

## What We Believe, Part 4: Jesus, the Son

**Philippians 2:5 ESV (Pg. 570)** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; that he is perfect in nature, teaching and obedience; that he is fully God and is fully man; that he was always with God and is God; that through him all things came into being and were created; that he was before all things and in him all things hold together by the word of his power; that he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation, and in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily; that he is the only Savior for the sins of the world having shed his blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross; that by his death in our place, he revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God; that having redeemed us from sin, the third day he rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness, and for a period of 40 days appeared to over 500 witnesses performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection; that he ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all, awaiting his return; that he is the Head of his body, the church, and should be adored, loved, served and obeyed by all.

- I. We're continuing our series on the truths embraced by NRLC. You'll recall that we've already discussed the Authority of Scripture, The Mystery of the Trinity, and have specifically looked at the person of God the Father.
  - A. Today we turn our attention to the central figure in all of Scripture; the one whom the Old Testament foretold, the one who has come and pleased the Father in every way, and is forever put forward by the Spirit: Jesus, the Son.
    1. There's no one that is any way comparable him. History hasn't produced even one reasonable facsimile who said things like he said, did things like he did, caused as much controversy, or generated as much devotion.
      - a) His birth was so significant that it split time in half: BC & AD. It was so miraculous that the implications of it are astounding.
      - b) Legendary interviewer Larry King was once asked who, in all of history, he would like to interview. He said Jesus. Why? "I would like to ask Him if He was indeed virgin born, because the answer to that question would define history."-Larry King. How astute! It has indeed defined history!
    2. Other famous non-believers have been compelled to attest to the undeniable uniqueness of Jesus Christ over the years.

- a) “I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him.” –Napoleon
  - b) “I am an historian. I am not a believer; but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.” - H.G. Wells
- B. I want to present four simple truths that true Christians will embrace in order to hold a correct view of Jesus Christ. Like the mystery of the Trinity, these may sound contradictory to our limited human understanding, but I hope to thoroughly prove each one, using authoritative scripture.
1. Jesus Christ is fully and completely **divine**.
  2. Jesus Christ is fully and completely **human**.
  3. The divine and human natures of Christ are **distinct**.
  4. The divine and human natures of Christ are completely **united** in one person.<sup>1</sup>
- II. To say that Jesus Christ is divine presupposes that he is, as we have said, 100% God; that is, everything that God is, Christ is. If God is omnipotent, all-knowing, ever-present, eternal and self-revealing, by necessity Jesus must be all of those things as well, else he would be **less than** God, calling his divinity into question.
- A. We read earlier how the Apostle Paul told the Philippians Jesus was “in the form of God” and had “equality with God”. He says to the Colossians “He is the image of the invisible God” and “in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”<sup>2</sup>
1. **Hebrews 1:3 ESV** He is the radiance of the glory of God and **the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power**. Wouldn’t you agree that “upholding the universe” is the prerogative of God?
  2. In Jesus’ prayer in John 17, on the night of his betrayal, he asks the Father to “glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I **had with you before** the world existed”. He was glorious before that night in Bethlehem!
- B. Though critics, atheists and heretics will say that Christ never claimed to be God, a quick look at the Gospels shows this position to be highly unstable.
1. Jesus claimed the right to restate God’s law. In the Sermon on the Mount, 6 times he reminded the people what God’s Law clearly taught (“You have heard it said, ‘you shall not commit adultery..murder’”), but then he would authoritatively broaden it’s implications (“...but **I** say to you...”) <sup>3</sup>; Surely expanding the reach of the Law is something only God can do! In John 13, he issued “a new commandment”!
  - a) He also claimed that it was **he** who would sit as Judge of the Earth on the last day. **Matthew 7:22 ESV** On that day many will say to **me**, ‘Lord, Lord,

<sup>1</sup> ESV Large Print Study Bible; Biblical Doctrine: An Overview; The Person of Christ, Pg. 2761; © 2008 Crossway

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 1:15,19

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34, 38-39, 43-44

did we not prophesy in **your** name, and cast out demons in **your** name, and do many mighty works in **your** name?’ **23** And then will **I** declare to them, ‘**I** never knew you; depart from **me**, you workers of lawlessness.’

