

The Humanity of Christ

Incarnation: part 2

December 20, 2009

INCARNATION; God's becoming human; the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus of Nazareth.
Incarnation (Lat. *incarnatio*, being or taking flesh)

John 1:14 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.

The mystery of the incarnation is that Jesus, God incarnate, was one Person in two natures—fully divine and fully human.

The Purpose of the Incarnation: Our Salvation.

The angel of the Lord, in a prophecy of Jesus' birth, plainly stated

Matt. 1:21 "[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (*Luke 19:10*; *John 3:17*; *1 Tim. 1:15*).

God, in one of the modes of His existence as **Trinity** and without in any way ceasing to be the one God, has **revealed** Himself to humanity for its salvation by becoming human. Jesus, the Man from Nazareth, is the incarnate Son of God. As the God-Man, He mediates God to humans; as the Man-God, He represents humans to God. By faith we become as adopted children of God the Father.

The liberation of humanity from everything that would prevent relationship with God as Father requires incarnation. The biblical materials related to incarnation portray Jesus as the One who accomplished the mission of salvation because He was the One in whom both full divinity and full humanity were present.

Jesus: Fully Human

Birth: The respective **genealogies** of Jesus serve as testimonies to His natural human descent (*Matt. 1:1-17*; *Luke 3:23-37*). Jesus was supernaturally **conceived**, being born of a virgin (*Luke 1:26-35*). To be sure, the Bible records other miraculous births such as those of Isaac (*Gen. 21:1-2*) and John the Baptist (*Luke 1:57*), but none attained to the miraculous heights of a human being supernaturally conceived and born of a virgin.

and the witnesses in the NT recognized Him as fully human. **Peter**, in his sermon at Pentecost, declared that Jesus is "a man pointed out to you by God," *Acts 2:22*. That the Word was made flesh is the crux of the central passage on incarnation in the NT (*John 1:14*). Jesus **referred** to Himself as a man (*John 8:40*). He attributed to Himself such normal human **elements** as **body** and **soul** (*Matt. 26:26,28,38*). He grew and developed along the lines of normal human **development** (*Luke 2:40*). During His earthly ministry, Jesus displayed common **physiological** needs: He experienced fatigue (*John 4:6*); His body required sleep (*Matt. 8:24*), food (*Matt. 4:2; 21:18*), and water (*John 19:28*). Human **emotional** characteristics accompanied the physical ones: Jesus expressed joy (*John 15:11*) and sorrow (*Matt. 26:37*); He showed compassion (*Matt. 9:36*) and love (*John 11:5*); and He was moved to righteous indignation (*Mark 3:5*).

A proper understanding of the events preceding and including His **death** requires an affirmation of His full humanity. In the **garden**, He **prayed** for emotional and physical strength to face the critical hours that lay ahead. He **perspired** as one under great physical strain (*Luke 22:43-44*). He died a **real death** (*Mark 15:37*; *John 19:30*). When a **spear** was thrust into His side, both blood and water poured from His body (*John 19:34*). Jesus thought of Himself as human, and those who witnessed His birth, maturation, ministry, and death experienced Him as fully human.

Although Jesus was fully human in every sense of the word, His was a **perfect humanity**. The NT also attests to the **sinless** character of Jesus. He, Himself, asked the question, "Who among you can convict Me of sin?" *John 8:46*. Paul declared, God "made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us" *2 Cor. 5:21*. The writer of Hebrews held that Christ was "without sin" (*4:15*). The NT presents Jesus as a man, fully human, and as a unique man, the ideal human. *Walter D. Draughon III*

So What?

Three things strike me about the humanity of Christ.

1. He Knows Us in Our Temptations and Trials (Heb. 4:15).

- **Tempted** to sin, just like everyone else.

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Your everyday temptations; dark, ones you'd be loathe to admit to anyone else. Same desires we deal with.

(Matt. 4:1-11) Jesus was tempted three times in the desert at the beginning of his ministry. What's fascinating to me is that Satan showed his cards in those temptations. Satan's three temptations of Jesus had to do with Jesus denying his human struggle and overcoming them with a counterfeit, "quick fix."

When I was in college I got real close to becoming an alcoholic. On the surface all I could see was alcohol was the route to popularity (the "in" group) and a buzz. Unbeknownst to me was the real temptation: a futile attempt to overcome the feelings of life's humbling circumstances, loneliness, and frustration that are so much of the human condition. The same is true with drugs. Intellectual pride fits the same bill. I can take myself so seriously that I feel superior to others. I presume I am more important because I feel more important.

