

FROM MANGER TO MAJESTY

REVELATION 1:13-17

It's hard to believe it's New Year's Day already. Can you believe another Christmas has come and gone?

You've taken down the stockings - disconnected the lights - recycled the tree - put up the ornaments and tinsel. *We decked the halls, now we cleared the deck.*

But though, the trimmings of Christmas can be shelved when the season ends, the ramifications of the Christmas message cannot be so neatly dismissed.

The *implication* of the *incarnation* spills over into every day of the year and ever facet of our lives.

I love what author Eugena Price writes about this time of year, ["Men and women everywhere sigh on December 26 and say they're glad Christmas is all over for another year. But it isn't over. 'Unto you is born a Savior.' It's just beginning! And it will go on forever."](#)

Christmas is a grand beginning. It's *the first rock in an avalanche of miracles - the landing of a massive invasion.* It marks a new day in the future of mankind.

The Babe of Bethlehem didn't remain in the manger, He climbed out of the crib, and embarked down the rough and rocky road of obedience to His Father.

He traveled a path of sharing, and serving, and suffering - and for His obedience He was rewarded in heaven with a position of exaltation, and glory, and everlasting honor... Messiah traveled from the manger in Bethlehem - through the

muck and mire of this evil world - to ascend to a position of supreme majesty.

The Babe with a name few knew, now possesses the name before which every knee will bow and every tongue will declare its surrender, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Jesus joined humanity on the ground floor. I suppose "infant" is the ultimate entry level job. Jesus came as a baby, but He has surely worked His way up the ladder.

Today, **the babe is now the boss.**

At Christmas we see the baby in the manger. We behold the tiny, and tender, and innocent tot. But the next time the world sees Jesus, He'll pierce the eastern sky. His sword will be drawn. He'll judge the wicked.

We'll call Him, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

In this morning's text, John gets a glimpse of this awe-inspiring, fearful figure... John's heart is still full of love for Jesus. His memories of the Lord were his most cherished possessions. But in Revelation 1 on a barren island called "Patmos," the Apostle John sees a vision.

He sees his Lord Jesus once again, but this time Jesus' appearance is radically different than what John had remembered. *Now Jesus is clothed in **majesty**...*

Jesus has gone from manger back to majesty!

In Revelation 1:13 John recounts what he saw, "One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last."

What an incredible vision... Obviously, a startling transformation had taken place... Jesus' **swaddling clothes** have now been replaced with *royal robes*.

The **shoulders** that felt the weight of man's sin now bear a *priestly breastplate*... His **face**, sunburned and weathered on earth, is now as pristine as snow...

The **gentle eyes** of Jesus are now *penetrating lazars* of truth.... His **calloused feet**, symbols of humility, are now *polished brass*, made to crush His enemies... The **tender voice** that calmed the sea now *roars like a waterfall*... To sum up John's revelation of Jesus, the **lamb** he had remembered, has now become a **lion**!

You can't take the Babe of Bethlehem and box Him up with the electric candles and plastic Santas... You can't keep him a babe. He no longer fits in the manger.

Yet there are many people who try. A Messiah tucked away in the manger is more manageable. He can be controlled if you keep Him in a cradle. The living Lord can be bound and gagged with swaddling clothes.

Mary Ellen Ashcroft writes, "We can tiptoe past a drowsy baby as we buy stocking stuffers for little Susan, or an electric lint remover for Aunt Phyllis, forgetful of African children dying, bellies swollen and flies swarming around their eyes. But it'd be ridiculous to try to sneak past this Jesus, His eyes aflame.

How could we give that cute Christmas mug (*penguins in red-and-green top hats*) to Betty at work without bothering to tell her about Christ - if we really thought she'd face those blazing eyes herself one day?

Our problem is that we want to keep Jesus a baby, not have Him swinging cords in temples and tastelessly knocking over tables. We prefer the *slumbering babe* to the *consuming fire...*"

Parents know you can take a baby anywhere. The kid doesn't have a say. Wrap her in a blanket. Plop her in a stroller - and you're off on what *you* want to do!

A baby may pose an inconvenience...

He might make travel a little more cumbersome...

But a baby doesn't stop a person from doing what *he or she wants to do!* It's only when the child grows older that they expect to have *A SAY* in the agenda.

This is why we like to keep Jesus a baby. By doing so, we can live our lives, and do what we want without interference. We can box Him up and take Him with us.

A Babe can't talk, so we can even pretend He agrees with *our* selfishness. As long as Jesus is a baby we are in control - *and Jesus... well, He's just religious cargo.*

But Jesus is no longer a baby! He's now all grown-up. He climbed out of the manger and ascended to majesty! Agree or not, *the babe is now the boss!*

For me, the most fascinating aspect of the Christmas story is that the second person of the Godhead, not only became a man, but **He remains a man forever!**

Today, 2000 years after His birth in Bethlehem, the King of heaven is still a man! The incarnation was permanent! God is forever attached to mankind.

The Word became flesh and He continues to wear it!

Some people think of the Son of God as coming to earth in human form - living, dying, rising from the dead, ascending to the Father, where He then shed His humanity to return to His pre-incarnate status.

But that's not so! **Once a man, He's always a man.**

As Bishop Moule wrote, "Incarnate, slain, and risen again, **Christ, still our brother, is crowned with glory and honor.**" Amazingly, the Lord is still our brother!

The NT teaches us Jesus is currently in heaven interceding for us - and here's the kicker, *as a man!*

1 Timothy 2:5, **"There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."**

Here's a stunning, amazing truth - right now, and forevermore to come - **a man**, Jesus the Messiah - sits on God's throne in heaven. *Chew on that for awhile!*

After the resurrection Jesus clearly maintained His humanity. He ate. Many and His disciples touched Him.

Remember, He invited Thomas to touch His scars.

Certainly, His resurrected body was clothed in eternal glory, but it was human nonetheless!

I believe we're going to be shocked when we get to heaven, and see Jesus. Isaiah 52:14 tells us when Jesus was executed He was severely beaten.

“His visage” (or face) was so disfigured He no longer looked human. He was bloodied - His beard was plucked out - His brow pierced with a crown of thorns.

The face of Jesus looked like that of a professional boxer who'd gone 15 rounds in a bloody brawl - or the victim of a plane crash, disfigured beyond recognition.

If the twelve disciples had held a funeral for our Lord Jesus I'm certain it would've been *"closed casket."*

In Revelation 5 John sees the glorified Christ as a Lamb, but as a Lamb that had **"been slain."** It's my belief, Jesus in heaven will still bear in His glorified body the scars of His crucifixion. He'll retain the ugly reminders of His sacrifice for our sin.

In fact, our first glimpse of Jesus may be startling!

It's not what most of us are expecting.

Isaiah says, **"So shall He (startle) many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider."** Rather than seeing beautiful contours, stout

muscles, rosy cheeks, and a handsome visage - we'll look into a damaged face.

An old friend of mind wrote a song entitled "[The Eternal Reminder](#)." It remains one of my favorites.

In the song he describes our first few moments in heaven, "[I cried in glee, 'No more will there be any trace of sorrow or of pain!' But my Savior shook His head and said, 'Some things remain.'](#) He showed to me His hands and feet, how badly they were scarred; and then I knew, as never before, how much I owed my Lord." The song ends, "[The pain and struggles known on earth are gone forevermore, save the only scars that will not fade are on my precious Lord.](#)"

Here's a riddle for you, "[What's the only man-made thing in heaven?](#)" And the sobering answer is, "[The scars still evident in the body of our Lord Jesus.](#)"

The story is told of a little girl whose mother was severely disfigured. When the girl started school her mom's appearance caused her great embarrassment.

Classmates called her mother a monster and poked fun at her. The little girl started to hate her mom.

It didn't take long for the mother to realize the problem. One day, she sat her daughter down, and the mother explained how she had acquired her scars...

When the child was a baby, one night their house caught fire. The mother had braved the flames to rescue her little girl. Her scars were the result of the severe burns she'd suffered to save her daughter's life.

The moment the daughter heard the story her attitude changed. She was never again embarrassed by her mother's scars. The same scars that were a *source of embarrassment* became a *point of pride*.

This may be our response to Jesus when we reach heaven. At first glance we'll be shocked and stunned at the Savior's scars. We might even recoil in horror.

But when we remember Jesus' scars were the price He paid for our salvation, our *tears of sorrow* will turn into *tears of joy, and praise, and eternal gratitude*.

God became a human, not just for the 30-plus years Jesus lived on earth, but forever! God cares about mankind enough to become a man for all eternity.

Hebrews 2 discusses God's plan for mankind. The writer quotes Psalm 8 - written by a shepherd named David - "[What is man that You are mindful of him?](#)"

Imagine David, just a young shepherd boy, out in his father's fields with his family's sheep. He's curled up in his sleeping bag, under a starry sky. He's eyes are fixed on the heavens, marveling at an ocean of stars.

As young boys do, David may've imagined himself sailing across the cosmic sea - a star-traveler exploring the *wonders of worlds* different than his own.

No doubt, David was admiring God's artistry and genius - *when it hits him!* While he is on earth thinking about God - God is in heaven thinking about him.

What a stunning revelation! David marvels at God's grace, "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him?"

Understand, on a clear night in the country - away from the city lights - you can see about 5000 stars with the naked eye. With a 4-inch telescope two million stars become visible. Through the powerful 200-inch telescope at California's Mount Palomar Observatory you can see up to a billion stars. The universe is a very big place with endless attractions and fascinations.

But what if you could view the universe from God's vantage point? What if you were perched in heaven, sitting on the precipice of the universe? Just think of the vistas you could behold... the sights your eyes could see... quasars, supernovas, black holes, etc.

Yet David marveled... of all God's infinite interests His attention was focused on man. David was preoccupied with heaven, but heaven was preoccupied with David. The mind of God was on a humble man.

Here's the truth that God revealed to David...

Throughout His vast universe God narrows His focus to one tiny galaxy - and one tiny solar system - and one tiny planet. And of the millions of creatures that live on that tiny planet there's one creature of which God values more than all the others. To God, *the cream de la creme* is a creature on planet earth called *human*.

*But why mankind? Why has God invested so much attention on humanity? We're beings dirged from the dirt - molded from mud - nothing but *animated ashes*.*

Sweep the floor, and you're reminded of how frail and fleeting we are. As the rock group Kansas use to sing, "**All we are is dust in the wind.**" And the Bible agrees. Psalm 103 declares, "**(God) knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.**" The common funeral chant sums us up, "**Dust to dust - ashes to ashes.**"

David understood man's value is wrapped up not in *what he is* - but in what *God intended him to be*. Man is important because we were made in God's image.

Our real worth can't be measured by our current condition. **You have to return to our creation, and fast forward to our coronation – to grasp our full value.**

Because of the damaging effects of sin, mankind is no longer a fraction of the glorious creature we *were designed to be* and *will one day become*.

Realize, all living things were made after their kind, but man was modeled after God. We were created to rule by His side to enjoy a **sweet intimacy** with God, and exercise a **superior influence** over His creation.

God exalted mankind, and intended for us to have dominion over the rest of His creation. We are to rule.

Hebrews 1 says even angels are commanded to minister to the needs of the saints. In 1 Corinthians 6 we're told that our destiny includes judging angels.

Mankind was the *cap and crown* of God's creation. We're a divine masterpiece. We're the one creature created by God to actually share in His incredible glory.

There is a legend mentioned in the Jewish Talmud...

When the archangel, Lucifer, got wind of God's *plan for man*, he grew jealous. Man would be made in the image of God. We would begin a little lower than the angels - physically inferior, no doubt - but in time man would eclipse the angels in *glory and greatness*.

Lucifer couldn't stand the thought of serving a horde of mud-dobbers - *human hairballs* - creatures made from dust! So he became determined to thwart God's plan. Lucifer and his minions first tried to **stop** creation.

When he failed he tried to **spoil** creation. His goal was to do everything he possibly could to keep man away from God, and His plan for our promotion.

Of course, Satan succeeded with the first man, Adam. He tempted him to sin, and stole his dominion. Satan stripped Adam of his prestige and preeminence.

