

Week 4

WE CREED: Through Him, all things were made

The next statement with the Second Article of the Nicene Creed states: *(We believe)* “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.”

It’s a sobering thought that the grand architect of the universe, that the Creator of life, the universe, and everything (in it) would empty Himself of his divinity and come to this little speck of space — all to make righteous again his highest creation as he designed us to be. He came to save the whole of the world, for those who in faith choose to believe in Him.

Consider for a second just the first four words of this clause: “who for us men” — meaning, for all humankind. The WHO is HIM, and *He* wasn’t thinking of himself, but rather about the whole of the human species. He was for us, for he himself made us and chose to come to us to refashion us in *His* likeness as we were intended to be — pure, blameless, without fault, and full of light and love,

In this man’s humble opinion, the gravity of this notion — of this theological expression — is greater than the black hole at the center of our milky way Galaxy. The Apostle John wrote of the Father’s grand design before he laid the foundations of the world through Christ:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16–17, ESV)

Peter and Paul (but not Mary) — sorry, a bit of humor there — also said this about God’s mind for humanity. Paul, writing to his protégé, reminded Timothy:

“God our Savior... wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

And St. Peter, in similar manner said that God doesn't want anyone to eternally perish, but for all people to be saved (**see 2 Peter 3:9**).

The word “all” Peter chose in Greek is πᾶς (pas), literally translates to “all people”, “all of humanity,” “everyone.” That doesn't mean that everyone *will* be saved, but that God's desire is for the whole of humanity to be saved, so that all persons could live in eternal fellowship with Him as intended.

Although not biblical, at all, some people want to believe that, in the end (like at “the end”), God will save *everyone* who's ever lived, no matter who they were, where they were from, what they believed, or what they had said and done – that even the damned – people would equate to men like Adolf Hitler – will be pardoned and granted eternal life with God. (This is the belief known as universal salvation.)

Of all the early church fathers, only Origen believed in this notion. And because of his beliefs and dogma, he was disputed by all others bishops and church leaders at the Second Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. Yet even today, many people want this notion to be true. << TALK ABOUT SISTER >>

Despite this word *all*, AND God's desire for the whole of humanity to be saved from our sins, if we believe and maintain the whole of the Christian cannon as inspired truth, many souls *will* eternally perish. God doesn't force himself or his love on us. God will honor the wishes of those who choose to live apart from him, while on this earth and eternally speaking.

Now, a question for ya. **Question:** While we're getting ahead of ourselves quite a bit in the creed, do you think it's fair that some people will cast into eternal darkness, away from God's presence – that not *everyone will be saved*? Why, or why not?

Now, of course, by "saved," the Apostles John, Peter, and Paul meant to be saved of our sins. St. Matthew spoke of that explicitly. He wrote:

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21, ESV).



The "she" St. Matthew spoke of was that teenage girl from a small, rural town in northern Israel that was barely on the map, whom God in His infinite wisdom choose her to conceive, carry, and give birth to the savior of humanity, and raise him to manhood. And as the Creed asserts, it was the Holy Spirit of God who caused Mary to become pregnant with Jesus.

Matthew quoted the Prophet Isaiah about the incarnation of Christ when he wrote his gospel account. Isaiah wrote:

"Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14, ESV).

I bet you know this already, but Immanuel means: God with us (in other words, God walking among us – God who makes his home among us). Luke’s gospel account tells the story of how Mary came to be with child. Let’s read it together: **Luke 1:26–37**

Now, I’m not sure if anyone fully comprehends the magnitude of what “overshadowed” means (apart from an academic definition that is). Now, in its truest sense, “overshadowed” meant the glory of God came upon Mary – this is an illusion Luke used to harken his hearers and readers back to Exodus 40:35, when the God’s glory filled the tabernacle within the tent of meeting – the foreshadowing of the temple and the holy of holies. (see **Exodus 40:35**).

Quoting Warren Wiersbe, “Mary’s womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God!” That’s really at the heart of what it means that the Holy Spirit of God came upon Mary and overshadowed her. I think this is something that’s truly hard for us to grasp as mortal people.

In no way was Luke suggestion or insinuating any sexual inuendo between God’s *Holy Spirit* and Mary. Rather the Father, through his *Holy Spirit*, opened Mary’s womb and caused a one-time miracle that my brain just can’t get around.

TALK ABOUT – reason emphasizing *HOLY* in Holy Spirit. When we say the Lord’s prayer – which we’re gonna do a deep dive into this winter – we say, “Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed by thy name. Hallowed meaning holy – God’s name is holy. His Spirit is holy.

That means to be completely set apart, that there is no equal. It means pure and blameless, without fault, without sin, with not one particle of darkness within him – the purest of light and the purest of love. I mention all this because back in the ancient world – especially within Greek and Roman cultures and their religious expressions – they believed their gods, (whom they believed lived on Mt. Olympus), would come down from the Olympus and have

sexual relations with human beings and bear demi-god offspring: the ancient heroes written of by the likes of Achilles, Hercules, Perseus, Atalanta, Ares, and more.

St. Luke, a brilliant physician, historian, theologian, and sound mind in his time, understood that some of his readers in the Roman world might understand how the “sons and daughters” of the gods were conceived – how the demigods were conceived. Luke needed his readers to know that, that wasn’t happening here between God’s Holy Spirit and Mary.

The Holy Spirit’s overshadowing Mary was on a level that pure and holy, and meant fashion, if you will, Mary’s womb into the holy of holies so that that the Word of God could make his home within her, and grow from within her, and be birthed from her.

As Mary did when the Archangel Gabriel broke into this earth and excitedly told her the news that God had chosen her, Mary took God at his word in faith. That’s the only thing we can do too.

Question: Notwithstanding Isaiah’s prophecy (see above) spoken by our Lord, why do you think God chose to have a virgin’s womb be the tabernacle for the glory of His son to take on human flesh, instead of, say another woman who’d already given birth to another child?

We use the word “incarnation” a lot in Christian circles, and we hear that word in the creed. It literally means, “in (the) flesh.” Consider these scriptures

- John 1:14
- Hebrews 2:14
- John 6:51–57

It's interesting how the early church fathers inserted that little notion that Jesus came in the flesh. They did so, because within only a few hundred years of church history, there was a growing belief by a group known as the Gnostics that claimed that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, never truly took on human flesh, as the holy scriptures claim.

They believed Jesus only appeared to have taken on human form but was more like a spirit and less flesh like, not fully human, "not made man" as the Creed states. And of course, that has ramifications, because, if Jesus wasn't flesh and blood as you and I are flesh and blood, then he couldn't have offered himself as the sacrifice for sin. He wouldn't have suffered as the Gospels detail and the Isaiah prophesied, he would (**see Isaiah 53**).

Question: How and why do you think it's important that Jesus came to live among us as one of us – both *fully human* and *fully divine*?



FOR HOME

Read Luke's account of Mary's conception and Jesus' birth again. Note what stands out to you that you perhaps have missed before. How does this text speak to you, either as a man or woman? Journal your thoughts here:

