

The Incarnation

God
Is
With
Us



by Martin M. Davis

With the approach of the Christmas season, Christians around the world begin to focus on the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. Whether in children's plays or elaborate choral recitals, Christians will celebrate the miracle that theologians call the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation is a term that means that the Second Person of the Trinity, without ceasing to be God, condescended to become a human being in order to save us from our sins (1 Timothy 1:15). In the words of the Apostle John, "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

Yet, how does God speak to us through the Incarnation? *What does the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ into the human family have to do with us, our children, grandchildren and other loved ones who must live among the sorrows of our troubled planet?*

For the Elderly

For example, how does the Incarnation of Jesus Christ relate to the elderly, who must endure the many difficulties associated with aging? What does the Incarnation say to our aging citizens who are bed-ridden or confined by a walker or wheelchair?

Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, who assumed frail human flesh to live among us, says to the enfeebled elderly, "I know what it is to be weak and frail. I know what it is to be deprived of strength so that I fell in the street and another had to carry my cross. I know what it is to be helpless and unable to move, for my hands and feet were nailed to a cross; yet, I could not free myself and be your Savior." What does the Incarnation say to those whose bodies ache with arthritis or other difficulties of aging? Jesus Christ says to them, "I, too, know what it is to feel pain, for I cried out in such pain that it seemed even my Father had forsaken me. Yet, just as my Father got me through it all, I will get you through and bring you to the other side."

For the Fearful

What does the Incarnation say to

those who are afraid, who, for example, face life-threatening surgery and understandably fear what lies ahead. What

does the Incarnation say to the anxious husband and father who is about to lose his job because of corporate lay-offs? The Incarnation says that our Savior knows what it is to be afraid. The Incarnate God says, "I know what it is to be so full of dread that sweat fell from my face like drops of blood. I know what it is to face an ordeal so terrifying that I asked my Father to take the cup of wrath away from me. Yet, I could not turn aside from my hard path and be your Savior. But my Father got me through my terrible ordeal, and I will get you through the troubles ahead."

For Those in Harm's Way

What does the Incarnation say to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan who fear the battles ahead? Or to the police officers and firefighters who face danger everyday?

The Incarnation assures us that our God is not like a general who directs his troops from the safety of a bomb-shelter miles behind the front. Instead, Jesus Christ leads his troops from the front, having already done all that he asks us to do in turn.

For the Lonely and Abandoned

What does the Incarnation say to the young wife with small children who cries out to God at three in the morning, her heart broken by the rejection and betrayal of the husband who abandoned her? What does the Incarnation say to anyone who is left to face the difficulties of life alone?

The Incarnation says that God knows what it is to be abandoned, to be left all alone with no one to support you when you need them

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most. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus was abandoned by his disciples—he was left utterly alone, with none to support him, other than his Father in heaven. So, to the deserted wife who cries alone in the night, the Incarnate God says, "I know what you are experiencing. I, too, know what it is to be abandoned, and I want you to know that, just as my Father was with me when all others had left me, I am with you and will walk with you through the difficult times ahead."

For Those Who Have Been Abused

Finally, what does the Incarnation say to those who have been abused, whether verbally, physically...or even sexually. The Incarnate God, Jesus Christ says, "I, too, know what it is to be abused, for I was stripped naked, beaten with rods, scourged with a whip and verbally abused by hardened, cursing, battle-worn pagan soldiers. I know what it is to be laughed at, mocked, ridiculed, insulted, spit on and crowned with thorns, only to be paraded through the streets and tormented by a leering, blood-thirsty mob. And just as my Father got me through, I will get you through, for *I do* know how you feel, *I do* know what you are going through and *I am* there with you to take you to the other side."

Does our Christian faith assure us that we will not experience hardship, pain and difficulty? Of course not. Yet, *the Incarnation of Jesus Christ shouts to us that we have a Savior who loves us enough to come to this earth and go through the pain before us, so that when we cry out to him, we can be certain we are heard*

by One who knows the way to the other side.

The Incarnation teaches us that God did not send a representative to do the difficult work of redemption—rather, God came to earth to personally provide for our salvation. The Incarnation assures us that our loving Savior completely understands the difficulties of our lives, for he knows what it is to be hungry, thirsty, tired, alone, hurt, sad and afraid. Jesus Christ is our *sympathetic* High Priest (Hebrews 4:15)—he suffers right alongside us.

When one goes to a professional counselor for help, it is to their advantage to find one who has been wounded in the way they have been wounded. They are far more likely to receive help from a counselor who knows what they are going through because he or she has been there as well. Jesus Christ is our wounded Healer and Counselor. With every problem we bring him, he suffers alongside us because he has been there before us. Therefore, we may approach the throne of grace with confidence that our Savior understands our need (Hebrews 4:16).

What difficulty can we face that is beyond the compassion of our Savior? Where can we go that our Lord has not been? Though we go into the depths of hell, he has been there before us and will see us through. That is the meaning of the Incarnation. *Put simply, the Incarnation means that God is on our side!*

As the prophet foretold long before the events in Bethlehem, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which means, God is with us! □

"I, too, know what it is to feel pain, for I cried out in such pain that it seemed even my Father had forsaken me. Yet, just as my Father got me through it all, I will get you through and bring you to the other side."

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