

The Incarnation: Renovation of the Cosmos

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'Adoration Of The Shepherds', Rembrandt, 1646.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18–25

The miracle of the incarnation – of God becoming man – is the foundation of Christianity, and, alongside the resurrection, the ground of our faith.

When the eternal *logos* (Jn 1:1) nestled into the womb of that young Hebrew girl in the form of a baby – conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit – an event of cosmic significance, long foreshadowed by the prophets, was coming to fruition.

For in the one who was to be born, would dwell the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:9)—truly God and yet truly man. In the one person the two natures – human and divine – would hold together unchangeably and inseparably without intermixture, the differences in no way being removed by the union. He was truly the God-man; neither the deity nor the humanity was diminished or confused. God had condescended to the human estate, taking on the form of man (yet without sin), signaling his estimation of this apex of his creation—man in his own image, created and mandated to be his vice-regent in the earth (Gen 1:26-28; Psa 8; Mtt 28:18-20).

And consequently, as the *last Adam* (1 Cor 15:45), he was uniquely qualified to accomplish the divine task: to terminate and reverse the disobedience of the *first Adam* through his own obedience, and thereby, as the only mediator between God and man, not only pay the judicial penalty for sin but also perfect man (Rom 3:21-26; Heb 2:10; 5:9). He is not only the *last Adam*, terminating the old order of sin and death (Gen 3; Rom 1-3; 5:12-21), but also, and more significantly, the *second man* (1 Cor 15:47)—the beginning of a new creation (Col 1:15, 18; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

And so, the sweep of human history, beginning in creation and fall, finally climaxes in new creation – redemption, resurrection, and glorification – taking man and the cosmos beyond the paradisiacal state into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Rom 8:12-30)—into the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1).

The good news is that the new heavens and new earth were inaugurated in Christ. He is the *eschaton*—the climactic event of history. In him is signaled the 'presence of the future'—the invasion of this "present evil age" (Gal 1:4) by the powers of the "age to come" (Heb 6:5; Eph 1:21). And as Jesus taught, the Kingdom of God is like leaven that inexorably leavens the *whole* loaf (Mtt 13:33); its influence invades and governs the totality of the created order. The implication of this for our eschatology is revolutionary—our Christology then, must govern our eschatology (end things).

The incarnation of Christ and the whole redemptive event signals the renovation of the cosmos—the Kingdom of God here and

now in the person of the God-man – Jesus Christ – filling time-space history (Eph 1:23; 4:10). If Christ has truly vanquished sin and death (Romans) and the powers of darkness (Ephesians) in his incarnation, death, and resurrection – i.e. in real-time history, in the reigns of Caesars Augustus and Tiberius – there is no ground for defeat. This is why Jesus could announce his ultimate success in building his ecclesia and that the powers and authorities of darkness would not withstand it (Mtt 16:18). Christ and his church, despite momentary setbacks, are advancing and victorious in history. The mandate to disciple whole nations and cultures in the ways of God will succeed. The dominance of Satan and his minions – human and diabolical – will be exorcised from the affairs of men—from the public square and the governance of the nations (Gen 1:26-28; Deut 4:5-8; Psa 2; 110; Isa 2:1-4; Mtt 28:18-20).

Let us celebrate the miracle of the incarnation: of God manifest in the flesh – Christ as the God-man – the champion of his people, not only to save them from their sins but to raise them up as his vice-regents in the earth, his agents of cosmic renovation. Praise the Lord!

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