

Fourth Week of Advent Fasting

The Incarnation

The Perfect and Final Sacrifice

As we enter the season of Kiahk, we must prepare our hearts and minds to celebrate the Nativity, the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior. This Holy season of reflection is not just about the birth of Jesus but also about the mystery of why He came into the world. What we aim to understand and recognize about this season is that Christ is the perfect and final sacrifice who has brought to fulfillment the prophecies of the Old Testament and has accomplished God's divine plan for salvation.

Throughout the Old Testament, sacrifices were central to the covenant between God and His people. Sacrifices in the Old Testament were acts of worship and atonement for sins offered to God. Among these sacrifices made by the Jews, the lamb held a special place. The Passover lamb in Exodus, whose blood was used to save the Israelites from death, is a very important symbol of purity. This lamb and other sacrifices used during the Old Testament foreshadowed the coming of a perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, that would ultimately atone for the world's sins. Although the Jews made these sacrifices, these sacrifices were incomplete. In the Letter to the Hebrews, it states, "For It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The Jews repeated these offerings, thus showing their inability to fully restore humanity's relationship with God. This foreshadowed what would come to the world: a singular, ultimate, and perfect sacrifice that could remove sin and create a new covenant between God and man.

The Incarnation is the foundation of Christ's role as the perfect sacrifice. By taking on human nature, Christ became fully human while He remained fully divine, allowing Him to mediate between God and humanity. The uniting of the two natures was essential: Christ being human can allow Him to represent humanity, and Christ, being fully Divine, could allow His sacrifice to have infinite value.

The prophets prophesied about the redemption that is to come, such as in Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant, "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds, we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" ([Isaiah 53:5-6](#)). These words prophesied by Isaiah find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, whose sacrificial death was not a mere event, but God's plan for man to be reunited with Him. As St. Athanasius explains, "The Word, realizing that in no other way could the corruption of men be undone except by death as a necessary condition, took to Himself a body...and gave it over to death in the stead of all" (*On the Incarnation*).

Christ's sacrifice is incomparable because of His sinlessness and purity. The book of Hebrews states, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). The Incarnate Logos of God was fully human, and therefore experienced pain, emotions, suffering, and temptations, although He was sinless. His

sinlessness made Him the unblemished Lamb, allowing Him to take away the world's sins. He voluntarily accepted suffering and death, thus demonstrating His love and obedience to the Father and His unconditional love for mankind. He declared, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:18). Christ's self-giving and sacrifice were complete and final for mankind. Unlike the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which had to be repeated, Christ's offering on the cross was "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). By His death, He gave us life. He secured eternal redemption for humanity, thus making Him the final sacrifice and any further sacrifices unnecessary.

Christ is the perfect and final sacrifice that fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament and God's plan of salvation for us. This time of Kiahk is a time to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ and for the sacrifice He will make for us. This season of repentance, reflection, and renewal urges us to contemplate the Holy mystery of the Incarnation. When we understand why Christ came into the world, we can deepen the joy of celebrating His Nativity. His incarnation reminds us that His coming was not just a mere event but an eternal expression of God's unconditional love for His creation. Amen.

References:

- English Standard Version Bible
- <https://copticapologetics.com/2023/09/11/st-athanasius-on-old-testament-prophecies-of-christ/>
- Chapter 2 Section 9 of On the Incarnation by St. Athanasius
- https://www.copticchurch.net/pdf/theology/incarnation_st_athanasius.pdf