- b) Moreover, He forgave the sins of the people, and validated that forgiveness with miraculous healings, even though the Jews present protested saying, “Who can forgive sins **but God alone?**”<sup>4</sup>
  - 2. The Jews certainly had no doubt about who Jesus was claiming to be! In John 5:18, they sought to kill him because he claimed to be God’s Son. By doing so, it says, he was making himself equal with God.
- III. But we must now consider a seemingly contradictory point, and that is the mystery of the incarnation, the fact that this one who was fully God and equal to the Father, became a man, a fact fully attested to throughout the Bible. In our text, Paul said he was “born in the likeness of men” and that he was “found in human form”. John likewise said that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14).
- A. This fact is not easy to get our minds around! But, as we saw with the Trinity, we must let the Bible, and not the intellectual difficulties we face, have the final word. “Let God be true though every one were a liar...” (Romans 3:4) So what exactly does the scripture say about Christ’s humanity<sup>5</sup>?
    - 1. First, that he had both a human birth and a human genealogy. **Galatians 4:4 ESV** **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law** He was born just as you and I, emerging from his mother’s womb. He was born a Jew, under Jewish laws, and traditions; and with a Jewish family line; descending from King David. (Rom. 1:3)
    - 2. Secondly, He had a genuine human body that grew and matured...Jesus experienced puberty! (Luke 2:40) He experienced both hunger and thirst (Matt. 4:2; John 19:28); he grew tired (John 4:6) and he was even capable of death (Luke 23:46), and did, in fact, die.
    - 3. Third, He had a human mind, capable of limitations of knowledge. **Mark 13:32 ESV** **“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”** Luke also tells us that he “grew in wisdom” (Luke 2:52).
    - 4. Fourth, he also experienced human temptation. **Hebrews 4:15 ESV** **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.**
  - B. Christ’s humanity matters to us a great deal, because apart from his becoming a man, we could not be redeemed!
    - 1. He had to be one of us to perfectly fulfill all of God’s righteous laws for us. He had to be one of us in order to receive, in our place, the death penalty our sin and rebellion had incurred.
    - 2. **2 Corinthians 8:9 ESV** **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.**

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 2:5-12

<sup>5</sup> This section culled from ESV Large Print Study Bible; Biblical Doctrine: An Overview; The Person of Christ, Pg. 2761-2766; © 2008 Crossway

- IV. Perhaps you think you understand Christ's humanity, or his deity. But try to imagine them as simultaneously true! Because of the difficulty of harmonizing these dual truths, as they did with the Trinity, the early church had to endure the introduction of multiple heretical doctrines that, on one side or the other, got the essence of the Person of Christ wrong.
- A. These included Ebionism and Arianism, which denied, in differing measures Christ's deity; as well as Docetism and Appollinarianism, which denied, in differing measures Christ's humanity. None of these passed the "Bible test".
  - B. So, once again, the church convened a council, this time in 451 A.D. in Chalcedon (modern-day Turkey) to resolve these disputes. Their conclusion was that the mystery of Jesus Christ was that he was simultaneously 100% God and 100% man; not "50/50", or some other mixture. To sum it up: The divine and human natures of Christ are complete and **distinct**.
    1. This means that "One nature of Christ is sometimes seen doing things in which his other nature does not share."<sup>6</sup>
      - a) For example, we are told multiple times in the New Testament that Christ was an equal participant with the Father in the creation of the universe<sup>7</sup>, But we don't see the "man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) creating new worlds by the word of his power during the time of his incarnation.
      - b) Conversely, one of the fundamental truths about God is that he cannot die (1 Tim 6:16), but Jesus **did**, in actuality, die.
    2. What is the explanation of this apparent conundrum? Those things are seen as Christ acting **distinctly within** the two natures in which he exists, and both scenarios (creation and death) are true. We mustn't forget that when Christ became a man, he wasn't less than fully God; and since he has ascended back to his father in Heaven, he is still, even now, the perfect man.
  - C. Therefore, Christ's "incarnation is a matter of Christ's **gaining** human attributes, not of his **giving up** divine attributes. He gave up the glory of the divine life (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6), but not the possession of divine powers."<sup>8</sup>
    1. This is what Paul meant in our text when he says he "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant". The Amplified Bible says "without renouncing or diminishing His deity, but only temporarily giving up the outward expression of divine equality and His rightful dignity".
    2. This also means that "Anything that either nature does, the Person of Christ does. He, God incarnate, is the active agent every time."<sup>9</sup>
- V. And this brings us to our final point; that the divine and human natures of Christ are completely **united** in one person. An early church father, Anselm of Canterbury, in stating why two natures had to exist in one Person for the work of saving the lost, said, "It is necessary that the self-same Person who is to make this satisfaction [for

