

Article: “No Other Way”

“How was anyone saved before Christ came into the world?” Are we to believe that there was some other way of salvation in the Old Testament than through the incarnate Lord Christ? Would the Law have been sufficient to bring salvation in the Old Testament, if it was not sufficient in the New Testament (John 1:17-18)?

God justified the wicked (Rom. 4:5) in view of the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. This was as true for Abraham, who lived in anticipation of the incarnation, as it is for us, who live after the incarnation. God’s plan to save the world was put into effect in the promise to Adam and Eve that Eve’s Offspring would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). We should not chide God that He did not give to Eve the fulfilment of her messianic desire (Gen. 4).

God was not careless of the need of His foremost creation. For that hope justified Adam and Eve through the possession of the object of the hope, the coming Messiah, Christ our Lord. If it were not the case that the divine plan to save the world through the incarnation of the Son of God was effective for those both before and after the incarnation actually occurred, it would be as though God Himself was unaware of His own gracious plan. And although the Charles Wesley hymn, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” describes His coming as “Late in time” (LSB 390:2), is it too late? Not at all. The Son of God comes in this last age at precisely the right time for us. God is not constrained by time, nor by any other creature. If He is constrained by anything, it is by His freely-given grace because of which He determines from eternity to en flesh the Word. The Word, who came in the flesh, first came into the world in the divine speaking to the prophets. There were intimations of His enfleshment when they cried, “Thus says the Lord.” This “delay” filled with the speaking of God’s Word was the proper anticipation and preparation for the enfleshment of the Word.

That is why now in this last age we learn of the Word’s becoming flesh only in the Word. There is no other way.

*Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease,
And be yourself our King of Peace.*

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

(LSB 357:7)