it comes to that first generation of people who are going to encode this in black and white propositional sentences in the Bible. What is important to them is that, "you know that we have seen it."

As a matter of fact, look at this passage with me, please. First John. First John Chapter 1 verse 1. Let's look at this passage. First John Chapter 1 verse 1. "That, which was from the beginning." John, the same author of John 1:1. But now we're talking about the beginning of what? Right? "Which we have heard." We sat there and listened to Christ preach. We're talking about the beginning of his ministry, "which we have seen with our eyes," we watched him, "which we've looked upon and we've touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life." What Word? The Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. We saw it. We heard it. We touched him.

Verse 2, "The life that was made manifest." There's the picture. We see God now in human form. He's been made manifest. We see it "and we have seen it," verse 2, "and testify to it." Oh, guess what? They're messengers of it. They're testifying to it, they're speaking about it. "And proclaim to you," that's the same word we're going to see in the fourth line, "proclaiming to you eternal life, which was with the Father," and here it is again, "was made manifest to us," we saw it, "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us." So we're going to give you a message. You didn't see it, but you need to know that we saw it. We were part of it. We heard it, we saw it, we touched it. And we are relaying this to you as reliable witnesses, as eyewitnesses of what we've seen "so that you can have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship was with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." We want you to be Christians.

But here's the thing. You're going to have to rely on the message that we're giving to you, but we've seen it. How important was that in the New Testament? I don't know. When Judas goes out and flames out and hangs himself, the betrayer, they, in Acts Chapter 1, they sit around and say, "so we got to replace him." What was the criteria for replacing the apostle? They said, "We've got to have someone who was with us from the beginning, who's seen it all, who's heard it all and has been testified and who's heard and seen and touched the



resurrected Christ." I need someone who said... We need eyewitnesses and they're going to go all out in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth with this message. But they have to be reliable witnesses.

One more passage. Second Peter Chapter 1. Turn there with me. Second Peter Chapter 1. Look at verse 16. Second Peter 1:16. "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths," now this is Peter writing, think about Peter, "when we made known to you the power and coming," the manifestation, the incarnation, "of our Lord Jesus," the son of David, the "Christ, but we were," underline it, "eyewitnesses of his majesty. For," verse 17, "when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice that was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard the very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain." We not only saw it at the baptism, we saw it at the Mount of Transfiguration. We were there, we heard it, we saw it. We were eyewitnesses to it.

Verse 19, "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed." We are testifying to you that we saw the fulfillment of the prophecies. And every person in this room in the 21st century, if you are a follower of Christ, we are relying on the eyewitnesses, the messengers, the angelos who were eyewitnesses to the reality of Christ. What he did, the vindication by the Spirit, they saw his miracles and his resurrection, the ultimate vindication of his life by the Spirit, raised with power by the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. We are saying we know that these guys saw it. This isn't a backroom pinky swear. You know, you and I, let's just think about what we know. This is a massive amount of people for 40 days post-resurrection Jesus was out there, he was preaching and as Paul says in First Corinthians 15 that sometimes there were more than 500 people present at one time. You can go find them. You can go talk to them.

Why was it important in First Corinthians 15 that Paul say that? Because he wants them to know this is based on eyewitness testimonies. We saw it. And did they fold when the pressure got ramped up? Of course not. The whole point was they went to their deaths saying we saw this. We were part of it. We touched it. We heard it. We were there. We were eyewitnesses to it. And we know that the Scripture of the Old Testament being fulfilled in our day, we know that. And we recognize that you ought to, as he goes on to say here, "the prophetic word is more fully confirmed, to which you would do well to pay attention." Why? Because it's true. Those prophets have spoken the truth. "It's like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns" and all of the promises are going to be fulfilled.

So they're writing about that, that there is a coming kingdom, that Christ is going to return, "and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture," either Old Testament or New Testament... And Peter is going to say that in this book he knows Paul is writing New Testament Scripture. He says the writings of Paul are like the other Scriptures. These Scriptures, they're not done by people sitting around stroking their beards, thinking about, you know, ethics or ideals or philosophies. No, "they're not a matter of one's own interpretation" of reality, right? No. "No prophecy was ever produced," verse 21, "by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."



Why? Because they were testifying to the things that they saw that vindicated the claims of an incarnate God.

