

Jesus - His Humanity

The humanity of Christ is a subject which is very seldom studied by professing Christians, and yet it is an all-important subject. In the sight of God it is a great sin to deny the humanity of Christ. The Apostle John, in his second Epistle, warns us of the evil of denying the humanity of Jesus. Verse 7 states, "*Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*" In John's day the false teachers, the Docetic Gnostics, denied that Jesus actually had a **human** body. According to them He only *appeared* to have had a body. Let us beware today of teachers who in one way or another deny the "**humanity**" of our Lord.

PROOFS OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

The first great question to consider is, "***How can we know that Christ was actually a man?***" A few passages of Scripture will make that plain.

First, let's look at Luke 2:7, which states, "*And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*" Jesus was born into this world as a baby. Mary was His mother.

Luke 2:52 states, "*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" Jesus was not only born as a baby, but He grew as a boy. Growth signifies that this was a normal boy.

Matthew 4:2 states, "*After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.*" If Jesus had been other than a human being, then fasting would not have made Him hungry. Because He was hungry He must have been human.

Matthew 8:24 states, "*Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.*" The fact that Jesus could sleep is proof that He was a man.

John 4:6 states, "*Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.*" Like other human beings Jesus grew tired after a long journey.

Hebrews 4:15 states, "*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.*" Because Jesus was tempted as you and I are tempted, therefore we can know that He was a real human being.

Two words from 1 Corinthians 15:3 give us one more proof. Those words are, "***Christ died.***" The fact that He died shows His humanity. In all these ways we can know without any doubt that Christ Jesus our Savior was man as well as God.

ANCESTRY OF CHRIST

It will be well for us to consider His ancestry, for because of His lineage God says He shall one day occupy the throne of David. Luke 2:7 gives us His immediate parentage when it

states, "*And she [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*" Because Mary was the mother of Jesus, we know that He was a real human being. His ancestry through Mary is given us in the third chapter of Luke's Gospel.

In Hebrews 7:14, we are told to what tribe of the children of Israel Jesus belonged. It states, "*For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.*"

1 Chronicles 5:2 tells us that Judah is the royal tribe, when it states, "*And though Judah was the strongest of his brothers and a ruler came from him, the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph.*"

However, the right of *kingship* must be traced to King David. Can Jesus do this? Let's listen to what Peter had to say on the subject in his great sermon preached on the day of Pentecost - Acts 2:29-30 declares, "*Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.*" Thus we see from these verses the importance of the **human** ancestry of Jesus. When He comes back again a second time to earth, He will be entitled to the throne of David because of His ability to trace back His human ancestry to David and Judah, as well as His ability to substantiate His claims of deity.

HOW TO RECONCILE THE HUMANITY AND THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Is it possible to reconcile the perfect humanity of Christ with His *absolute* deity? In answering that question let us say that our limited knowledge of spiritual things does not enable us to fully understand all the mysteries of God, but this need not interfere with our wholehearted acceptance of both doctrines - ***the humanity and the deity of Christ***. There is one great Scripture passage from the writings of Paul that will help us understand Christ's humanity in view of His deity. It is Philippians 2:5-8, and states, "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!*" This passage makes it plain that Christ *voluntarily* took this humanity upon Himself, and that certain functions of deity were held in abeyance by Him in order that by His humanity He might accomplish certain vital purposes.

F. B. Meyer in one of his messages points out that the "*self-emptying*" of our Lord Jesus Christ at the time of his incarnation was, "*like keeping my right hand, by a voluntary act of my will, behind my back, doing all my work with my left hand. Thus Christ voluntarily put behind Him certain aspects of His divine powers when He became man.*"

HUMANITY AND PERFECTION

Jesus took upon Himself humanity, yes, but what kind of human being was Jesus Christ? It is just as important to know that Jesus Christ was morally perfect when He was here on earth as it is to know that He was perfectly human. And the Scriptures are very clear on this point.

In John 8:46 Jesus spoke these words, "*Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin?*" No other human being who has ever lived would dare challenge His countrymen with such words as these. Through the ages no one has been able to pick one flaw in the life of this one and only perfect human being - Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul says of Christ, "*God made Him Who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*" Jesus could not have been made sin for us if He had not been sinless Himself. But the humanity of Jesus was not simply *negative*...[that is, lack of sin]...it was *positive* and full of righteous acts.

Peter tells us that in Acts 10:38, "*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.*" How thankful we should be for the perfect humanity of Jesus!

