

Christmas Is for Freedom

Jesus became man because what was needed was the death of a man who was more than man. The incarnation was God's locking himself into death row.

Christ did not risk death. He chose death. He embraced it. That is precisely why he came: "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

No wonder Satan tried to turn Jesus from the cross—in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11) and in the mouth of Peter (Matthew 16:21–23)! The cross was Satan's destruction. How did Jesus destroy him?

Hebrews 2:14 says that Satan has "the power of death." That means Satan has the ability to make death fearful. "The power of death" is the power that holds men in bondage through fear of death. It is the power to keep men in sin so that death comes as a dreadful thing.

But Jesus stripped Satan of this power. He disarmed him. He molded a breastplate of righteousness for us that makes us immune to the devil's condemnation. How did he do this?

By his death, Jesus wiped away all our sins. And a person without sin cannot be condemned by Satan. Forgiven, we are finally indestructible. Satan's plan was to destroy God's rule by condemning God's followers in God's own courtroom. But now, in Christ, there is no condemnation. Satan's treason is aborted. His cosmic treachery is foiled. "His rage we can endure, for, lo, his doom is sure."⁷ The cross has run him through. And he will gasp his last before long.

Christmas is for freedom—freedom from the fear of death.

Jesus took our nature in Bethlehem to die our death in Jerusalem—all that we might be fearless in our city today. Yes, fearless, because if the biggest threat to our joy is gone, then why should we fret over the little ones? How can we say (really!), "Well, I'm not afraid to die but I'm afraid to lose my job"? No. No. Think!

If death (I said, death!—no pulse, cold, gone!) is no longer a fear, we're free, really free. We are free to take any risk under the sun for Christ and for love. No more enslavement to anxiety.

If the Son has set you free, you shall be free, indeed!

7 Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," 1527–1529.