

Communion

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[0 : 0 0] First Timothy 316. This is the incarnational time of the year.

And I do think that the incarnation of deity is exceeded perhaps only by the purpose of it, which was redemption.

And we have a portion here in First Timothy 3 and verse 16 that is commonly referred to as an ancient hymn. It reads this way from the New American Standard.

And by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness. He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Perhaps the only thing that is lacking there is his return. And what we are celebrating this morning in connection with the communion service, we are admonished to do this until the Lord returns.

[1 : 3 7] So when we gather together like this several times during the year, we remind ourselves of the body that was given with the bread, the blood that was shed with the cup, the purpose of it all.

It's all about redemption. It's all about relationships and restoring that which was lost. Only in biblical Christianity do we have a concept such as the very incarnation of deity.

We are talking about the creator god of the universe taking upon himself human flesh like that which he created in our first parents.

It is part and parcel of the trinitarian nature, the makeup, the being of deity, which none of us fully appreciate or understand.

We have a plurality of persons in the Godhead, but we have only one deity. There is but one God subsisting in three persons.

[2 : 5 6] How does that work? I don't know. I just know that the scriptures teach it unequivocally. From Genesis to Revelation, we are taught that the Father is deity in his essence, character, nature, and makeup.

We are taught that the Son is deity in his essence, character, nature, and makeup. And that the Spirit of God is deity in his essence, character, nature, and makeup.

These three do not each comprise one-third God. Put them all together and you have one God. That is not it.

Each is fully God in his own right. Then how is it that we have one God subsisting in three persons?

I already told you. I don't know. But should it surprise us that there are elements about the nature, character, and makeup of the Creator God that we simply cannot comprehend?

[4 : 1 2] We are asked to believe them. We are not asked to understand them. Someone asked me once, how is it possible that you can believe things in the Bible that you don't understand?

I said, that's very simple. I believe the things in the Bible that I don't understand because of the things I do understand. Those things that I do understand give me great confidence that God is in charge and that he understands what I don't.

And he is asking me to take my position below him and be content with not being God.

I can do that. And we let God be God. God and these mysteries regarding his character, nature, and makeup must be reserved solely unto him.

Howard Hendricks, who was professor at Dallas Theological Seminary for like four or five decades, said one time to his class of young seminarians, does it come as a surprise to you that there are things about the infinite, immutable, eternal God that you don't understand?

[5 : 29] Is that a shock? Or is that not rather something that ought to be anticipated? And would a God whom you could completely understand really be worth anything?

Would he be worth any more than you? He is the ineffable, unchanging, immutable, eternal God who is also love.

And this God, this creator being who is referred to in scripture as spirit. And we don't know what that means either.

Except we know that it means lacking corporeality. God does not have a body. He is spirit.

That is immaterial. We have bodies. We know that he took upon himself a body.

[6 : 32] The psalmist said, speaking messianically of the Lord Jesus, but a body thou hast prepared for me.

And this body, this egg, this seed was implanted in probably a teenage Galilean peasant girl 2,000 years ago who was to provide the humanity for this deity.

So, what we are talking about is an utterly, absolutely stupendous thing wherein God became man.

You are familiar with the word Emmanuel. It literally means God with us. The enfleshment of deity is peculiar only to Christianity.

This creator God took it upon himself to become one of his creatures. And I've sometimes used the analogy, how would you go about communicating to an ant?

[7 : 51] You know, one of those busy little creatures that you see crawling around on the sidewalk. Every spring about May, I have some of those crawling around in my kitchen.

They just kind of come alive in the spring, and I have to put out my little ant traps. And if there were some way that I could really intelligently communicate with those ants, you know what I would tell them?

I would say, look, fellas, I really don't have anything against you, and I really don't want to just kill a whole bunch of you. So, I'd be glad to feed you some food that you would really appreciate and enjoy, and I will put it right over here outside the door.

And you won't even have to come in the house to get it. Wouldn't that be nice and convenient? And that way, you won't have to risk your life with my ant traps or anything. And I could just go on and on about how I could save these little creatures' lives, but they're not listening.

I can't speak aunts. I just can't. You realize what I would have to do, don't you? I would have to become an ant.