Number three, you got to "Be clear, Christmas Is About a Reliable Testimony." Why are we still celebrating this? Because under scrutiny and research we found the truth of Christianity to be true, objectively true. You heard that this morning during announcements. Objective truth. Third person, propositional truth. Not my truth. Not your truth. Right? Not your story. Not my story. Objective truth. We were eyewitnesses to this. And that's what the Bible says that started this New Testament era with eyewitnesses saying we confirm the truth of what Jesus claimed as the Spirit authenticated it.

Which, by the way, if you denied that when you saw it, Jesus said you cannot be forgiven. I mean, the reality is, you know, he says you can say a lot of things about me, but if you're saying the testimony of the Spirit bearing witness to who I am, if you're saying that's from Satan, that's all they were about to say. "Well, it's clearly a miracle. But whatever magic you're doing, Jesus, it must be by demons, by Beelzebub." And Jesus says, well then that will never be forgiven. I mean, that's how important the vindication of the Spirit was. And these men took this truth, they codified it in writing, and we read it today. We preach from it today. We meditate on it, we memorize it. We say, here is the objective Scripture where the Spirit of God has written the message to the men who are eyewitnesses of the things that we now still celebrate.

Christmas is about not some oral tradition. And you can have guys, you know, professors at Saddleback or UCI, they can go on and on with their nonsense and ignorance about Christianity not being a codified religion. It was written from the first century, right? There's evidence of that galore. People just talk because they're trying to talk their way out of Christianity. But you can't. This is a story of history and time and space, and it's something that's reliable. And that's why we still celebrate it. And we know and we rely on it as truth.

And then guess what? That can be proclaimed among the nations. Number four, "proclaimed among the nations," proclaimed among the nations. You know that Christianity is not only the biggest religion in the world. Christmas is the biggest holiday around the world. The Bible is the bestselling book around the world. You say, "Oh, there are some countries... I saw some countries online. They don't celebrate Christmas." I understand that. You can't even go to those countries. You can't go to Indonesia or some Islamic countries and say, well, they do not allow it there in the Sudan. Right? I would ask them. Right?

The idea of Christ, even within the world religions, they embed the concept of Christ though they twist the doctrines of Christ. Christianity has been proclaimed around the world. As Paul said, it's spreading all over the creation. Why? Because Jesus told people to do that. "Go make disciples of all the nations." And that word, just kind of makes some nuanced distinctions here, is not political entities or city-states or borders. Don't think about the Great Wall of China, this, you know, country and that country or North Korea, South Korea. This is taught "Ethnos," that's the word for the ethnicities, the different people. It doesn't matter if you're Jew or Gentile or barbarian or Scythian or slave or free. This message is universally



applicable and it's to be given to the nations. Why? Why did Jesus say in Acts 1:8, "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, be my witnesses." Testify to this. Testify what you've seen and what you've touched and what you've heard. Why? Because this is urgent.

As Peter gets around to saying very clearly and is recorded in Acts Chapter 4 verse 12, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." As Jesus said, John 14, "I am the way, I'm the truth, I'm the light and no man comes to the Father except through me." You got a short period of time on earth. 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 years, maybe, right? You've got to get it right with God. And the only way to do that is through Christ. And that's what's fueled our parent's and grandparent's and our great grandparent's generation to get out there and get serious about missions just like it did in the first century, because we knew if they die without Christ, they face an eternity where they'll hear "Depart from me; I never knew you." We have to get the message of Christ. It's urgent. Christmas is about that, and you ought to parlay it for that.

Number four, "Be Clear, Christmas Is About an Urgent Message." It's an urgent message of heaven and hell and life and death. He's going to come back, as I said last week, and separate the peoples like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. That's what Jesus taught. And we've got to make sure people are on the right side of history and that means you get right with the living God. And the only way to do that is to embrace the incarnate God. And that message is urgent.

Why? Next line. Why is it proclaimed among the nations? Because people need to believe on it, "believed ON in the world." People believe ON this message. What's the urgent message? Well, I'm glad you asked. It needs a response. And the response is your faith, "Pisteou." This word in Greek is sometimes translated "faith," sometimes "believe." But the idea is that I'm putting a preposition after I believe ON HIM. Right? I put my faith IN HIM. That's a concept of me transferring my trust. And if you say to your friend, "Here's what Christmas is about. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Do you believe it?" Do you know what they're thinking your question is? Do I think it happened in history? That is not the urgent message of Christmas. The urgent message of Christmas is you got to get right with God. Jesus sent his Son and he's got a message. And that message is that you've got to get right with God by putting your faith in him, your trust in him.