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<sup>6</sup> ESV Large Print Study Bible; Biblical Doctrine: An Overview; The Person of Christ, Pg. 2766; © 2008 Crossway

<sup>7</sup> John 1:3,10; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 3:8-9, Colossians 1:16, 3:10; Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>8</sup> <sup>8</sup> ESV Large Print Study Bible; Biblical Doctrine: An Overview; The Person of Christ, Pg. 2766; © 2008 Crossway

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

humanity's sins] be perfect God and perfect man, since he *cannot* make it unless he be really God, and He *ought not* to make it unless he be really man.”<sup>10</sup>

- A. The cost of our sin was unspeakably high! So high that no human being could have ever paid it. The price set by God's holiness was **perfect** morality and law-keeping, with no wiggle room. No one gets graded on a curve, and God never looks the other way.
    - 1. But not only was the price unspeakably high, but our fore-parents, Adam and Eve, had plunged us all into devastating spiritual depravity and ruin, resulting in crippling spiritual poverty for every living soul: red and yellow, black and white. None could be found who could pay even a portion of the debt.
    - 2. So someone, not of our race, had to become one of us, and be 'adopted' into our family. He did this so that, paying our debt, and adopt us into his family!
  - B. **Hebrews 2:17 ESV** Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
    - 1. Paul put it like this in our text: "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Let that sink in. Sovereign, Creator, Holy God **humbled himself**. What does that mean?
    - 2. He was rich, but became poor (2 Cor. 8:9). He was righteous, but became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), but became the despised, the rejected, the cast away (Isaiah 53:3; Mark 12:10).
  - C. This is the mystery of mysteries, but what a blessed truth! God became poor, condemned under sin, despised, rejected and cast away and viciously murdered - is there no reward for this injustice? Is there no payoff for Christ who gave so much? Yes! Much in every way!
    - 1. Psalm 2:8 prophetically has the Father saying to the obedient Son, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession." A day is coming when all that Christ has died to save will have been gathered in; a representative people from every race, tribe, tongue and culture on the planet, and he shall rule with justice and righteousness forever!
    - 2. On that day, no one will be able to resist offering him the praise he is due! No one will be too tired, distracted, or apathetic to worship their King. Because of the humility and love of his sacrifice, Paul declares, **Philippians 2:10b ESV** "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- VI. So what is the proper response to the truth of Christ's divinity and humanity? It is two-fold.
- A. When you feel that God is distant, that he does not hear your cry, remember that he has walked where you walk and felt what you felt, and as a human being, he overcame this world for you. As a man, he accomplished for you all that you were unable to accomplish - most notably, destroying the power of sin and death.
  - B. But never forget that the Man who accomplished all of this is **most surely** God to the fullest degree! He deserves your worship and your obedience.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, page 2765