

## Why did the Word become flesh?

St John's Gospel is claiming that the One who was born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem was with God in the beginning and indeed was God himself. So why was it that this divine Word became flesh?

One answer is that Christ came to save us from our sins and to undo the wrong that Adam had done in the Garden of Eden. As the hymn puts it:

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.

And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's presence and his very self  
And essence all divine.

God was not content for us to be alienated from him because of Adam's sin. And so in his loving wisdom, he sent his own Son to pay the price of sin, though he himself was sinless, and to reconcile us with the Father. For, as another hymn says of Christ:

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good;  
That we might go at last to heaven  
Saved by his precious blood

There was none other good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven and let us in.

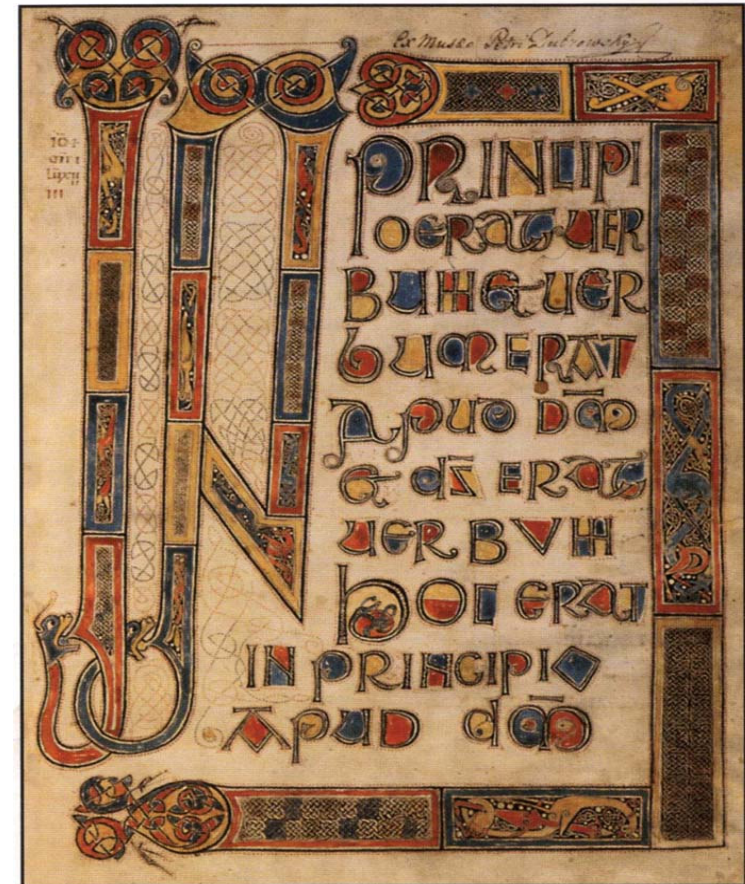
## Out of love...

But the incarnation is much more than just a divine Plan B, as it were to put right God's original purpose that had been messed up by Adam. One of the prefaces for the Eucharistic Prayers puts it like this: 'Out of love for sinful men and women (Christ) humbled himself to be born of the Virgin'.

Love is the dominant motivation for the incarnation. God cannot help but pour out his love into the world he created. Just as a lover must be with the beloved, so God in Christ cannot help but come to his people.

Love is what lies behind the themes of light, grace, truth and glory. Love came down at Christmas. Love lies in the manger. Love was seen on earth and went about among us. God is love. And Christ is God.

## Holy Innocents & Holy Trinity



## BEAUTY FROM THE BIBLE

Second Week of Lent: John Ch 1

## The Prologue of St John's Gospel

1 In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God;

3 all things were made through him,  
and without him was not anything made that was made.

4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

5 The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light,  
that all might believe through him.

8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

9 The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him,  
yet the world knew him not.

11 He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.

12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name,  
he gave power to become children of God;

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh  
nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,  
full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory,  
glory as of the only Son from the Father.

## The Word is Jesus...

One of the most confusing things about the opening verses of St John's Gospel is the continual reference to *the Word*, or in Greek, *Logos*. So it is important to realise that when John speaks of the Word, he is speaking of Christ. And Christ's origins are not just in the stable at Bethlehem, but *in the beginning... With God*. The Bethlehem bit only comes in at Verse 14 where he says: *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father*.

Compare this with the words about Christ's birth in the Creed that we say on Sunday mornings: *For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man*.

The word **incarnation** is an important one here. It literally means *the enfleshment*. God becomes human flesh, a human person, just like us.

What do you think that the Creed and St John's Gospel are telling us about the child born at Bethlehem? The words in the boxes below tell us what some Christians have said...

### About Christmas...

'I too will proclaim the greatness of this day: the immaterial becomes incarnate, the Word is made flesh, the invisible makes itself seen, the intangible can be touched, the timeless has a beginning, the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, always the same, yesterday, today and forever... The arrival of God among us'

St Gregory Nazianzen  
329-389 AD

### To Christ on Christmas Day...

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
Born this happy morning,  
Jesu, to thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing

'Awkwardly and slowly and with much complication and apparent contradiction the New Testament moves towards the extraordinary notion that the Creator of the universe is at work without interruption in the life and work of Jesus—that it is God who is doing what Jesus is doing.'

Archbishop Rowan Williams