If I asked Jesus why did you come. I know what his answer would be because he already gave it. Right? "I came not to be served," first coming, "but to serve and to give my life as" a payment, "a ransom for many." Right? What does that mean? I guess there's a payment that's needed, I guess there's some kind of debt that needs to get paid. Or, as Jesus said, "I came to seek and save that which is lost." They're not right with God. They're going to be cast into outer darkness. I want them to be saved. The picture of the message of the gospel is that "God sent his Son that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life." There's another 3:16 verse that you know. Right? And you understand that, I hope, because the point of Christmas is Jesus sending his Son as a solution to our problem.



Number five, you need to "Be clear, Christmas Is About Our Needed Solution." And the problem with your neighbor is they don't think they have a problem. And the preaching of the message of the coming of Christ is God would not send his Son to this planet if you didn't have a problem. You have a problem. And the problem is sin. I shared the gospel yesterday with this guy. And as I'm sharing the gospel with him, you know, he brings up what I think every non-Christian eventually brings up. We had a good civil, intelligent conversation with each other, and he brings up Jeffrey Dahmer, which, of course, it's going to come up. Right? I mean, especially now, it seems he's always on the tongues of everyone.

And as he's trying to think, he wants an explanation from me. "You mean to tell me this guy at the end of his life in prison could put his trust in Christ and God is just going to forgive it?" I mean, you've heard this before. I'm sure you get it in your evangelism. I got it just yesterday in my evangelism. Right? What's my answer? I mean, you know what my answer is. I'm going to a historical situation that Jesus put into the narrative because it happened in history, because in God's providence, he knew we needed this one. There's a criminal hanging next to him. The worst of the worst in their society. Right? The dregs of society. Just like when you think of Gacy and Dahmer and you think these are the worst. And here's a guy hanging here. I mean, the criminal of criminals being executed puts his trust in Christ and Jesus turns to him and says, "Today you'll be with me in paradise."

I told the guy what I tell everyone when I'm sharing the gospel. Jesus is our solution. And he came as our solution. Because the solution that needs to be provided for you is the same solution that needs to be provided for Dahmer or Gacy or anyone else who, in your mind, is way worse than you. And here's the deal. I'll admit it, relatively speaking, as I sat there and we sat there and civilly talked about the gospel, I said, "I get it, I get it. You and I, we haven't eaten anybody this week. So I get it. We're better than that guy. We're relatively speaking, better, upstanding, taxpaying citizens."

But here's the deal. The transaction of the gospel is that Jesus comes and lives for us, and Jesus comes and dies for us. And because of that I need his death in my life. And I need my life to be transferred to his death. I need to recognize that everything that I am dies. It becomes skubalon, rubbish. And I say, I need your righteousness to be imputed to me. And I need all of my sin, regardless if it's as bad as Gacy's or not, I need it all attributed to Jesus' cross. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Christ I might become the righteousness of God." Second Corinthians Chapter 5. That's the picture of the gospel. It's the exchange of my life for his life.

And this is the deal. How much of my life do I have to put on the cross? All of it. How much of his righteousness needs to be imputed to me? All of it. I need all of his righteousness. And I said, guess what? Gacy and Dahmer and all the rest are in the same category that you and I are in, in that the transaction, the solution that solves our problem is a complete exchange of my life for his life and his death for my death. BAM. Done. God the Father treats Christ as though he is the sinner that I am or that you are, and who knows who between you and I is worse. But we can read the blotter, the crime blotter, and find people who are worse than us,





relatively speaking. But the bottom line is we got to exchange everything. My life for his life and his life for my life. And we exchange it. And that's the gospel. And Jesus came to do it.

If he came to die, which most of us think, well he came to die, then show up on Thursday, right? You can die on Friday. Why spend all this time down here? He had to fulfill all righteousness. He had to live a life that actively fulfilled all the requirements of righteousness. And that's the point. He came to live in our world. That's why he came as a baby. That's why he came and lived a toddler's life and a child's life and a teenage life and an adult life. Jesus came to solve our problem. And that's why we need to now respond by believing on him, whether we're Gentiles or Jews or Scythians or barbarians or slave or free or CEOs or hourly workers. We're here to put our trust in Christ, believe on it. We're throwing ourselves on the mercy of God and saying we trust that Christ did it all for us. "Not having a righteousness of our own derived by some keeping of the law," or the rules, "but the righteousness that comes from God is by faith," to quote Philippians Chapter 3. Be clear, that's what Christmas is about. It's about a needed solution. You need it and I need it.

