

WORD MADE FLESH TEACHING

THE INCARNATION: FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God knew from the very beginning that Adam and Eve would disobey Him. He also knew He would offer His Son as a sacrifice to bring the people back to Him. He knew that He was going to have to die for us, and He still chose to create us with an eternal soul, free will and in His image and likeness.

Right after the Fall of Man, the Lord God promised to redeem the human race, "After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall."

God's original plan for human beings is that they would enjoy His love and grace in His presence. In Genesis, God would walk through the Garden in the cool of the day. God did not create us to fall from His grace, but we did. Adam and Eve chose to disobey and rebel against the will of the Lord. God would not prevent human beings from turning against Him, because He created them with their own free will, but He did offer a plan of redemption to them—a second chance to be realized in future generations. This is announced after the Fall of Adam and Eve when God speaks to the serpent and tells it that one day a man will come to destroy evil. God did not abandon His people, "This passage in Genesis is called the **Protoevangelium** ('first gospel'): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers... Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the *Protoevangelium* as Mary, the mother of Christ, the 'new Eve'."

So, right off the bat, we were told what to wait for—we know that the darkness will one day be overpowered by the light. We just weren't told when.

WHY DID THE WORD BECOME FLESH?

As Christians, we profess that, "for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." This is a central belief in the Catholic faith (hence its place in the Creed.) St. John tells us that, "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." This moment is called the **Incarnation**; the moment when the Second Person of the Holy Trinity took on a human nature and human flesh, becoming man for the sake of our salvation. He was born of a woman and given the name Jesus. Why did Jesus do this? He did it because He loves, but also so we could be restored to the original justice enjoyed by our first parents before the Fall. Without God becoming man, man would never be able to atone for his guilt, "The Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it." St. Athanasius tells us, "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." Christ incarnate gives us the chance to return to God's love and once again bear His likeness.

At the time chosen by the Lord, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary to ask her if she would be the mother of the redeemer—*she was asked to be the Mother of God*. She cooperated with the Lord and through the power of the Holy Spirit, she conceived the Son of God. God prepared a place for His Son in the person of Mary, which is why she plays a great role in the story of salvation.

CCC 410

Genesis 3:8
Genesis 3:15
CCC 410-412

CCC 456
Nicene Creed
John 1:14

CCC 461
CCC 460

Luke 1:26-38

It is important to realize that Jesus Christ was not "part" man and "part" God. Christ is all man and all God: He has two natures. If He were not completely God, He would not have sufficient power to release us from the bonds of sin. He needed to be fully human to share the guilt of our sin and atone for the injustice of our first parents Adam and Eve. The Incarnation is the moment that changed salvation history and made God present among us in a way not seen since the Garden of Eden.

FOUR REASONS FOR THE INCARNATION

It is Christ who saves us: we do not save ourselves. We have to understand what sin is and what the effects are. Justice is receiving what is due you. When there is an injustice, something has to be done in order to restore the original justice. For example, when you hit a baseball through a neighbor's window, you have to pay for the repair. A sin is an unjust action against God. When we were created, we were made in His image and likeness. Sins are an injustice against God; they damage our relationship with Him. For there to be justice, we would have to do something in order to make up for the offense, but how could we ever do enough to make up for the offense against the Lord? We know that an action's significance is relative to the parties involved. If one child hits another child, the action is morally less severe than if a child were to strike his parent. So then how could a creature ever have the ability to reconcile with his Creator? If God is infinite, then any offense against Him is an infinite offense.

REASON 1

This situation is precisely the reason why the Lord chose to take on human nature, "The Word became flesh for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who 'loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.'*" Human beings are incapable of offering the Lord anything that can ever fully atone for the wrong committed by our first parents' disobedience (as well as our own). Only someone as infinite as God could do this, but it would be unjust for God to fix our problems for us because we owe Him. This is why the Incarnation is so monumental. In the Incarnation, the Lord God takes on the sinful human flesh in order to restore it. As the person of Jesus Christ, a member of the human race, He is one of us. As a member of the Trinity, He is capable of making an offering suitable to God. The reality of our salvation hinges on this point.

CCC 457

REASON 2

Who can begin to understand this love? Jesus was condemned to death though truly innocent, tortured by those He was saving, abandoned by His closest friends and crucified amongst common criminals. The Lord endured these injustices out of love for us, "The Word became flesh so *that thus we might know God's love: 'In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.' 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'*"

CCC 458

REASON 3

To be holy literally means to be "set apart." When we say that we are called to be holy, we are affirming that we are called to be something special, set apart from the ordinary; something worthy of being called "God's." Jesus Christ is our model of holiness. Through His life and His teachings, He always points towards the truth and instructs us, by word and example, on how to live.

"The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness," as Jesus tells us, "'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.' I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.' On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: 'Listen to him!' Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: 'Love one another as I have loved you.' This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example."

CCC 459

REASON 4

Jesus reached out to replace the stony hearts of the people with new hearts of flesh. Jesus taught us the ways of God so that we may follow Him, that we may share in His life, "The Word became flesh to make us *'partakers of the divine nature'*: 'For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God...' The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods." The Church's mission is to again and again turn our hearts to Jesus for us to experience this partaking, this communion, with the divine nature. We can encounter this communion through the Sacraments and through prayer. These two tools of the Christian life must not be overlooked.

Lastly, the Incarnation is what destroys the power of the devil. At the Fall of Man, humanity cooperated with evil by disobeying the Lord. We mortally wounded our human nature, choosing to be selfish instead of selfless. The Incarnation gives us a second chance by showing us the true model of holiness, "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." The Incarnation is the light that shines in the darkness that darkness can't overcome.

Though evil is present in this world, it is only as powerful as we allow it to be. But we don't have to dwell in darkness. Because of the Incarnation, death is no match for life. Darkness is no match for the Light of the World. Because of Him, we have hope for our salvation. The war is won and our victory assured. All we have to do is to remain in the light, realizing that the Word has been made flesh. We can develop a relationship with the Eternal Word through prayer. He is our *creator*, "Through Him all things were made." He is also one of us—*human*. We have been given this incredible gift of the Son of God and we have to nurture our relationship with Him through prayer. Reading the Scriptures, discovering His life and finding Him a place to thrive in our hearts is the most basic call of every Christian.

Ezekiel 36:26
CCC 457-460

1 John 3:8
John 1:5

John 1:3