THE DANGER OF OVER-EMPHASIS

There is a real danger these days of our emphasizing the humanity of Jesus to such an extent that we lose sight of His deity. Many teachers praise the earthly life of Jesus and are constantly urging upon men to follow His example, but they say little about His deity, and scarcely mention His atoning death on the cross, and leave out the teaching concerning the new birth. The teaching of the humanity of Christ in such a way is truly dangerous. We are to imitate the example of Jesus, but only after we have been regenerated, or born-again, which will make this possible. The wise thing to do is to have the deity always in mind when teaching the humanity. Both doctrines are so important that we cannot get along without either. An Old Testament illustration of what we have been saying is to be found in the teaching regarding the meal offering in relation to the burnt offering in Leviticus. The meal offering was a bloodless offering being composed largely of fine flour. This offering pictures to us Christ as a perfect man Who was tested by great suffering. The fine flour would symbolize the fineness of character which was His. Now it is interesting to notice that the meal offering was not to be offered alone but usually in connection with the burnt offering as being the complement of that. The burnt offering was a blood offering, whereas the meal offering was not. The burnt offering pictured Christ as the Son of God, whereas the meal offering pictured Him as the Son of Man. Hence the danger is pointed out of considering Christ only as a man. The two great doctrines go together. We must beware of separating them.

PURPOSES OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

But why was it necessary for Jesus Christ our Savior to be a man as well as God? The Scriptures give us several reasons which we will study now.

John gives us an answer to the question in the first chapter of his Gospel. Verses 14 and 18 state, "*The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, Who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.*" According to John the Eternal Word became a human being in order that He might declare unto men what God is like. Men cannot look upon God the Father any more than he can expect to look indefinitely at the sun without losing his eyesight. But Jesus Christ took upon Himself flesh that He might reveal to men the real character of God.

There is in Rome an elegant fresco, by Guido, "*The Aurora*." It covers the high ceiling. Looking up at it from the pavement, your neck grows stiff, your head is apt to become dizzy, and the figures may become indistinct. So the owner has placed a large mirror near the floor where you may sit down at your leisure, and, look into the mirror without growing weary, and thereby study the fresco which is above you.

Even so, in Jesus Christ, as in a mirror, men may behold the glory and truth and grace of God. God has come down to us in His Son, Who is the "*express image of His person*" [Hebrews 1:3], and the full revelation of deity to man.

Paul gives us another reason for the incarnation of Christ in Galatians 4:4-5, which states, "*But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*" It was necessary for Jesus to be born as a human being and live under the dominion of God's laws, keeping them perfectly, before He could redeem those who are under the curse of a broken law.

Psalms 40:8 tells us Messiah's attitude toward God's law, when it states, "*I desire to do Your will, O My God, Your law is within My heart.*" Jesus delighted in keeping these laws of His heavenly Father and, because of this, He was ready to bear the curse of the broken law on the cross and then give us power to keep the law through His indwelling Spirit.

When we studied the deity of Christ we saw that the first chapter of Hebrews gave us six quotations from the Old Testament proving Christ's *deity*. Now let's examine the second chapter of Hebrews and we will see six reasons given for His *humanity*.

We will begin with verse 10, which states, "*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for Whom and through Whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*" This verse teaches us the humanity of Jesus was necessary because Jesus had to suffer as a human being before He could bring us to glory.

When Mrs. Booth, the wife of the founder of the Salvation Army, was a little girl, she saw a prisoner dragged away to the lockup, and on the way the crowd hooted at the poor man and the little girl looking on felt how lonely he must feel with no one to care for him, so she walked up to him and accompanied him down the street. She was willing to share with him his sufferings, whether they were deserved or not. And that was something like what Jesus Christ did when He came down to this world and entered into human experiences, sharing with us in our sufferings, that He might lead us to His glory.

Verse 11 states, "*Both the One who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*" This verse teaches that Jesus had to be identified with human beings before He could be their Savior. A good illustration of this is the life story of Lough Fook, a Chinese Christian. This splendid man was moved with compassion for the Chinese coolies who labored in the South American mines. He wanted to help them and he saw that the one way of doing it was for him to become one of them. So he sold himself as a coolie slave for a period of five years and was sent to work among them. In laboring with them he was able to win over 200 of them to Christ. Had he not identified himself

with them he would not have won them. And had Jesus Christ not identified Himself with lost humanity, He could not have won us to Himself.

Verse 14 states, "*Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil.*" Christ had to become a human being to destroy the power of the Devil over death. It was necessary for Christ to die and be raised again to conquer death and the Devil, but before this could come to pass He had to become a human being. Since he has conquered death, death should hold no terrors for any one who belongs to Him.

A little child used to play in a large garden, but there was a winding path at one end of the garden of which the little fellow was afraid. His nurse had told him that "*goblins*" were there, so he never ventured into that part of the garden. But one day his older brother took him to the place where the path began and left him there while he himself went singing down the path to its end and back again. From that time on the little fellow lost all his fears of that path. Mankind has always been afraid of death, but one day the Lord Jesus as a man walked the valley of the shadow of death and came back again singing a song of triumph, and since that day you and I need have no fear of death if our hearts are united to Him.