[9 : 08] If I really wanted to get down to their level and be able to talk to them and tell them what they need to know and how they could enjoy life and life more abundantly.

But I can't do that. I don't have the ability to reduce myself to an ant. But God, the creator, had the ability to reduce himself to a human being.

And in doing so, one would expect that there would be a number of similarities between him and us and a number of dissimilarities.

So, if God were to become a man, what kind of a man would he be? How would he manifest himself?

What are the things about him that would be like us? Well, we know that he became weary. He became tired. And he found it necessary sometimes to withdraw himself from the crowds and the hustle and bustle demands that were made upon him and isolate himself in a quiet place where he could kind of enjoy some R&R.;

[10 : 39] And we know that he was capable of thirst and hunger and pain and disappointment and heartbreak.

He had all of those things in common with us. But there were other things that were completely uncommon about him. And I suspect that it would be only fitting of the deity if he's going to become humanity.

He can't become just like us because if he were just like us, he couldn't do for us what we need. So, for starters, his entry into this world is different.

If he is going to come and rectify the sin problem of humanity, he is going to have to show up without a sin debt of his own.

How is he going to do that? Because everyone that is born of a man and a woman has the same nature as that man and woman.

[12 : 11] And that includes the Adamic sinful fallen nature. So, if he comes into the world with that, he will not be qualified to do the job.

Because in having sin of his own, he would not be eligible to take the sin of others upon him. So, in the wisdom of God, as evidenced by the prophet 700 years before the incarnation ever took place, Isaiah tells us, Behold, the Lord himself shall give you a sign.

A virgin shall be with child. Later, we're told in chapter 9 that his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father.

All of these wonderful names that are given to him. So, a virgin, a girl who has never had sexual relations with a man, which is the way we understand that babies are made, that whole process is bypassed.

And this father, this father entity of the triune nature prepared a seed and impregnated the womb of the Virgin Mary by way of just a supernatural thing that he did.

[13 : 48] And yet, we know how a man impregnates the womb of a woman. But it's a mystery how God does that. And yet, he did that with a seed.

And it was an uncontaminated, pure seed. Deposited in that womb of that little girl.

And in nine months, someone has said, and I think rightly so, we often refer to the miracle of the virgin birth, but so far as we know, there really wasn't anything miraculous about that.

Probably, our Lord Jesus, after nine months of gestation, was delivered just about like anybody else. I suspect that there were birth pangs. I suspect that Mary had labor pains.

But the real miracle was in the conception. It was the conception that was miraculous rather than the birth.

[14 : 52] And being born without sin, his entry into the world was certainly different. And his character and nature would be different, as we've already mentioned.

His sojourn on earth would be different. His purpose for being here is completely different from ours. It was to communicate, that's true.

But when we are born, our parents gave us birth that we might live.

But God, as a parent, and Mary, providing you humanity, gave birth to Jesus, that he might die.

Isn't that something? We are born to live. I remember when my firstborn came into the world, eight pounds and 14 ounces and 22 inches of him, Timothy Mark.

[15 : 58] I could not conceive of holding that precious little bundle in my arms and saying, well, son, you were born to die. You just wouldn't do that.

You were born to live. You lived fully. But Jesus was born to die.

You wonder what these magi had in mind or how informed they were when they came with their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Gold, of course, is self-explanatory.

And frankincense is a costly perfume-like. But myrrh is for burying.

You mix myrrh with aloes and you embalm bodies for burying, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came with myrrh and spices and aloes to embalm the body of Jesus.

[17 : 07] And you wonder what these wise men, magi from the East, really knew. There's more about them than is often told. And his words would be different.

His words would probably sound like a lot of other people's words, except they would come with a ring of authority and authenticity that nobody else's words had.

And the common people heard him gladly and they stood in amazement of what he said. And they often said things like, he speaks with authority, not like the scribes and Pharisees.

You know what the equivalent of that today would be? He doesn't sound like your ordinary preacher. He has words that really communicate something special.

What kind of a person would he be who could make the statement, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

[18 : 24] Who in the world would be qualified to make a statement like that? Either one who can back it up because it was every bit true, or some kind of an egomaniac.

