

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 14

“LOVE CAME DOWN AT CHRISTMAS”

*Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.*

Two lines of “Love Came Down at Christmas” read: “Worship we the Godhead / Love incarnate, Love divine.”

It’s that incarnate word that encapsulates so much of what I think Christina Rossetti was trying to explain in the poem that eventually became this Christmas carol.

What does it truly mean that love became incarnate?

The story behind the song

Christina Rossetti lived in London when she wrote the poem that would become “Love Came Down at Christmas.” Her entire family studied literature, music, and art. Her brother, Dante Rossetti, was famous for his paintings.

Christina was inspired by the verses of 1 John 4, a passage that describes the greatness of God’s love and the calling God has given his people to love others as God loves them. First John 4:7–8 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Christina wanted people to remember that Christmas was the time God showed his great love to all of mankind. We see this immense love in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” We could even consider that verse a Christmas verse, though we seldom think of it that way.

But that is the central story of Christmas: “God so loved.”

Love sent for you

The dual meanings of incarnate represent well what happened at Christmas. According to Merriam-Webster, incarnate means both “invested with bodily and especially human nature and form” and “made manifest or comprehensible.”

In other words, God became human and love became manifest.

God loves every person in this world. He longs for all to be with him in heaven. But everyone makes wrong choices. We all sin. God knew that, no matter how much we'd try to obey his word, we would never obey perfectly.

Only one person ever lived a "sinless" life. He was born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph, then grew and "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). This sinless man then taught his disciples and others and performed miracles.

Then this man died on a cross and was buried. Many people, even his disciples, thought they would never see him again. But Jesus was no ordinary man.

He rose from his grave, proving his power over death.

We celebrate Christmas because of Easter. God loved us so much, he gave us his Son.

One day, his Son will give people who believe in him eternal life in heaven.

What do we have to believe in order to go to heaven?

That Jesus was born and died on the Easter cross.

That Jesus never sinned, which means that his life, sacrificed for our mistakes, can atone for our wrong choices.

That Jesus saves every person who trusts in him as Lord and Savior.

Love indeed came down at Christmas.

He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Later, Jesus was wrapped in burial clothes and laid in a tomb. But he rose from the grave.

Now he is in heaven, waiting to wrap his loving arms around us.

Have you received the gift of his love, your salvation?

All you need to do is ask.