Last one, number six. "Taken up in glory." Glory. I was online, of course, like you probably just hunting for Christmas gifts. And I came across an ornament in this Christmas ad and then I clicked on it and I got to this page that was selling ornaments for the tree. And the particular ornament they were selling was an ornament of Christ's ascension. It was a picture like a stained-glass picture in a bulb that hung on your tree and had Christ, you know, shooting up into the sky. Like it's a typical, you know, looked respectful and all but it's the ascension of Christ.

And I thought to myself as I was about getting ready to preach this sermon, I thought, I'll bet not many people I'm preaching to this weekend have an ascension ornament on their tree. And I'm thinking, why don't you have an ascension ornament on your tree? Well, I know why. I know why, right? I know why you don't have an ascension ornament on your tree. Because if you gave it any thought, you might think, well, that's a cool thing that happened in Christ's life. But you wouldn't think, wait a minute, why am I in the celebration of Christ coming going to put something on my tree that reminds me of Christ leaving. That's why you don't have an ascension ornament. That's why it probably is not selling very well. Right? That ornament. Why would I want an ascension ornament, why would I want to be reminded that he's leaving?

Because here's what the disciples thought when he said he was leaving. They were thinking, "Don't!" Why? I don't want him leaving, you don't want Christ leaving. And he's telling him, no, no, no, it's necessary that I go away. It's necessary that I go away. And you're not going to be orphaned. I'm going to send the Spirit, and the Spirit is going to come and he's going to make sure that you're not orphaned. He's going to be the comforter. He's going to take you through this life and the Spirit of God, if we think about a number one role that we have, is going to make sure that we accomplish the goal. This is the last thing he said after the 40 days of appearing after his resurrection.

He said in Acts Chapter 1, I'm going, here's the deal. And they said, "Well, wait a minute, you're resurrected. You paid for our sin. Is now the time you're going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" And he said, "It's not for you to know the times, but here's your job. Go and be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and all the way down to Orange County, California. Why? Because they have people appointed to eternal life who haven't even been born yet. I mean, this is a Mike Fabarez paraphrase as I preach to the 21st century in Orange County. The point is, you and I wouldn't be here if the first coming was all there was, right? If after the resurrection, he said, "Great. Now's the time I'm going to set up the kingdom." And not that it's about you and he's waiting on you. But he's waiting on you. And he's waiting on everyone else.

That's what Second Peter Chapter 3 says. "He's not slow in keeping his promises as some count slowness, but he's patient toward you, not willing any should perish, but all come to repentance." And of course, I know in his plan is all that are appointed to eternal life. He's got more people who are going to be in this thing called the gospel, the Church. He's got more people to get saved. It's the same thing he said about the parable of the kingdom, he said, "What shall I compare the kingdom to? I'll compare it to a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds," at least in a day of their horticultural farming. It's the smallest seed you guys deal with. And that little tiny mustard seed, you put it in the ground and it grows into this big tree and has all these branches. And then the birds, all kinds of birds from the sky can come and make their living and their dwelling in that tree.

Do you know what it takes to get from that tiny seed to where birds can move in? What does it take? Time and growth. And I know it's all about time and growth because the next thing he talks about is leaven. You put leaven, the next parable he tells, you put it in the bread and it goes and it goes and it goes and it goes and it goes and it goes. It's about the growth of the kingdom. And God wasn't content in sending his Son to save and culminate everything in the first century. He wants this thing to grow. And so he said, as he starts to tell them and break the news about, "you know, I'm going to go away." He said, "don't let your hearts be troubled." This is the Upper Room Discourse. And he spends three chapters trying to explain to them his leaving and he starts with this, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."

He talks about the plan that he has. The Father's house has many places to go. But here's the thing. "If I go away," which of course he was going to, and that's the whole point of this discussion. Right? "I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am you may be also." The promise of Christ when he ascended was I'm coming back, but you've got a job to do between the time I leave and the time I come back. And the whole point of the test of our godliness in many ways, he says, is are you busy while I'm gone? I don't want to come back and find... Blessed is the servant who the master finds working and busy and waiting and going about the work when I return.

