

The Incarnation Jesus Our Emmanuel

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The Word was made flesh.

1. We must consider the importance of this Christmas - Jesus' 2000th birthday, the climax of this Great Jubilee year. We should approach the Christmas season, not with dull minds, but on the basis of who Jesus really is. My own mind had been occupied with shopping, wrapping, mailing, baking, decorating but lifted up to the true meaning of Christmas until I sat down to prepare this talk. We can often learn from children how to reflect on the mysteries of our faith.
2. The Incarnation of God is a mystery but it makes sense out of everything else the New Testament contains. It must be the basis of our approach to reading any scripture. Once the Incarnation is grasped as a reality other difficulties in believing are dissolved. For example, his victory over death is easy to believe once we understand that the man who died is the incarnation of the immortal Word. What's hard to believe is that he died in the first place.

The New Testament understanding of who Jesus is: fully God and fully man. This belief is the distinctive sign of true Christian faith.

1. The baby born in Bethlehem was God.
The Word was with God ([Jn 1:1a](#)). In relation to God the Father, the Word is a distinct Person.
And the Word was God ([Jn 1:1b](#)). He was not a creature but divine in himself. *All things were made through him* ([Jn 1:3](#)). Here we see the Word creating. *In him was life* ([Jn 1:4](#)). No creature has life in himself except God and we have life only through him.
2. The baby born at Bethlehem was God made man. Many heresies involved either reducing Christ's full humanity or claiming that aspects of his divine nature (such as many of his divine attributes) ceased to exist. In the face of these heresies, the fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon in 451 stated, "He did not lose any elements of his deity but was now God plus all that man is" (see [CCC par. 467](#)). Jesus Christ was one person with a divine nature and a human nature. (It helps me to think of him as the Word who personally took to himself the human body of Jesus rather than a human being who also happens to have a divine nature.)
3. While on earth he learned what it was like to be a created being. *For we have not a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning* ([Heb 4:15](#)). As a man he could be tempted by Satan, one of his own creatures. He was made like us (see [Heb 2:17](#)), susceptible to temptation, so that he could help us when we are tempted. (We don't have to go it alone, he didn't go through that for nothing. He wants us to approach him boldly so that he can minister mercy and grace when we are tempted and when we sin.)

What should be our response to the Incarnation?

Worship and adoration.

Emmanuel and other names of Jesus.

1. *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us) ([Matt 1:23](#)). God is with us, not 'God against us.' And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ([Jn 1:14](#)). He is not aloof or ashamed of us, he came to be close to us. He desires to weep with us and wipe our tears away. He longs to share in and be the source of our joy.*
2. *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus... is the spirit of antichrist ([1 Jn 4:2f](#)). To say that Jesus has come in the flesh has implications for us. He is no longer a God whom we can hold at a distance. When we acknowledge that he is right here with us it means that he is no longer a theory but a reality in our lives. Now I can no longer ignore him but I must respond to him and live by his Spirit each day. I must bow down to him with my whole life. (No wonder antichrist wants to deny he came in the flesh.)*
3. *For, if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life ([Rom 5:11](#)). Yes, he died for us, but now he lives for us. There are so many examples of ways he lets his presence be known in the middle of mundane tasks. He calls us to turn to him, the Word made flesh, who wells among us to comfort, console, convict of sin, cleanse, empower and generally lavish his life on us.*
4. Other titles of Jesus to consider: **Wonder Counselor** ([Is 9:6](#)), [Jn 14:6](#)), **Everlasting Father** ([Is 9:6](#), [Heb 1:3](#)), **Mighty God** ([Is 9:6](#), [Jer 32:27](#)), **Lamb of God** ([Jn 1:29](#)), **King of Glory** ([Ps 24:7-10](#), [Zech 9:9](#)). Our king is a righteous king. He was always obedient to the Father and blameless in his sight. Now he shares the throne with the Almighty One. He wants to call us away from the world to be a people for himself. Let's open ourselves to him this Advent and allow the King of Glory to rule our hearts. Prince of Peace ([Is 9:6](#), [Jn 14:27](#), [Col 1:20](#)). The New Testament teaches that true peace comes through reconciliation. Christ is at work in us transforming our relationship to God as well as the way we relate to others. "Let us not allow (the enmity) to revive in us, but prove that it is indeed fully dead. Let us not call it back to life by anger or by the memory of injuries done to us" (St. Gregory of Nyssa). If the peace of Christ eludes us this Advent it may be because of our sin. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we can present sinless and joyful hearts to Jesus and he will lead us into his peace.

Questions for Discussion

1. Read [Jn 1:1-18](#). According to John, what is the mission of the Incarnate Word?
2. The Church teaches that Jesus was one Person with a divine nature and a human nature. Why is this important? What questions does this teaching resolve?
3. Find four or five scriptures that show the divinity or the humanity of Christ. In these scriptures, what is his attitude toward other human beings?

4. Describe a situation this week (other than formal prayer) when you sensed in a particular way that God was with you.