

THE LORD IS COME IN THE FLESH ADVENT WORSHIP
HEBREWS 2:14-17 WED DEC 9, '15

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

What are we getting ready to celebrate come Dec. 25?

One way to answer question is "Jesus' birthday"

and it is true that we are celebrating that Jesus was born.

Even though we don't really know what day he was born.

In our culture, we celebrate the date of people's birth

because that is when their life began

and we count how old they are starting from that date.

That is not what we are thinking of at Christmas because

Jesus is eternal. His life didn't begin with his birth.

As we say in creed, he was begotten of Father from eternity.

What we are celebrating is not his beginning but his incarnation, that the divine, eternal Son became a flesh & blood human.

So, if we don't know when he was born,

how did we pick this day?

According to one ancient Jewish tradition,

a person will die on the day they are conceived.

We do know when Jesus died, the Friday of Passover.

According to an ancient calculation,

in the year he died this was April 25.

So, if you suppose that this was day he was conceived,

he would have been born 9 months later, Dec. 25.

It is appropriate that the date of our celebration

is based on the date he died because his death

is key to the reason for his incarnation and birth.

JESUS BECAME FLESH TO TAKE OUR PLACE
JESUS BECAME FLESH TO BE UNDER THE LAW
JESUS BECAME FLESH TO DIE AND LIVE AGAIN

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In Catechism class I talk about a girl's basketball game.

Suppose one of the girls fowls out,
you would have to put in a substitute,
but the substitute can't be a girl soccer player
or a boy basketball player
it has to be another girl basketball player.

But suppose everyone fowls out at same time,
you would have to substitute in more than just
a regular girl's basketball player
would have to be super girl basketball player,
one like Lindsay Whalen, Maya Moore, Sylvia Fowles
who maybe could win whole game singlehandedly.

This is what we need. We and rest of humanity are sinners.
Because of our fowls against one another and against God
we have fowled out. The wages of sin is death.

This is true of you and me and every other human at once.

Only way for us to not lose life forever
is for there to be a substitute who is truly one of us,
a real flesh and blood human being,
offspring and descendant of Adam and Abraham.
and yet one who could take the place of all of us at once
and still win the victory over sin and death.

This is why Jesus came in the flesh, to join our team,
to win the victory, and because he is truly one of us,
to win the victory for us so that we are victorious.

This is what we need because we live real human lives
and have real physical problems like suffering and death.

If you had a health problem and there was a way to solve it
if you lived in outer space or under the sea,
that wouldn't help you because you can't live there.

Jesus provides not only spiritual help for angels
but the kind of help flesh and blood people need.

There are two parts to his taking our place.

JESUS BECAME FLESH TO BE UNDER THE LAW

¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

This verse is talking about slavery to sin, death and the devil,
that is being forced to do what is not good for us
which is what fear does.

Fear of missing out, of not getting our share,
of embarrassment, of criticism,
and ultimately of death itself
is one of the main tools of the devil to make us feel
forced into doing what we know we should not.

Instead we are to fear, love and trust God above all things,
and so we are to obey his commandments, but we have not.
Therefore we truly deserve death.

But we celebrate that Jesus has kept the whole law in our place
and he became genuine flesh and blood in order to do it.

Gal. 4:4 "But when the fullness of time had come,
God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,
⁵ to redeem those who were under the law,"

Jesus and only Jesus kept God's whole law for us
from the beginning of his life until the end.

This is why on Jan. 1, when world celebrates New Year's,
church celebrates what O.T. law says must be done
8 days after Jewish boy's birth: Circumcision of Jesus.

He had to be flesh to keep this law.

He had to be flesh to keep 6th commandment
about right use of gift of sexuality

And every other commandment of God that we fail to keep
because of desires of sinful flesh.

Think of what sins we are inclined to because of our flesh.

The desires designed to bond together marriage and family
are perverted to lust and immorality.

Appetites designed to nourish us turn to gluttony & greed.

Feelings intended to preserve us from danger
twist into anger, hatred, rage, revenge.

Can we really get rid of these sins by cutting off a hand
or plucking out eye? No, they pervade our whole bodies.

The only thing that truly helps is what Jesus did in the body.
Being flesh meant he had same experiences and temptations
as a child, growing up, as a worker & neighbor,
same feelings, hunger, hurt, loneliness, sadness & grief
we have and so he knows just what it is like
is able to help us when we have these troubles

But he never gave in to sin, which means
he had no guilt of his own that deserves to be punished.
This is why he can also take our place in another way.

JESUS BECAME FLESH TO DIE AND LIVE AGAIN

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself
likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might
destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

Like all the rest of the greatest truths of Christian faith,
the incarnation of Jesus is a mystery,
How can it be that he is fully and truly eternal God
and fully and truly a human creature
both at the same time as one person?

We don't understand it but believe what God tells us.
This mystery leads us to another, his death on the cross.

The eternal God, as God cannot die
But Jesus became a mortal man so that he could die.
and because Jesus, who died, is both God and man,
God died for us on the cross.

It is important that this is true.

Paul points out that would be surprising for one man
to willingly die in the place of another,
although this is what those in the military
and first responders like firemen & police do
He grants that one might die for the sake of a good man
but Jesus died for us who are sinners.

If you or I died to take the place of another who was guilty
we could only substitute for one, a life for a life.

But Jesus died for everyone in the whole world at once
which he can only do because he was God at same time.

Our salvation depends on this astonishing truth,
but how can we know and believe this?

Even more astonishingly, Jesus also rose to life again,
same Jesus who died for us, to prove our sins are gone.

Because he is still true man, ever since his incarnation & birth,
when he rose again, he rose with same flesh & blood body,
with holes in hands, feet, & side that could be touched.

he demonstrated this by eating & drinking with disciples.

And he demonstrates it for us by eating & drinking as well,
because, now ascended into heaven, he is still true man
which means he still has a body and blood

and still one and the same person is true God
who can be everywhere at once,
So that he can accomplish another great true mystery,
he gives us here in Holy Communion his flesh & blood,
the same flesh that died for us on the cross
so we can be sure he died for us
for forgiveness of our sins & rose again to give us life.
There is great joy for the whole world because the Lord is come.
He has come in the flesh, he is coming & will come again.

JESUS BECAME FLESH TO TAKE OUR PLACE

to save flesh and blood people like us.

JESUS BECAME FLESH TO BE UNDER THE LAW

to keep it perfectly in the place of us

who give in to the sinful desires of the flesh.

JESUS BECAME FLESH TO DIE AND LIVE AGAIN

to truly suffer and die for us who suffer and die

and to rise to true life again

and to give us his true body and blood

so that we can be truly forgiven

and truly be restored to life forever with him.