When he actually did leave in Acts Chapter 1 after that statement about "Go be my witnesses," and they're gazing up with their gaping mouths at the sky, and that ascension ornament came true. Jesus is flying back up to be taken up in glory, the angels come back



and say, "Guys, here's the message. Don't you understand it? He told you if he goes, he's going to come back. But you've got a job to do in the meantime." Here's how he puts it. "The same way you saw him go you're going to see him come back." He's going to come back and it won't be this generation. Right? It's going to be several generations later but stay busy at the work.

The ascension is a doctrine. How many books written on that? Patrick Schreiner, one who came teach here at Compass Bible Institute has written one book on it at least, the idea of the Ascension being a critical... He's got a whole section in that book on the ascension and eschatology. And one thing he ties in there, which you can't ignore is you cannot think about the ascension without thinking about eschatology, the time when he's coming back, they're tied together. And while this is kind of anti-climactic, to get to the sixth thing, I think, hey, let's talk about the coming of Christ. He left, right? "Oh, that doesn't feel good." Yeah, but when he left, the whole point was, I am coming back and you need to be ready and praying for it and longing for it and crying out Maranatha because of his return. And every time I preach on Christmas, every year, you know this, I can't talk about the first advent without anticipating the second advent.

Number six, that's what Christmas is really about. "Be clear, Christmas Is About a Promised Consummation." He's going to bring all of history into the consummation of all things, as he says in Acts Chapter 4, Peter does, the renewal of all things. The new heaven and the new earth, they're coming. But what he says is, when I go, just know I'm coming again. I'm coming back. So it wouldn't be a bad thing to put an ascension ornament on your tree, but right next to it, put some kind of second coming ornament next to it because he's come once, he went away but he promised with that that he's coming again. Some kind of Siamese twin ornament. You can design it. It would be good. Just pair them together. You can't have the leaving without the promise of the coming.

I had a guy on my floor in college in the dorms, and I think he went on to be a preacher. I don't know. And most preachers, present company excluded, are very articulate people. Very articulate. This guy, though he could speak very clearly, he was an expert mumblor. That was one of his hobbies. He just loved to mumble and he did it as a joke, right? He would come up to people and he'd say things. I remember going through the line of the dining hall and if there was a new person working behind their counter slopping the slop on our tray, he would say, "Oh, can I have the (mumble, mumble, mumbler)?" And it sounded like real words. Not like that. I'm not an expert mumblor, only when I don't try. But he would try and he would mumble and they would be like, "Oh, that sounds like real syllables. And we're... What? How, what?" And sometimes he'd be so embarrassed because he'd repeat it and make it sound exactly the same. Exactly. He was so good at it. And we would laugh. We'd go to a restaurant and laugh. And it's just we heard him all the time do this, he was so good at it. And I thought to myself his intention was to be unclear.

One of the questions I have you contemplate on the back of the worksheet this week is from Colossians Chapter 4 when Paul asks for prayer and he says, "Listen, I want to make known the mystery of Christ, but pray that I can make it clear as I ought to speak." It ought to be



clear. Man, I want it to be clear as it comes out of your mouth and look for those opportunities. We get into Christmas week right now. You got opportunities to say, "Hey, it's Merry Christmas." What does that mean? Right? It's a mega message, man. There's a lot to it, right? But our job is to make it clear. Is it simple? It's got a lot of facets to it. But please make it clear. And it starts by, I'm trying to do my work this week for you, I'm trying to make it clear in your mind. If it can be clear in your mind, maybe this week it'll be more clear coming out of your mouth and telling people about how important it is. They were claiming an incarnate Christ who has come to this earth, proven his divinity based on a reliable testimony, with an urgent message that we are in desperate need of a solution that he provided. And his going away is only an anticipation of his return.

Let me pray for you. God, help us to be clear as we think about the gospel. Because the gospel really is what the incarnation is all about, that Christ came to solve our problem. And he's calling us to repent, calling us to trust him. And I pray that not only would we do that, but we would care very much because this is an urgent message. No one comes to you unless they go through Christ. And so clarity about that message needs to be heard not just in foreign mission fields, but right here in our mission field in a day when people just they think they've been there and done that because they've learned a couple of lines about the Christmas story, but they don't know anything about what it is. So gear us up to present that to this world that is much more ignorant about these things than we might even imagine. Let us help them understand with clarity as your Spirit gives them an illumined mind to figure out exactly what it is we're saying and we say it clearly as we ought to say it. I pray for that this week.

In Jesus name.