Verse 16 states, "*For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.*" For Christ to have become an angel instead of a human being would not have done. Thank God, He became a *man*! A little Girl was trying to go to sleep in the dark, but she was lonesome and kept crying out for her mother. The mother told her that the angels would be with her and protect her, but somehow she was not satisfied. She exclaimed, "*But I want some one with skin on his face.*" The cry of that little girl is the cry of the world toward God. And Jesus Christ is the answer of God to that cry. He is a man, and yet He is God. He is one with us.

Verse 17 states, "*For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.* Here we are told that Christ had to become a real man as well as to continue to be God in order to atone for sin.

Dr. A.C. Dixon once told the story of an agnostic who was looking at a colony of ants confined under a glass cover. He was thinking about the wonderful intelligence which these tiny creatures demonstrated. Then he got to wondering and said to himself, "*How could a human bring help to these ants or impart knowledge to them?*" There was only one answer to that question. To help these ants one must himself become an ant. And this thought helped him to see the reasonableness of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The only way for God to help human beings was for Himself to become a human being. And this He did in Christ.

Verse 18 gives one more reason for the humanity of Christ, when it states, "*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*" Christ must be a man to help those who are subject to temptation. He was tempted in the same way you and I are, and therefore when we go to Him in prayer we can be assured of a sympathetic hearing. When I am tempted I am thankful I can go to a Savior Who is both human and divine. He is the God-Man!

AN IMPORTANT PROPOSITION

Let's examine a little further into the humanity of Christ while He was still on earth and derive from that an important proposition. Let us look at two incidents from his life. In Mark 1:35 we are told that Jesus arose early one morning and went out to a solitary place and there prayed, however, if Jesus was Son of God, why did He need to pray? The only answer is, He needed to pray because He was also Son of Man. The second incident is the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. There we see Jesus praying and fighting a great battle, the greatest of His life, there on His knees before God. And that victory was won there because God gave Him the needed strength. Both of these pictures are of Jesus as a man.

Now I want to share a proposition with you that I trust you will never forget as long as you live. It is this:

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, the victories which He won over temptation were not won by resorting to His omnipotent power as the Son of God, but rather He won His victories in exactly the same way you and I win our victories today, by trusting in God for strength.

In the first chapter of Hebrews there are six quotations from the Old Testament proving the deity of Christ. In the second chapter there are three quotations proving his humanity. One of them is this short expression taken from the Psalms, "*I will put my trust in Him.*" That expression is the secret of how Jesus lived that Christian life when He was here on earth. He lived it by trusting in His heavenly Father. You and I can live it in the same way. What the world needs is more men like Jesus Christ who have faith in God.

CHRIST'S HUMANITY TODAY

There is one further question that needs to be asked, "*Is Jesus Christ a man today, or did He cease to be man when He ascended up into heaven?*" Let the Scriptures themselves answer the question.

1 Timothy 2:5 states, "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" That is present tense. Right now Jesus is a man although He is in heaven and is God also.

Does it make any difference that our Savior is a man? Yes, it makes a vast difference. Hebrews 4:15-16 state, "*For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*" The Lord Jesus can sympathize with us in all our trials because He has had similar experiences to ours. He can rejoice with us and weep with us. He can enter into our experiences. A little girl came home from school one day and told her mother, "*I just love Marjorie more than anybody else.*" And her mother asked her, "*And why do you love her the most?*" The child replied, "*Because she cries with me when I cry.*" Ah, it was true sympathy that drew this child to her girl friend. And it is sympathy that draws us to the Son of God who is also Son of Man. Let us thank God that Jesus Christ is man as well as God. No other Person could meet the needs of poor lost humanity. Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh.

Let's not close this lesson without calling our attention to the presence of both the deity of Christ as well as the humanity of Christ in the passage of Scripture we have just examined, Hebrews 4:14 states, "*Therefore, since we have a great High Priest Who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*" Verse 15 follows with emphasis upon the humanity of Jesus, when it states, "*For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.*" Verse 16 continues, "*Therefore, let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*" The word "**therefore**" refers back to both verse 14 and verse 15 and has the meaning, that, because Jesus is the Son of God, with all power to supply our needs, and because He is the Son of Man and sympathizes with us in our trials, **therefore** we are invited to go to Him in our time of need. Thus we see how inseparable are these two great foundation doctrines of Holy Scripture.

Oh wondrous thought that my High Priest, To whom I go in time of need,
Is rich with all the wealth of heaven, for He's the Son of God indeed!
I do not hesitate to ask for anything my case demands,
I simply state my wants to Him and leave it all in His dear hands.

Oh glorious truth that my High Priest, Who bids me tell Him all my need,
Is sympathetic with my plight, for He's the Son of Man indeed!
He's touched with my infirmity, For He was tempted, He was tried,
And He will listen to my cry and grant me comforts that abide.

Oh blessed fact that my High Priest, Who when I'm tempted succors me,
Is both the Son of God and Man, With power and gracious sympathy.
Let me therefore draw boldly near in prayer before His throne of grace,
Assured that when I pray He'll hear, when thus I meet Him face to face.