

Incarnate

By

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WHY? Why should the Eternal so humble Himself to become flesh and blood, to become mortal, to be born of the flesh? (Phil. 2:5–8 Heb. 2:14). Birth is the universal terminal disease! All born of woman must die! “And in the fullness of time, God sent His son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

The world speaks of Christ coming to earth to give peace. But Jesus said, “I came not to bring peace, but a sword.” If Jesus came to bring peace between nations, the kind of peace our diplomats like to talk about, then His mission was a total failure, for every year the carnage of war has increased, not diminished, and each year there is less chance for peace than at any time before.

Man talks of Christ coming to show us how to live in the world. But Jesus said that He came to die, “to give his life a ransom for many>” His public life lasted only 3 ½ years, and was a preparation for death.

People think of Christ entering the world to show that man has an “immortal soul”, but Jesus “poured out his soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12), and warned of the soul’s destruction in judgment (Matt. 10:28). He taught that life is fragile, that it can be lost forever, and that only those who receive Him may have immortality and eternal life.

The lessons Christ taught about human relationships were not new. They can all be found in the Law and the Prophets. Even if a new message were forthcoming from Heaven, it could be declared by God’s messengers without Deity becoming flesh and blood!

But there was something that had to be done, for the survival of the race, which could not have been done by Moses, nor a prophet, nor even by an angel.

“Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14–15).

Flesh and blood! That’s us. And we are terminal, stricken by the disease of sin, with death fastened upon us, until the grave; and then — because we are unfit to live in the presence of God — awaiting the final day when He destroys “both body and soul in Gehenna” (Matt. 10:28, Luke 12:4–5).

“In the fullness of time, God sent His son, born of a woman” — born of flesh and blood, so He could partake “of the same”. Christ became mortal, in order to die the death that awaits all mankind at the judgment.

The subject of death is the most shunned subject among men. Even when all hope of survival is gone, there is still a reluctance to face the fact that death is approaching. Surveys show that 70% of the doctors avoid letting the terminally ill know that they are dying. When it finally comes, every precaution is taken to avoid talking about it. At the funeral the preacher is likely to say that the “beloved has not died, but is now living in a greater room,” or something just as irrational and unfounded in scripture or fact.

Yet, the message of Christ had to do with His dying. The preaching of the apostles centered on His death. Paul said, “I am determined to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified.” Not Christ and His life. Not Christ and the peace of the world. But Christ’s death! Never did Paul, or Peter, or John — no not even Jesus Himself — say that man is immortal or that he has an immortal soul that cannot die! If man is immortal, why would Jesus leave the eternal state to become **mortal flesh and blood**? He became flesh and blood in order to suffer our punishment for sin, that we not suffer it ourselves in moral death at judgment! Christ’s entrance into the stream of human life as mortal man to die as a man is the proof-positive that the final punishment for man’s sin is the sentence of mortal death. It is called the “second death” and is to be carried out by fire, symbolically described in Revelation as a “lake of fire.”

Christmas is not usually the time to talk about death, sin and judgment. These subjects supposedly mar the happy atmosphere of Christmas festivities. The fact is that it is the neglect of facing the reality of these things that makes it impossible for millions of people to find the joy that they expect to realize at Christmas. Somehow, in spite of all the beautiful decoration — the music, the parties, the laughter, the family gatherings, the gifts — the long-awaited experience of a deep seated joy is never realized by vast numbers of people. “Merry Christmas” is on their lips, but in their hearts is a bitter vacuum.

If Jesus can really make man happy and give him joy and peace, then why hasn’t He done so? The question with many is, “Why can’t I be happy, especially at Christmas, like I’m supposed to be? I have decorated the tree. I have given and received the gifts. I have been to my share of the parties, and have even gone to church and said two or three prayers. But where is the Christmas Joy?” The answer is simple, but unacceptable to many because it involves the very things we have made taboo at Christmas time: sin, judgment and death.

The joy Christ gives is the joy of **sin forgiven**. The peace He gives is peace with God because the penalty for sin is paid, and no guilt stands between man and God. The hope is made possible because the punishment of death was transferred to Jesus, and now life and immortality is awaiting. All the blessings of Christ are made possible because of His death, and His death was possible because of His incarnation. Without His being born as a flesh and blood man He could not die the death which is due man for his sin. Justice requires that the sin-offering be the same as the penalty required for the sin. Animal sacrifice could not do it. An angel could not meet that penalty. (Although, if the penalty were “spiritual separation”, or spiritual suffering, as many claim, we see no reason why flesh and blood were required.) A pure spirit could not meet the penalty because the penalty is not spiritual death only, but a total death of the person. A mere man could not meet it, for all men have sinned and must pay the penalty for their own sins. Only by Deity taking upon Himself the form of man and being made in the likeness of man — through the virgin birth — could the death for sin take place. Before the proper death for sin could take place there had to be the proper Dier, Himself without sin, and before He could die He had to become flesh and blood like that of man in whose place he was to die.

The incarnation means that the Eternal Word became flesh. But it tells us much more. It tells us that the Greek idea of the “soul” being some detachable and immortal part of man was erroneous. “The soul that sins it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). Christ entered

the stream of human life as a flesh and blood man in order to die the human and mortal death due all man for sin. Therefore the eternal punishment for the sinner is a final and irrevocable death — not eternal life in misery, but eternal death.

It tells us that when we have received the benefits of Christ's death, on the terms He gave, the threat of judgment and death is removed. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The penalty for our sin has been met already.

It tells us that being free from that penalty, we have the hope of eternal life and immortality. There is reason to be merry over the birth of Jesus, but only for those who receive Him. "...whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Although Jesus was mortal in order to take our sins and die our death, He had no sin of His own, therefore He arose from the dead to live forever, and is the first man to become immortal. John writes that "we will be like him" at His coming (I John 3:2).

The joy of Christ's birth is not in any sense the same as the usual joy of the newborn. Mary and Joseph did not plan His birth. There were no baby showers, no congratulations from family and friends! They were not the typical proud parents, for He was not their natural son. The custom of remembering Christ's birthday by depicting Him as a baby is to miss the whole point of incarnation. The joy and gory of His birth is directly related to His death, and to our own mortal (terminal) condition. We rejoice in Christ's birth because it made possible His death, that God's justice might be fulfilled without our having to suffer final destruction!

REJOICE! That God has revealed Himself in the likeness of man, that we may know eternal truth and not live in the darkness and directionless dilemma of hopeless humanism.

REJOICE! That God is love! He did not owe it to us to save us from death, but in mercy and by grace entered the world to face death in our place.

REJOICE! That the cold grave cannot forever hold the believer who had been laid there asleep in Jesus, because his sin is blotted out and Christ will give him immortality at the day of resurrection.

REJOICE! That He who came once to be mortal man will come against as the one "Who has Immortality" and His own will dwell in His glorious presence forever, in contrast to the darkness of utter death for those who obey Him not.

REJOICE! That having accomplished all for the Father, the Christ now reigns with all power and authority. The wicked may rage more fiercely yet, but He Who was born so low hurls back their blind fury from the highest position of power, and will bring them to naught.

REJOICE! That Deity became mortal, that flesh and blood might become immortal!

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