And since then, rather than *thrive* the Adam's family has just struggled to *survive*. Today, human beings live in a fallen world where we've unleashed a Pandora's Box of pain, and suffering, and evil. We've become a slave to our own sin and its destructive consequences.

Because of our sin man has gone from *honor to horror* - from *glory to gory*. Man was made to dominate and shine; instead he now lives defeated and soiled.

America's most famous philosopher, Will Rogers, said, "God made man a little lower than the angels, and he has been getting a little lower ever since."

This is why Messiah became a man - why He was *plastered to our predicament*. This is why God allows Himself to be held prisoner to our humanity. He's joined this fallen world to free it... to regain for humankind the dignity and dominion we lost... to cleanse us of our sin... to remove our shame... to restore our honor...

Jesus adopted our destiny because He was determined to alter it forever! *Jesus is now God stooping down and man standing up*. Our Lord Jesus is the *humiliation of God and glorification of man*. Jesus became a prisoner of our plight to restore our **destiny!**

It's interesting, when David the shepherd boy wrote Psalm 8 he was thinking of mankind in general, but the writer of the book of Hebrews applies this passage to one man specifically, Jesus. In becoming a part of the human family, Jesus could fulfill David's prophecy...

In taking on a human body Jesus was made a little lower than the angels, but through His obedience and death He has now put all things under His feet. *Our Lord Jesus became the man all men were meant to be!*

Jesus has now been crowned with glory and honor.

And according to Hebrews 2:10 He's bringing many sons into glory with Him. The Messiah in the manger has embraced *our destiny* so He can elevate us to *His majesty*.

One day we'll share His glory - *possess the same kind of body - even rule and reign with Christ!*

In the Bible whenever a human sees an angel he hits the deck. Angelic creatures cause a panic. Angels are so awesome they frighten human observers.

Yet 1 Corinthians 6:3 tells us one day believers will judge angels. We started out looking up to the angels, but in the end they'll be shining our shoes. Redeemed humans will be of a higher rank than even angels.

We're told in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is."

We'll be like Jesus. We'll have the same body...

Those same fiery eyes, the sparkling countenance, the bronze feet... Believers in Jesus are destined to one day be like Him - we'll be spiritual heavyweights.

CS Lewis once remarked, "A regenerate man in glory would be something we in our ignorance might be tempted to worship." If we saw a saint in the glory he'll one day possess, we might mistake that human being for the divine. The NAS Bible translates Psalm 8:5, "thou hast made man a little lower than God."

Indeed, God will exalt mankind to dizzying heights.

Paul Billheimer in his book *"Destined for the Throne"* writes these words, "God has exalted redeemed humanity to such a sublime rank that it is impossible for Him to elevate them any

further without bringing them into the inner circle of the Godhead itself."

There's a lot of talk these days about positive mental attitude and boosting one's self-esteem. *You need to achieve self-actualization. Be the best you, you can be!*

The Human potential movement says man is still evolving. He's yet to reach his highest potential. The New Age believes humans are destined to be gods.

Well, I agree man is not a fraction of what *he can be or will be* - but the critical error made today is this... **Man is not rising upward, He's fallen downward.**

As Augustine put it, **"Man is a good thing spoiled"**. Mankind lost his glory when he rebelled against God - and his glory won't be restored apart from God.

I'm sure you've noticed that today **"everyone is trying to find themselves."** Yet for most folks *"finding themselves"* is only swapping one shirt for another until you find the one that itches least. The irony is you can't really discover your true purpose, your real identity, your ultimate destiny - until you find your Lord Jesus.

Jesus is the man as all men were meant to be!

God wants you to reach your full human potential, but not by esteeming *self*, but by esteeming *the Savior*.

You become like God not by *trying to be God yourself*, but by *letting Jesus be God in your life*. As big as the universe is, it's still only big enough for one God.

Humble yourself and surrender your will to Jesus.

Bow to Him in this life and God will exalt you with Him in the life to come! You'll "Be all that you can be..." not by joining the Army, but by first joining Jesus.

