

Well, we find ourselves back again for another Christmas Eve and Christmastide. Merry Christmas, everyone! The story of Christmas, of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, is so familiar that we often skip over serious contemplation of its significance. At least tonight, here, let us take a few moments to not make this error.

In the days of Christ and the Apostles, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation was scandalous. It was considered the utmost height of foolishness by the educated of the Roman Empire. God was spirit and high above the material world. Only we lowly humans were tainted and corrupted by materiality. And for many of the pagan philosophers, the goal of human existence was to transcend the limitations of our physical bodies. How then did it make any sense that God Himself would take up a human body – that He would become one of us? This was a laughable proposition, and Christians were derided for it.

We, however, are so accustomed to the idea that we make the opposite mistake. We take it for granted. We underestimate just how earth-shattering the Incarnation was. We hear the story often, but I don't believe that we can really understand it. Why? Because we are so limited by our own finite imaginations while God is infinite. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite, let alone understand how the infinite could reveal Himself to us in a finite body. It simply makes no sense.

But rather than being evidence for the falsity of our religion, it is just the opposite. A human-contrived religion would not include as one of its core tenets a doctrine that could not be understood, or that would subject it to mockery and scorn, or that would leave its adherents complacent through familiarity. Yet God dares to do all of this. Our common-sense is scuttled when we truly try to fathom the Incarnation. But this is what we are left to grapple with. The second person of the Eternal Trinity took a body into Himself from the Blessed Virgin Mary. God, pre-existent before all time, entered into the material world He created. He chose DNA for Himself and became a single human cell, beginning His existence just like each and every one of us began our existence. Of course we don't remember that, but our remembering is not required for us to know that we, each one of us, started as a single cell. Our understanding is not required to assert the truth of the beginning of our lives. Our understanding is likewise not required to affirm the truth that God became man.

The Christmas story – how Mary became pregnant with Jesus by the Holy Spirit, how she and her betrothed, Joseph, as common folk made the trek to Bethlehem when she was great with child, how there was no room in the Inn, how in the lowliest of conditions, in a cave where livestock were kept, the Creator of All that is was born as a little baby – this story

touches all of us. It breaks our hearts. Why? Because God condescended to suffer with us. He did not judge us from afar, but instead gave all that He could out of divine and eternal love for His creatures, for you and me. And this story is the first demonstration of that love.

The Epistle lesson tonight ends with these sentences: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." We may not understand how all of this happened, but God grant that we would speak the truth of salvation with boldness and conviction. God did not, God would not, turn His back on the Creation He made, but entered into it to save it out of the highest love, out of perfect and divine love.

May we this night be more and more and more convinced by the Truth of the Christmas story. May we this night be more and more and more touched by the beauty of the Christmas story. God became man, born of the Blessed Virgin, born into the lowliest of circumstances, to redeem us and save us from our sin. God became man so that we would be with God. Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God in the Highest, and may His peace reign on earth, may His goodwill be known to all men.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. AMEN.