You just about have to take your choice between the two. The words that I speak unto you, they are truth and they are life, Jesus said.

The words that others speak, sometimes we know we take with a grain of salt because you may be able to believe them and you may not. But when Jesus spoke, it was different.

On one occasion, scribes and Pharisees and the religious establishment was tired of putting up with all of the commotion that he caused and they sent a delegation of temple police to arrest Jesus and bring him to them.

and after a while, they returned without Jesus and they said, well, where is he? Why didn't you bring him? And all they could say was, no man ever spoke like this man.

[19 : 40] It was just something about his words. And ought we not to expect that about his words? Because, listen, this is the same one who said, let there be light.

light. And there was light. This one has something about his words that nobody else has about their words. No man ever spoke like this man.

His words would be different. His influence would be unsurpassed. If God became a man and dwelt among us, his influence would be far-reaching and undying and non-competitive.

With whom would you liken Jesus of Nazareth? Who would you put alongside him to compare with him in influence and honor and power?

Raw authority and power. But power that was never used to injure people or hurt people.

[20 : 58] But power that was always healing and remedial and corrective and loving. We all know what happens when when men are entrusted with too much power.

Many are unable to constrain themselves. Jesus never abused his power or his authority.

His influence is unsurpassed. There is no one man on the globe who is so frequently quoted or so often referred to in literature in languages all over the world as Jesus of Nazareth.

And you know he never left his own country except when he was when he was a baby. He was taken into Egypt and they spent a little while there until things cooled down back in Israel.

and then they returned. But other than that he really never left the country never owned a home never really owned anything to speak of.

[22 : 17] Foxes have holes birds of the air have their nests but the son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he wasn't complaining he was just making a statement of fact.

so he had none of this world's goods to speak of but do you know he enjoyed a measure of contentment that very few people know anything about because even though Jesus didn't have anything we would say by way of material possessions he didn't have anything but he didn't want anything.

He was just completely contented. He had no he he who owned a cattle on a thousand hills that could turn anything into anything he wanted to just didn't want it was a completely contented individual.

So his influence is unsurpassed and his ability to satisfy our spiritual hunger is real and lasting. Who else can do that?

Can you name any philosopher any king any ruler any dignitary of any century in all of human history in whom people could place their faith their trust their confidence and be at peace and relax and be satisfied?

[23 : 36] Have you ever heard anybody say you know my trust my confidence all of my hopes and dreams and my aspirations are in George Washington.

Boy I really appreciate that man. He just does so much for me. He makes my life complete. He gives me purpose and meaning and fulfillment and satisfaction.

Good old George yes sir he's I've never heard anybody say that but there are multitudes that say that about this one solitary exemplary life Jesus of Nazareth.

and we would expect this one who is the creator God to be able to exercise power over death itself and we know that's just what he did and then he was able to say because I live you shall live also.

Do you know of anybody that can stand alongside this one solitary figure of history Jesus of Nazareth utterly unique stands completely alone incarnation the enfleshment of God his becoming a man as I've said I think is surpassed only by the reason for his doing it that was he might affect our redemption God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself wow that is some message isn't it and the tendency is you hear it and you hear it and you hear it and it gets a little old and we start taking it for granted and we just need to step back and look at the magnificence and the awesome effect of what that really entailed

[26 : 01] God in human form come to earth one of us died in our place to give us life and we call that the gospel and indeed it is today I trust that you are familiar and acquainted with this one that we call the savior because he alone is in the business of saving that's why he has that name and that's why nobody else is entitled to wear that name savior Jesus of Nazareth so would you pray with me please loving father we once again just absolutely stand in awe of what this time of year really means and there is so much about it that we cannot grasp grasp because it's just too wonderful it's beyond us but what we do understand we love and we appreciate and we want our understanding and appreciation to grow so that our gratitude will grow and that out of our gratitude can come more effective and more loving service to you and to each other thank you once again for stooping to this earth to become one of us thank you for what you did thank you for the promise that ensues from that and we rejoice over not knowing what we shall be but we know that when you appear we will be like you for we will see you as you are and we would say even so come