Jesus became human - and He remains human - to guarantee our exaltation. Jesus descended from *majesty to manger* - then ascended from *manger to majesty* so we can stay in step. Andrew Murray writes of Jesus, "His humanity is the revelation of what we can be; His divinity is the pledge that we can be it."

Once a mechanic and a sculptor were competing to create a statue that would sit on the pinnacle of a huge skyscraper. The sculptor's statue was chosen...

It was an exquisite piece of art - filled with meticulous detail. But as the crane hoisted it upwards into the air it lost its definition, and looked like a shapeless block.

That's when they tried the mechanic's statue. On the ground it seemed clumsy and uncouth, but as it rose higher and higher to its perch, its deformities vanished. The further it ascended the more elegant it looked.

And this is the Christian's plight. Now we appear rough and uncut. We're nothing but dust. But as we ascend with Jesus we take on a breathtaking beauty.

And here's why all this matters. *Tomorrow's destiny produces today's determination.* I'm no prophet, but I guarantee you in the very near future you'll be tempted to sin - you'll be lured into a compromising situation - *and that's when you need to be sure of your destiny!*

Why sell out to cheap thrills and earthly promotion, when in just a little while we'll join Jesus in His glory?

Why swap God's eternal riches for this world's *tasteless treasures* and its *passing praise*. Why risk a tragic compromise when so much is at stake?

In 1 John 3:3 the Apostle John is speaking of our future glory when he says, "Everyone who has this hope in (Christ) purifies himself, just as He is pure."

It was Emerson who penned this refrain, "Could you in vision see yourself, the man God meant. You never more would be the man you are, content."

In his science fiction space adventure "*Perelandra*," CS Lewis wonders what it will be like to taste fruit in a perfect world. He has an earthling travel to a planet unsoiled by sin. This mortal man finds un-fallen fruit.

Lewis writes, "Great globes of yellow fruit hung from the trees... He picked one and turned it over. His finger punctured it and went through into coldness. He put the slit to his lips, extracting the smallest, experimental sip, but the first taste put his caution to flight.

It was so different from other tastes it seemed wrong to call it a taste at all. It was like the discovery of a new genus of pleasure, unheard of among men... For one drink of this on earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed." Even heaven's simplest pleasures will provoke a kind of ecstasy unheard of on earth today

Here's my point, *heaven is worth the wait!*

We'll need glorified bodies to handle all the heavenly highs. Why forfeit *eternal bliss* for *earthly attractions*?

To know what awaits me in eternity, builds up my immunity to sinful temptations in the here and now.

Granted, the Christian life is not a bed of roses. To enter God's glory we may be called on to sacrifice!

Numerous passages tell us that if we *suffer with Jesus now*, we shall *reign with Him then*. We must *bow* in this life to be *exalted* in the life to come. *Serving* is needed preparation for *ruling*. But in light of our future glory, our present suffering is a small price to pay.

The Apostle Paul says as much, Romans 8:18, "*The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*"

Heaven's first second will be joy enough to more than make up for all the pain this earth dished out.

Hey, it's okay to celebrate Christmas, and recall the birth of Jesus - *just don't leave Him in the manger*.

Jesus is all grown up now! The child of peasants has become the King of glory! He's been upgraded from a *crib* to a *crown* - and from the *manger* to *majesty*.

Make Jesus as much a part of your New Year as you did your Christmas celebration. Let Him fill every day, and let Him color your world this next year.

The incarnation of Jesus accomplished more than add another holiday to the calendar. It did more than create a Christmas. The incarnation now marks the turning point for every person who'll walk this planet.

Let me close with an incident recorded in Luke 2.

Joseph and Mary had brought their newborn Son to the Temple to be circumcised, when Jesus is seen by an old man named Simeon. He's waited his whole life for this moment. He utters a prophecy, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many..."

Because of Christmas, God has forever altered the destiny of the human race. Every man rises or falls based on his response to the Messiah in the manger.

Jesus now occupies the pivotal position in the universe. Will you force Him to oversee your *final fall*, or will you bow to Him so He'll insure your *future glory*?

The choice is yours... Just remember, all year, every year, the babe in the manger is now the Lord of glory!