

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, January 8, 2012 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

A Giant Step for God – John 1:14

Introduction: On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong took a step that not only changed his life, but also affected the life of everyone on this planet. When Armstrong set foot on the moon, his first words were, *“That’s one small step for man. One giant leap for mankind.”* And indeed, that small step was a giant leap forward for science and space exploration.

Over 2,000 years ago, another step was taken that was an even greater giant leap for mankind. This step took place in a small, obscure village nestled in the promised land of Palestine called Bethlehem. The step occurred as the eternal supreme being of the universe emerged out of His throne room in the splendor of heaven, and stepped into the realm of humanity in the bodily form of a baby. God made His human appearance on earth in the form of His very own Son, Jesus.

Indeed this was a giant step for God, for never before had He interacted in this way with man. Never before had He taken such a risk. But this step had to be taken if man was ever going to understand God, and if God was ever going to get through to man to be reconciled with God, and be saved from his sin. God took the giant step and mankind should be thankful He did.

Last week we said that we were going to start taking a closer look at Jesus this year, so this morning, we’ll start by looking at a fundamental belief in the person of Jesus. You know, it matters what we believe about Jesus because we can’t even approach the subject of Christianity without believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Jesus is central to Christianity, central to the Bible, and central to the church. If a person is going to be a Christian, experience the blessings of God, serve Him through obedience, and spend eternity in heaven, he or she must believe in Jesus as the Son of God. All of Christianity and the life of the church hinges on what one believes about Jesus as the Son of God.

This morning, let’s examine three important facets of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ – the Son of God. First, let’s focus on:

1. His Incarnation

A belief in Jesus as the Son of God is paramount. In other words, we must believe that Jesus is the God/Man - fully God and fully Man. This one truth is the one that all other beliefs about Jesus hinge upon.

John 1:14 (HCSB) says, *“The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* The “Word” in the Greek is “logos” and it literally means *“the divine expression.”* Jesus is the divine expression of God and John beautifully portrays that the divine “Word” became a human being and took up His residence among us.

This is the greatest step ever taken in human history because it implies two things – That God knows man and that Jesus reveals who God is.

Since God became man in Jesus Christ, we know that God knows man. During World War II, Lawrence of Arabia is reported to have wanted to jump on the side of the Allies. When the allied leaders learned of this, they sent word to him and told him, *“If you’re going to lead us, you must become one with us. You must eat the same food we eat, sleep in our tents, accept the same risks we’ve accepted, assume the same difficulties we’ve faced, live the same life we live, and you must do these things better than we do.”*

The Allied leaders were saying that if Lawrence of Arabia wanted lead and expect others to follow, he must identify himself with those he would lead. That is exactly what God was doing when He took this giant step. He knew man because He had created man, but in order to fully understand man, He knew He must experience what man experienced. He must put Himself in their skin, and this He did in Jesus. Jesus walked where man walked, and lived where man lived. The Word really did become flesh and took up His residence among mankind.

Now, some people have disputed the existence of Jesus, but even outside the Scriptural realm, there is evidence that Jesus indeed was a real historical person. For example, Sir J.G. Frazer, a secular historian, wrote in his classic work, The Golden Bough, that, *“From the earliest times down to the present day many sects have believed that Christ, nay God himself, is incarnate...”*

He continued on and wrote of “*the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the great religious and moral teacher who founded Christianity and was crucified at Jerusalem, under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. The testimony of the Gospels confirmed by the hostile evidence of Tacitus and the younger Pliny appears amply sufficient to establish these facts to the satisfaction of all unprejudiced inquirers.*” (pg. 412).

Of all the Scriptural evidence, probably the most telling is that written by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: “*For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time, most of whom remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one abnormally born, He also appeared to me.*” **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (HCSB).**

In this one statement, Paul states the historical accuracy of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

So, yes...Jesus was a real person. He became a man in His incarnation, but He remained fully God as the full revelation of God. The writer of Hebrews, speaking of the relationship of Jesus and God, stated that “*He is the radiance of His glory, the exact expression of His nature...*” **Hebrews 1:3a (HCSB).** I don’t know how this came about, but I know enough to understand that:

- Jesus was just enough man to be hungry, yet He was God enough to proclaim Himself as “*the Bread of Life.*”
- Jesus was just man enough to thirst, yet He was God enough to proclaim that He “*will give you living water.*”
- Jesus was just man enough to become weary, yet He was God enough to say, “*Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” **Matthew 11:28 (HCSB).**
- Jesus was just man enough to get caught in a raging storm at sea, yet He was God enough to command the winds to cease blowing and the sea to be still.
- Jesus was just man enough to be tempted by Satan in the wilderness, yet He was God enough to remain sinless.
- Jesus was just man enough to weep over the dying of His friend Lazarus, yet He was God enough to raise that same man from the dead.
- And Jesus was just man enough to die on a cross, yet He was God enough to rise again three days later, victorious over death.

Yes, Jesus is the God/Man! And being the God/Man, He not only knows man’s problems, He also knows God’s solutions! As the writer of Hebrews so eloquently put it, “*...we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin.*”

Hebrews 4:15 (HCSB). Next, I want us to look at:

2. His Dedication

It has been said that the true measure of a man is his degree of dedication and the impact and influence that person’s life has. And throughout the ages, no one even comes close to comparing to Jesus and His obedience to His Father’s will or His service to humanity. Whatever God the Father wanted His Son to do, He did. And Jesus understood His obedient relationship with His Father at an early age. He asked His earthly parents in **Luke 2:49 (HCSB)**, “*Why were you searching for Me?...Didn’t you know that I had to be in My Father’s house?*” Jesus was dedicated to obeying His Father, even if it meant sacrificing earthly pleasures as He proved when Satan tried to thwart His efforts through temptation in the wilderness. And Jesus was dedicated to obedience even to the point of death as He explained to His disciples when He told them “*that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...be killed, and be raised the third day.*” **Matthew 16:21 (HCSB).**

But Jesus was also dedicated to the needs of people. He settled His ministry in Galilee because that is where the greatest concentration of people was. He purposefully sought out people and met them where their needs were. He said it Himself when He announced His public ministry in **Luke 4:18-19 (HCSB)**: “*The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*” Jesus was fully and completely dedicated to the needs of people.

I ran across this illustration that speaks to the impact of Jesus: “*Socrates taught for 40 years. Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40, and Jesus for only 3. Yet the influence of Christ’s ministry infinitely transcends the impact left*

by the combined 130 years of teaching of the greatest philosophers of all antiquity. Jesus painted no pictures; yet some of the finest paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and da Vinci received their inspiration from Him.

Jesus wrote no poetry; but Dante, Milton, and scores of the world's greatest poets were inspired by Him.

Jesus composed no music; still Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, and Mendelssohn reached their highest perfection of melody in the hymns, symphonies, and oratorios they composed in His praise. Every sphere of human greatness has been enriched by this humble carpenter of Nazareth.” (Source: Henry G. Bosch, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations Signs of The Times*).

Finally, let's look at another aspect of Jesus life that speaks to His status as the Son of God:

3. His Exultation

When Jesus entered human history, it was indeed a giant step for God but it resulted in a tremendous benefit for humanity. After Jesus fulfilled His purpose for coming to the earth with His death on the cross, He entered into an exulted state.

You know, it's common for people to be praised and lauded more in their death than they might have been in their life. One example would be former baseball commissioner, Bart Giamante. Giamante was a good baseball commissioner and was well respected by most of his peers and by most players. However, he had the unfortunate distinction of being the commissioner in office when it was discovered that Pete Rose had bet on his own team while he was the manager of the Cincinnati Reds. Giamante had to be the one who let the hammer down on Rose and ban him from baseball for life. When that happened, Rose was furious at Giamante, and called him every name in the book for banning him from the game he loved. However, Giamante died suddenly shortly after the Rose incident, and Rose changed his tone. Out of respect, Rose stopped talking of Giamante in a negative tone, and simply said that he was doing his job. Now, it could be that Rose was thinking that he now might have a chance to be reinstated by a new commissioner, but you see my point. A person's death has an impact on what people think about them.

Well, it was that way for Jesus, but in a purely spiritual sense. He was despised and shamefully crucified on earth, but after His death, He was gloriously exalted. The cruelty and humility of the cross was exchanged for the royalty and majesty of heaven. The rough wood of the cross was exchanged for the polished scepter of a heavenly reign.

The resurrection of Jesus brought about a change from mortal to immortality and from weakness and limitations to unlimited to the absolute power of God. Yes, we must believe in the exultation and the salvation of Jesus in order for His exultation to become our exultation. One day, we too will be exulted into His throne room. One day, we too will be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. One day, we too will put off morality and put on immortality. One day, we too will reign with Jesus in heaven, and then, as George Barnard wrote in His beloved hymn, we will “*exchange (that old rugged cross) someday for a crown.*”

The story of Jesus' life and death is not just an ancient story of a good man. His story is one that gives the opportunity for eternal life and joy forever. For as Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:9-11 (HCSB)**, “*For this reason God also highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow— of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

As our living Lord, Jesus is ruling over history. As our living Lord, Jesus has the power to search our hearts and show us where we stand with Him. As our living Lord, Jesus has the power to forgive us and save us from our sins. As our living Lord, Jesus can satisfy our every need, answer our deepest questions, and solve our most complicated problems. Because Jesus lives, we can face an uncertain future with hope and confidence.

Conclusion: God took a lot of steps trying to reveal Himself to man, but His greatest step was when He stepped out of heaven and into the skin of humanity. When He took that step, He was coming to rescue us. Won't you let Him take that giant step into your heart and life today? He will if you'll take just a small step of faith and trust Him. It's a step of believing that everything God has done has been done for you. It's a step of realizing that your life is not your own, and you can't do anything in your own power to save yourself. You've been bought with a price, and that price was paid by Jesus on the cross. God took a giant step toward you when He sent His Son to be your Savior. Will you take a small step of faith toward Him today? Believe in this Jesus. Believe in His incarnation. Believe in His dedication. Believe in His exultation. Come, and give Him your life!