

# Dartmouth

## Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church  
Series: Who is God/Who God Is Lesson 14 (Advent Attribute #2)  
Scripture: Luke 2:1-7  
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M., D.Min.  
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### ***A God Capable of Incarnation***

**Luke 2:1-7** (ESV) In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup>And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Introduction** Do you remember the day you were born?

- You broke your mother's water.
- You scrambled up her endocrine system and put it on red alert: four major hormonal systems go active once you bullied your Mom into labor and birth: **oxytocin**, the hormone of love; **endorphins**, hormones of pleasure and transcendence; **adrenaline and noradrenaline** (epinephrine and norepinephrine), hormones of excitement; and **prolactin**, the mothering hormone.<sup>1</sup>
- You starting *twistin the night away*.
- And you boogied on down the birth canal causing your mom pain like she couldn't believe.
- You popped out and greeted the world with a hearty blast of outrage!
- And along the way you forced your parents to download a whole dictionary of new words into their vocabulary<sup>2</sup>.
- You then changed your folks' lives FOREVER!

CHILDBIRTH IS THE WEIRDEST THING ON EARTH!

Let me shift gears here. If you want to get to know God you need to learn what He is like, right? Do you think that is a valuable thing? Do you think everybody automatically thinks accurately about God? If you decline to study

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bellybelly.com.au/birth/ecstatic-birth-natures-hormonal-blueprint-for-labor/>

<sup>2</sup> Like amniotic fluid, cephalopelvic disproportion, vernix caseosa, effacement, epidural, fontanelle, meconium, Pitocin, umbilical cord and finally postpartum.

who God is, you will probably have a very weak view of God. Unless you seek to understand that God is knowable and *desires* to be known you will satisfy yourself with a shallow and incomplete knowing of what He has revealed about Himself. This is probably where most people are... I, on the other hand, am fascinated with our God. I have not yet grown bored with Who God is, despite the fact that I have been looking into this since 1972.

We are doing this series to carefully consider what God's characteristics might be? I think that HE takes it seriously when people talk about Him. He wants to be spoken of correctly just as you might like for yourself. The third commandment says, ***You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*** (Exodus 20:7) God takes His name seriously. Those who know Him and know what His name is will do the same. In essence, it is an early and an important part of the Christian life to know what God is like.

So, we have so far touched on the attributes of His SOLITARINESS, His SOVEREIGNTY, His TRINITY, His HOLINESS, His LOVE, His JEALOUSY, His OMNISCIENCE, His OMNIPOTENCE, His OMNIPRESENCE, His IMMUTABILITY (unchangeableness), His GOODNESS, His BEAUTY, His GENEROSITY and His ETERNITY. Fourteen attributes so far.

*“How many more”*, you might be asking? Are these boring terms to you? Or perhaps you're not sure if these are *all true*? I assure you that they are. However, today we explore one that is not on ANY “list of attributes” (including Challies' chart) that I have seen and yet it is believed by all orthodox believers in Christ. Another attribute of God is His ability to become a human being. “Wait—what? God is God and man is man and one cannot become the other!” But God did become a human. We say—we believe—we are quite sure that the eternal, loving, sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, utterly holy Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, became a human. At the heart of the Nicene Creed (325 AD) are these words:

“And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father...”

Mary's baby came down the birth canal and came out into this world in the same way that all of us did (unless you were born by caesarian section). I have witnessed two births—our daughters Jocelyn and Susanna. Labor began and a number of hours passed. Then each joined this world—Jocelyn at about 5:30 in the afternoon, Susanna at about 5:30 in the morning. (In Susanna's case I was freaked out because they told me I had to wear a hat but they issued me no hat

and so I was running down the hall in Charlton screaming, “I have no hat, I have no hat!!!” The doc said “forget the stupid hat and get your butt over here and help me out.”

*My* Dad never witnessed a birth (to my knowledge), mine or anyone else’s. On this day, 65 years ago, while my mother was in a 23-hour labor, he smoked a carton of cigarettes and read some long, boring novel. I don’t know what Joseph did while Mary was in labor, transition and delivery but presumably he was right there, since they were in a stable of some kind and there was no “waiting room”. Mary underwent labor pains and had no epidural, placental abruption occurred, full dilation, the baby crowned, and presumably Joseph guided his head out and there He is—Mary’s firstborn son, followed I assume by the afterbirth. All there was in the stable was a manger, which is a feeding trough, and so it is easy to imagine Joseph dragging it over and placing the newborn baby in it. They had rags or white cloths of some kind, carefully cleaned off the vernix caseosa, and wrapped the baby up, swaddling him so that He was a little bundle. He had two eyes looking up and probably cried since that is the way babies gobble up oxygen for the first time. Joseph is pretty much exhausted and Mary is *definitely* exhausted. There were no insurance cards, sanitary protocols, labor & delivery nurses or social workers. We don’t know how long they waited and rested, probably not too long before Joseph began the post-delivery search!

I ADD this to the list of attributes of God because I am amazed that God could and would do things in this way.

- The Father and the Son could have easily just *beamed the Son down*, as an adult human and launched His ministry just like that. But then, something about knowing what it was to grow up as a human would not have happened. It was important to God that the Messiah would be fully human, in every sense, including a normal birth experience. I do NOT believe, as so much **medieval, Baroque and Renaissance** art has Jesus depicted that He was some strange kind of super-precocious hyper-human baby that looked out at you with adult eyes and knowledge and coolness.
- The Son could have come in His first coming as He will in His second coming--***Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.*** (Revelation 19:11-13).
- Moviemakers imagine dramatic arrivals with all kinds of lightning and flash and bravado like how the Terminator came.

WHO WOULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED THE MOST DRAMATIC ARRIVAL OF THE MESSIAH AS A BABY? Well, 720 years or so before the first Christmas, Isaiah foresaw such a thing:

**Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.** (Isaiah 7:14)

**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** (Is. 9:6)

As something God could do, and be, through His Son, we love that He would identify with His created beings—people—so closely.

As something God could do, and be, through His Son, we love that the writer to the Hebrews wrote (4:15), about Jesus Christ, **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.** Our Great High Priest is one of us! He is like you and me in every way yet not polluted or ruined by sin. When you talk to Him you are talking to someone who understands what it is to be human.

As something God could do, and be, through His Son, we love that He **is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.** (Romans 8:34b). The Son, who came as a baby, lived as a boy, as a teen, as a twenty-something and then as a man, prays for us now.

Do you want to know God? Don't underestimate the fact that He was capable of becoming a human, through the coming to earth as a baby. We love that. It is who He is!

Let's sing:

What Child is this  
Who laid to rest  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing  
Haste, haste, to bring Him praise,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

COMMUNICABLE

- BEING
- PURPOSE
- MENTAL
- MORAL
- SUMMARY

INCOMMUNICABLE

To study God's attributes is to study His character, to answer questions like, Who is God? and What is God like? A typical classification of God's attributes divides them into those that are incommunicable (those that he does not share or "communicate" to anyone or anything else) and communicable (those that he shares with other beings). Like most theological classifications, this one is imperfect but still helpful as we seek to understand what is so far beyond ourselves.

God's communicable attributes can be further categorized into: attributes of God's being, mental attributes, moral attributes, attributes of purpose and "summary" attributes (attributes that, in a more particular way, specify each of the others).

It is important to consider that God is not simply the sum of his attributes. His attributes are not separate from one another, but each one modifies or qualifies each of the others.

**SUGGESTED RESOURCES:**  
 Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem  
 The Attributes of God by A.W. Pink

- TRANSCENDENCE** — GOD TRANSCENDS ALL CREATION AND IS UNKNOWABLE APART FROM HIS SELF-INITIATED REVELATION.
- IMMANENCE** — GOD IS ACTIVE IN THE WORLD AND IN OUR DAILY LIVES. GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR EXISTENCE AND INVITES US TO WELCOME HIS GRACIOUS, WORKING, AND LOVING.
- ASEITY** — GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT AND SELF-SUPPORTING AND HAS NO NEED OF HUMAN SERVICES OR THE HELP OF CREATION.
- OMNIPRESENCE** — GOD HAS NO SIZE OR SHAPE AND IS PRESENT IN ALL PLACES WITH HIS ENTIRE BEING.
- UNITY** — GOD'S WHOLE BEING INCLUDES ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES AT ALL TIMES. THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE NEVER IN OPPOSITION.
- ETERNALITY** — GOD HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, NEVER HAD BEGINNING AND ENDING, AND EXPERIENCING NO SUCCESSION OF MOMENTS.
- IMMUTABILITY** — GOD CANNOT CHANGE IN HIS BEING, PRACTICES, PURPOSES, AND PROCESSES.
- GLORY** — THE CREATED BRIGHTNESS THAT SUBSEQUENT GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.
- BEAUTY** — GOD IS THE POSSESSOR AND THE SUM OF ALL DESIRABLE QUALITIES.
- BLESSEDNESS** — GOD DELIGHTS FULLY IN HIMSELF AND IN ALL THAT REFLECTS HIS CHARACTER.
- PERFECTION** — GOD FULLY POSSESSES ALL EXCELLENT QUALITIES AND LACKS NO QUALITIES THAT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR HIM.
- JEALOUSY** — GOD ALWAYS WANTS TO PROTECT HIS OWN HONOR.
- GOODNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF ALL GOOD, AND ALL HE IS AND DOES IS WORTHY OF APPROVAL.
- PEACE** — GOD IN HIS BEING AND ACTING IS SEPARATE FROM ALL CORRUPTION AND DISORDER.
- HOLINESS** — GOD IS SEPARATED FROM SIN AND HE IS COMMITTED TO DENYING HIS OWN HONOR.
- LOVE** — GOD ETERNALLY GIVES OF HIMSELF TO OTHERS.
- MERCY** — GOD IS GOOD TO THOSE IN PERIL AND DEFENSE AGAINST GOOD TO THOSE WHO DESERVE PUNISHMENT.
- RIGHTEOUSNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF WHAT IS RIGHT AND HE ALWAYS ACTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT IS RIGHT. THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S JUSTICE.
- WRATH** — GOD INTENSELY HATES ALL SIN.
- TRUTHFULNESS** — GOD IS THE TRUTH. GOD WHERE KNOWLEDGE AND WORDS ARE BOTH TRUE AND THE FINAL STANDARD OF TRUTH.
- KNOWLEDGE** — GOD FULLY KNOWS HIMSELF AND ALL ACTING AND POSSIBLE THINGS. THERE IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S OMNISCIENCE.
- WISDOM** — GOD ALWAYS CHOOSES THE BEST GOALS AND THE BEST MEANS TO THOSE GOALS.
- WILL** — GOD APPROVES AND DETERMINES TO BRING ABOUT EVERY ACTION NECESSARY FOR HIS JUSTICE AND ACTING IN ALL THAT COMES.
- FREEDOM** — GOD DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES.
- OMNIPOTENCE** — GOD IS ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS FULLY. GOD EXERCISES COMPLETE POWER OVER HIS CREATION AND OVER HIS CREATURES.
- INVISIBILITY** — GOD'S TOTAL BEING, ALL OF HIS BEING, WILL NEVER BE VISIBLE TO US.
- SPIRITUALITY** — GOD IS A BEING WHO IS NOT MADE UP OF MATTER AND WHO CANNOT BE PERCEIVED BY OUR BODILY SENSES.