

The Logic of the Incarnation

Covenant Church
Sunday, December 16, 2018
Zack Phillips, Pastor

1 Cor 15:50-55 (NRSV)

What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*: But if death was within the body, woven into its very substance and dominating it as though completely one with it, *the need was for Life to be woven into it instead*, so that the body by thus *enduing itself with life* might cast corruption off.¹

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*: Stubble is a substance naturally destructible by fire; and it still remains stubble, fearing the menace of fire which has the natural property of consuming it, even if fire is kept away from it, so that it is not actually burnt. But suppose that, instead of merely keeping the fire from it somebody soaks the stubble with a quantity of asbestos, the substance which is said to be the antidote to fire. Then the stubble no longer fears the fire, because it has put on that which fire cannot touch, and therefore it is safe. It is just the same with regard to the body and death. Had death been kept from it by a mere command, it would still have remained mortal and corruptible, according to its nature. To prevent this, it put on the incorporeal Word of God, and therefore fears neither death nor corruption any more, *for it is clad with Life as with a garment and in it corruption is clean done away.*²

Rom 6:6-10: We know that our old self was crucified with him so that *the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin*. For whoever has died is freed from sin. *But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him*. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Heb 10:19-22: Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, *by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)*, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

2 Cor 5:17: So if anyone is in Christ, there is *a new creation*: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

¹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*. Ichthus Publications, 2018.

² Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*. Ichthus Publications, 2018.

Reflection for this Second Sunday in Advent

Through this union of the immortal Son of God with our human nature, all men were clothed with incorruption in the promise of the resurrection. For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by virtue of the Word's indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all.

—Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*³

³ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*. Ichthus Publications, 2018.