Lord Jesus Father if there is one here today who is looking for real solid satisfying answers to the mystery of life and the question of the hereafter may they see with perhaps a vision they've never seen with before and understand that this incarnation thing happened that you might be able to maintain your justice and your holiness and still be able to redeem sinful fallen man through the work of that incarnated one the Lord Jesus Christ may they even now say Lord Jesus if you did this for me then I want to put all of my trust and my hope and my confidence the salvation of my soul in your hands thank you for becoming man so you could die for me would you make that your prayer dear friend if you've never trusted

Jesus as your personal savior this is your opportunity to personalize that and make him yours and he stands waiting for your response of faith and trust in him you'll never ever regret the decision and you'll have all eternity for which to thank him amen would you open your hymnal please to number 253 i'll ask you to stand and we'll sing just the first verse of silent night number 253 would you stand please silent night holy night all is bright all is bright down yon virgin water and child holy infant stated in the Gideon

Jesye faith as for peace Receive it, please.

We practice what is known as open communion, and that means that participating of communion is not dependent upon one being a member of Grace Bible Church, but it is necessary that you be a member of the body of Christ.

[31 : 22] And if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you are a member of the spiritual body of Christ, and you are in union with Christ, and you are therefore welcome and encouraged to partake of the elements with us.

I want to make it clear that this is not a religious ritual that makes Christians out of people. That's not what this is about. This is not designed to help you to heaven.

This is something that we do in remembrance of what we already have. So we do not partake of communion to become Christians, to become religious, or to become anything else.

We partake of communion because we have become Christians, and our partaking of these elements simply reminds us of the physicality of the body of Christ and the fact that he gave that body and shed his blood on our behalf.

So it is strictly a memorial service. We are to do it in remembrance of him, and we are to do it until he comes. Amen.

[32 : 47] Our Lord Jesus, the night he was betrayed, took bread and broke it and said, Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Amen. If you'll turn once again to number 253, we'll sing the second verse only of Silent Night, Shepherds Quake at the Sight.

Verse 2. Silent Night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight, Glory streams from heaven afar, Heavenly hosts, hallelujah, Christ the Savior is one, Christ the Savior is one, Christ the Savior is one.

And in the same manner he took the cup. Amen. Amen. In the same manner he took the cup. Amen. Jesus said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

As often as you eat of this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death until he comes. Accept our thanks, Father, for the presence of each one here, for both the seriousness and the joy with which we participate, reflecting upon the terrible price that was paid in your death, and anticipating with sheer joy the promise of your coming again.

We bless you for being an utterly, complete, and wonderful Savior. Amen. Your hymnal once again, please.

[35 : 34] And let's sing the third stanza. Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light. Number 253. Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light.

With the angels let us sing. Hallelujah to our King.

Christ the Savior is born. Christ the Savior is born.

In connection with our communion service, we usually receive a benevolent fund for the elders, and we would encourage you to give in accordance with your desire and your ability.

And if you write a check, just make it payable, please, to Grace Bible Church. And by the way, I probably also ought to mention that this is not the only time that you may give to the benevolent fund.

[37 : 05] Anytime you desire, if you would just make a notation along with your gift that it is for the benevolent fund, then it will go for that purpose.

And this is a discretionary fund that is dispensed at the will of the elders when and if situations arise within the congregation where people need some financial assistance, much along the line that Ron was talking about this morning with the furnishing of an apartment.

And then sometimes our help extends outside our walls to worthy cases of people who are not at Grace or from Grace but are brought to our attention as being particularly needy.

And we have an opportunity to help them from the benevolent fund, and we are able that way to maintain their anonymity so as to avoid any possible embarrassment.

So this is a fund that has served us very well over the years, and it has been solely because of your generosity, and we appreciate that. So we'll wait upon the gentlemen to distribute these, and you can give in accordance, as I said, with your ability and your desire.

[38 : 22] Thank you. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

And let's sing, if we may, our last verse, Silent Night, number 253. And we will use this for our benediction.

Verse 4, and if you will stand, please. Son of God, love's true light Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace Jesus, Lord, at thy birth Jesus, Lord, at thy birth

[41 : 08] And the text says, and after they had sung an hymn, they went out. Merry Christmas.