



A Great and Mighty Wonder

What a wonder that God became man! *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16) This is a mighty deed! For God's Son to have died, he first came to earth and took on human form. Earlier in the Gospel of John, *The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14) Jesus, God's Son, one person in the Trinity, became one of us, but yet remained God. Another reference to Jesus being a man and yet God is found in St Paul's letter to the Philippians, *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross.* (Philippians 2:8)

The vocabulary word for God taking human form is incarnate. Other synonyms are: in the flesh, in physical form, in bodily form, and made flesh. Jesus is our God incarnate. Indeed, this is a difficult concept for humans to grasp; it is a great and mighty wonder!

In the words of the Christmas hymn, *A Great and Mighty Wonder* (LSB 383:2),
*The Word becomes incarnate And yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems To shepherds from the sky.*

The hymn writer conveys the great exultation of the Word becoming flesh and yet maintaining his Godliness. Even the angels sing of this awesome incomprehensible event to the lowly people of earth.

This hymn text was originally written in Greek by St. Germanus (c. 634-734) and subsequently translated by John M. Neale (1818-1866). *The English Hymnal* (1906) adapted the Neale translation to fit the tune ES IST EIN ROS; the major part of this adaption was to create a refrain. The tune ES IST EIN ROS was first used in the popular Christmas carol, *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* (LSB 359); this German hymn dates back to the year 1599 when it appeared in *Alte Catholische Geistliche Kircheengeseng* in Cologne. With slight variations from the 1599 tune version, Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) wrote the current popular setting used yet today.

Please enjoy The King's College Choir, Cambridge, United Kingdom, sing *A Great and Mighty Wonder* in a 2006 recording.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9hS2G_7LrQ

Sources:

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