

Why the Incarnation? – December 21, 2014
By Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Gloria

Why the Incarnation? Hebrews 10:5-10

Imagine that you are living in a land where it was always winter and never Christmas? Like winter, life would be cold and dark, colorless and drab. Existence would take place on a limited landscape, in colors that were mostly gray and black. There are no parties, no fun meals celebrated with family and friends, no worship services with triumphant music, no anticipation written on the faces of little children, and no mention of the Christ-child. Celebration is replaced by routine, and survival takes priority over the leisure and luxury of a holiday.

The coming of the Christ-Child changed all this. All because Jesus volunteered to obey the will of God in his life. Our text makes that plain: *“I have come to do your will, O God.”*

As bizarre as it might appear, the will of God may be the most talked about and the most misunderstood concept in the Church universal. Throughout history humankind has done horrible things in the name of “the will of God.” We only need to remember the Crusades, the Inquisition, slavery, families that are murdered in the name of ‘the will of God,’ the church is divided ‘in the name of God.” And then, 911 where terrorists sacrificed themselves and innocents in ‘the name of Allah.”

To Jesus, however, the will of God was supreme, from the beginning to the end of his life. Jesus himself referred to this when he said, *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me”* (St. John 6:38). In the garden Jesus expresses this saying, *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will, but yours be done”* (St. Luke 22:42).

The calling of Jesus in the incarnation was to make the eternal sacrifice for our sin. First century Jews had the Torah, impressive ceremonies, and centuries of tradition. Through these the people were reminded of their sin, none had the ability to eradicate their sin. Animal sacrifices foreshadowed the death of the perfect God-human, Christ Jesus, Lamb of God, who destroys sin once for all.

It was never God’s desire for animal sacrifices. What God longed for was a people

dedicated to fulfilling God's will. The animal sacrifices did not work because they had become an end in themselves. Those who gave sacrifices did so because they failed to be obedient to God's will. God was satisfied only when the sacrifices were an expression of a broken and repentant heart. It is the attitude of our hearts that God is concerned with.

There are old and new ways of approaching God. When Jesus was obedient to the will of God, he eradicated the first covenant to create the second or new covenant. There is finality here: "*once for all.*"

This is a reminder that we must exercise caution that our worship is not mere formality. We cannot afford to do as those long-ago people did who substituted liturgy for a life-changing experience, formality for faith, and silence for service.

In Advent, thoughts of family, and peace on earth fill our minds and hearts. As we ponder the deeper meaning of this season, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Incarnation, and even the cross, several ideas stand out like the bells of Christmas.

First, God can accomplish anything. If God can shape history, get the Caesar himself involved in the story, start life in the womb of a teenage virgin, and squeeze into a baby's body, imagine what God can do in your life!

Second, God can change anyone. Through the death of Jesus, God obliterated death, hell, and the grave, and brought life to all. Is there anything God can't do in your life?

Third, God can guide anywhere. God led Jesus from heaven to earth and back again. God can lead us if we are willing to be obedient to God's perfect will.

And so, we say with Martin Luther of old:

"All praise to thee, eternal Lord, Clothed in the garb of flesh and blood; Choosing a manger for a throne while worlds on worlds are Thine alone." Alleluia. Amen.