After I'd sin I use to tell myself, "Well, Seth, you're only human." But sin does not make me human; it compromises my humanity. The philandering husband with his mistress on business trips, the chemically addicted, the doting mother whose "life" is her kids, all seek a way out of feeling the forces of loneliness, frustration, and heartache on their terms.

2. We aspire to true humanity. (Authentically human)

Not just a man, but fully man; man as we are supposed to be! Not this milquetoast man sometimes portrayed in movies. "Blind fools, brood of vipers." (Mt. 23:17, 33) Kind and compassionate to sinners; fearless and direct in opposing hypocrisy and injustice.

Wrestled in the garden with his emotions. Like any other man he did not want to die. Felt completely separated and abandoned from God on the cross. Felt doubt. He voiced his thoughts with these agonizing words...

Matt. 27:46 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Could he still be human if he didn't sin? "Sin is not a part of what it means to be human. It is the corruption or contradiction of true humanity. It is not 'natural' but unnatural." Jesus perfectly fulfilled his humanity.

This past week Chris Henry, an NFL player was tragically killed when, during a "domestic dispute" he followed his fiancé out to the pick-up truck, and when she jumped in and sped off, he jumped in the back of the truck. Somewhere along the way he fell out of the truck and had enough head trauma that the next morning he was dead.

One of his teammates, who changed his name to Chad "Ochocinco" was interviewed Thursday afternoon. "He was doing everything right. My grandmother told me to never question the Man upstairs on decisions he makes, because he's never wrong, but, I don't see how Chris was supposed to go already, especially when you're on the right path."

3. Love of God Who Would Lay Everything Aside. (Phil. 2)

The Humility of God

Down through the course of history, mankind has created little "g" gods, figments of our imaginations, and extensions of a greater humanity. The Roman and Greek gods, and the pagan gods of the forest primeval are prime examples. What is common to all of them is that they are "gods" of strength. People relied on their "gods" for victory in battle, success in their harvest, ability to have children, etc.

What's striking about our God is that Jesus Christ was known particularly as a *lowly* Son of God. It was not his strength but his weakness, not his majestic power but his suffering, not his use of authority but his obedience that distinguished him from every little "g" god man ever created.

Isaiah 53:3 ...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...

Birth story: insignificant little outpost in the vast Roman Empire; a stable; the wife of a common laborer; poor shepherds receive him;

Temptation: *If you are the Son of God...* The three temptations consisted in that "Jesus Christ should use his divine power to take care of his own needs, gain popularity by miracles, and become a great world ruler." Jesus proved himself to be who he said he was refusing to be what all the other little "g" gods were or wanted to be.

Matt. 16:13-20 **Peter confesses** that Jesus is the "Son of the living God." But when Jesus then taught that he must suffer and be killed, Peter stopped him cold. Jesus' reply is stunning and striking, "Get behind me Satan, for you are not on the side of God, but of man." The idea that the Son of God should be like a great and powerful world ruler like the little "g" gods was the idea of the devil.

When we think about the virgin birth and the story of Christmas we usually think about "Emmanuel, God with us," as we did last week. However the other side of the story is also just as stunning: It also means, the *humanity of God: God stoops to identify himself with the cause of humanity by himself becoming man.*

Phil. 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

"God is not too good, too holy or too proud to 'lower' himself to man's level to participate in earthly life. He does not sacrifice but exercises his divine power, goodness and holiness by doing so.... Unlike all false gods, the true God can accomplish his will in weakness as well as in strength, by sacrificing himself as well as by asserting himself....Christmas means the Creator 'humiliating' himself to become a creature. It means the Righteous One humiliating himself to stand with and for the unrighteous.

Christmas confirms the ancient prophecy that he is "**Emmanuel**, God with us!" "Have we really understood the impoverishment that Christ endured? Everything was taken from him during the passion, even the love that drove him to the cross. No longer did he savor love, no longer did he feel any spark of enthusiasm. His heart gave out and a feeling of utter helplessness came over him. Truly he emptied himself. God's merciful hand no longer sustained him. God's countenance was hidden during the passion. Metz, p. 13

"For he is the God who gives himself to be known in the man Jesus who was born in a stable, tried and condemned in a courtroom, executed at public execution grounds."

Conclusion:

"If you want to know what it means to be truly human, look at Jesus Christ. If you want to know God—look at Jesus Christ." That is the wonder of the incarnation, God taking on human flesh! ...How it that in this one person we meet both genuinely human man and God the Father Almighty, the church has never been able to explain. All its attempts to explain it have finally only affirmed *that it is so*. He is at once true man and true God, God with *us*, and *God* with us."

Extra Material: