

In 1892, James G. Dailey wrote a beautiful hymn which questioned this fascinating concept. He asked the question this way, "Why did my Savior come to earth?" His answer was quite simple . . . "because He loved me so." In this "Bible Talk" we hope to delve a little deeper into this challenging question. If indeed there is a God who is our creator, and if Jesus of Nazareth was in fact "God in the Flesh," we cannot help but wonder what reasons God would have to visit us in such a way. Our answers will come from the Bible. Though someone might be able to think of other reasons, this "Bible Talk" will consider three.

The first reason why God became flesh is found in Hebrews 4:15. There we read, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." Under the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, the High Priest was the one who offered a sacrifice of "atonement" for the sins of the people. He was the mediator, or representative of the people before God. The Hebrew writer identifies Jesus as holding this position under the New Covenant (Hebrews 3:1; I Tim 2:5). Here, in Hebrews 4:15, we are shown why Jesus is qualified for the job -- He understands our weaknesses; He can sympathize with us; He knows what it is like to be hot and cold, to be tired and sick and tempted. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet He did not sin. If God had not become flesh, He could never have totally related to His creation; for "God cannot be tempted by evil" (James 1:13). In Hebrews 2:17-18, the writer emphatically declares, "He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God ... for since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." We should appreciate our creator all the more when we consider His desire to understand His creation. It should be a source of great comfort to know that the one who intercedes on our behalf before the Father (Hebrews 7:25) can "sympathize" with our weaknesses. That He has experienced and that He knows, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

The second reason why God became flesh is found in I Peter 2:21, which reads, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" Jesus came to show us how to live. As we learned in Bible Talk # 101, this is the essence of the "Discipleship" process. How could we ever become His disciple if He had not become flesh and left us an example? Laws written on stone could never convey the concept of behavior God wants from us. Only a living example could help us to see how life was intended to be lived. Only a living example could show us what our heavenly Father is really like, too. Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). In 1 Peter 2, verses 22-23, we are given some examples of how we should imitate Jesus. We should strive to avoid sin and deceit in our lives and we should keep entrusting ourselves to the one who judges righteously. If God had not become flesh, He could not have modeled a life of such devotions.

The third reason why God became flesh is also found in I Peter 2. Verse 24 says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." We must remember that God is both eternal and immortal. As such, it is impossible for God to die. For some reason, it was important to God that a perfect life be lived so that a sinless sacrifice could be offered for sins. If God had not become flesh, He could not have lived that life, nor could He have died that death. He had to become flesh so that He could die.

We seem to be able to understand the first two reasons why God became flesh. We are grateful that God would want to sympathize with our weaknesses and leave us an example of how to live. But that third reason is hard to grasp. WHY? Why did a death have to take place for sins. Why could God not simply say, "Your sins are forgiven"? This is a question many people struggle to comprehend, so we shall begin to explain the necessity of the cross . . . in Bible Talk # 107.

