

“Hail the Incarnate Deity!”

Have you ever had a popular song that you’ve sang for years, only to find out that you’ve been singing the wrong words? Hark, the Herald Angels Sing is like that. You’ve sung it for years – you and the children have sung it again tonight. But there’s that phrase in there that maybe you’ve wondered if you’re singing the right words.

“Hail the incarnate Deity” – that’s right – you haven’t been singing it wrong. But what does this mean? What are you saying when you sing those words? Well, let’s take a look at this unique phrase in one of our favorite hymns.

“Hail the incarnate Deity.” What does “hail” mean? It is an enthusiastic greeting of honor. You might greet a king with this word. The greeting of “Grandma” is full of this enthusiasm and honor.

Next is the word “incarnate” – another word that you probably haven’t used in your day to day life. “Incarnate” means “to become flesh” – and it goes along with the next word, “Deity.” “Deity” means “God.”

So, when you sing – “Hail the incarnate Deity” – you are greeting with enthusiasm and honor the God who has come in the flesh. That’s still a mouthful, isn’t it? Let’s put it this way – you are greeting and praising Jesus who is God in the flesh.

In singing this hymn you said – “Veiled in flesh the God-head see, Hail the incarnate Deity!” The God who comes to you is “veiled in flesh.” The flesh of Jesus hides the God who comes to you. The Bible teaches us that this Baby laid in the manger is God. Jesus, who healed the sick is God. The man nailed to the cross is God.

“Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel.” It pleased God to become man. God becoming man is hard for us to wrap our brains around. He is the Creator of all things – and yet – He becomes part of His creation.

That’s like your Dad putting together one of your Christmas toys (say, a scooter) – and your Dad becomes part of the scooter! That’s like you making something with Legos, and you become one of the Lego pieces!

God was “pleased as Man with man to dwell” – God was glad to become a human being – because He loves mankind, and He wants to be with us forever.

There’s a reason why Christmas is so important – because man has a problem. Man has sinned. We don’t live by faith in God. We don’t live by His Word. Like Ahaz, who rejected the gift God gives to him. And that sin separates us from God – like Adam and Eve who hid from God after they sinned.

The problem of sin is great – it’s deadly. Just as God said to Adam and Eve, when they ate the fruit that God told them not to eat – “in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.” And so, death came to Adam and Eve, to Ahaz, and to all mankind – including us.

God was pleased to become man – to do what we have failed to do – to live by faith, by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Jesus, God in the flesh, lives the obedient life of faith – and – He suffers the punishment for our sin, and pays the penalty for our sin – which is death.

God loves you so much that He suffers and dies for you. God in the flesh Jesus is sacrificed on the cross – and His blood redeems you, “buys you back” from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Jesus is born to save you from your sins – so that you can live with Him forever!

Now, I know I’m a bit biased, but I think this congregation has the greatest name for a church – “Immanuel.” Immanuel means “God with us.” Immanuel reminds us that God is with us – here, and now – and throughout all our days! We gather to hear God’s Word. The Bible is God speaking to us to guide and lead us. His Word gives us the greatest gift of all – the forgiveness of all our sins. And with His Word He gives us signs – like Baptism, to wash away our sins – like the Lord’s Supper, by which He feeds and nourishes us to live by faith.

Thank you to the children through whom we have once again heard the “good news of great joy” – that Jesus our Savior has been born for us.

A blessed Christmas to all of you. May our hymn this evening ring in your ears and come forth from your mouths for many days. "Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King Hail the incarnate Deity!"

Praise God – God is with us – He is with you, to save. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.