

DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Lesson 6

Humanity of Christ

The Humanity of Christ is just as important a doctrine as the deity of Christ. If Christ wasn't a man, then He wouldn't have been able to redeem mankind. He had to become a man so that He could be a substitutionary sacrifice for men. He also needed to be a man because many prophecies said the Messiah was going to be a man born of a woman. Because many cults reject the deity of Christ, the church has often focused on the deity of Christ and neglected to teach about His humanity. The Scriptures teach Jesus was a man with the same limitations we all have as human beings with the exception of a sin nature. In this study we examine the Scriptures to see what the Word of God has to say about the humanity of Christ.

The study of the person of Christ is one of the most complicated and intricate studies that can be undertaken by a biblical theologian. . . Contemplation on the person of Christ is an exhaustless mine of theology and vital preaching as well as the heart of any true devotion to the Savior. Every systematic theology worthy of the name gives considerable attention to the person of the incarnate Christ.¹

"The Incarnation is not an easy doctrine. When pondering the great truth that Christ as eternal God took on human nature, we are immediately faced with a deluge of mind-boggling questions. For example, how could Christ be both fully human and fully divine at the same time? What is the relationship between the human and the divine natures in Christ? Do the two natures merge to form a third compound nature or do they remain forever distinct? Did Christ in his two natures have two wills or just one will? Did Christ have conflicting desires – some human and some divine? Did Christ give up any of his divine attributes during his incarnate state? Was Christ still human following his death and resurrection?"²

I. DEFINITION OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

- A. Webster defines the word "human" as: *of relating to or characteristic of man; consisting of men; having human form or attributes; susceptible to or representative of the sympathies and frailties of man's nature.*³
- B. "The doctrine of the humanity of Christ is equally important as the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Jesus had to be a man if He was to represent fallen humanity. First John was written to dispel the doctrinal error that denies the true humanity

¹John Walvord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 106.

²Ron Rhodes, *Christ Before the Manger*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 189-190.

³*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1981, 552.

of Christ (cf. 1 John 4:2). If Jesus was not a real man, then the death on the cross was an illusion; He had to be a real man to die for humanity. The Scriptures teach the true humanity of Jesus. However, they also show that He did not possess man's sinful, fallen nature (1 John 3:5)."⁴

- C. "Jesus was not only fully God but also fully man, with one important exception to our usual concept of humanity. He was without sin and no other human being has that characteristic."⁵

II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT CHRIST'S HUMANITY

- A. "It was not the triune God but the second person of the Trinity that assumed human nature. For this reason it is better to say that the Word became flesh than that God became man."⁶
- B. "Christ's taking flesh was a plot of free grace, and a pure design of love. God himself, though Almighty, was overcome with love. Christ incarnate is nothing but love covered with flesh. As Christ's assuming our human nature was a masterpiece of wisdom, so it was a monument of free grace."⁷
- C. "As when a king is angry with a subject, the king's son marries his daughter, and so mediates for the subject, and brings him into favor with the king again; so when God the father was angry with us, Christ married himself to our nature, and now mediates for us with his Father, and brings us to be friends again, and God looks upon us with a favorable aspect."⁸

III. SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

A. Jesus Had A Human Mother, Brothers, and Sisters

- 1. **Gen. 3:15**⁹ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

⁴Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 222.

⁵Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

⁶Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 333.

⁷Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 194.

⁸Ibid, pg. 195.

⁹It is interesting that Gen. 3:15 is the only place where the "seed of a woman" is mentioned. Usually it is the seed of a man, but since Jesus was to be born of a virgin, he had to be described as the seed of a woman.

2. **Matt. 1:1** The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:
3. **Matt. 1:18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.
4. **Mt. 13:55-56** “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 “And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”
5. **Lk. 8:19** And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.
6. **Jn. 7:5** For not even His brothers were believing in Him.
7. **Gal. 4:4** But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

[Jesus] humbled himself more in lying in the virgin’s womb than in hanging upon the cross. (Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 196)

B. Jesus Natural Human Growth

1. **Luke 2:4-5** Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. . .
2. **Lk. 2:10-12** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 “This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”
3. **Lk. 2:39-40** When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. 40 The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . .
4. **Lk. 2:43-46, 48-52** and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 When they did not find Him, they returned

to Jerusalem looking for Him. 46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. . . 48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” 49 And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” 50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. 51 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

As bread is made of wheat, and wine is made of the grape; so Christ is made of a woman: his body was part of the flesh and substance of the virgin. This is a glorious mystery, ‘God manifest in the flesh.’ In the creation, man was made in God’s image; in the incarnation God was made in man’s image. (Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 192)

“We are told that “Jesus grew, and increased in wisdom and stature.” He “increased,” i. e., He kept advancing; He “grew,” and the reflective form of the verb would seem to indicate that His growth was due to His own efforts. From all this it seems clear that Jesus received His training along the lines of ordinary human progress – instruction, study, thought.”¹⁰

5. **Heb. 5:8** Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

C. **Jesus’ Human Appearance**

1. **Isa. 50:6** I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.
2. **Isa. 53:2** For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
3. **John 4:9** Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

¹⁰William Evans and S. Maxwell Coder, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible, Includes Index.*, Enl. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998, c1974), 55.

4. **Phil. 2:7-8** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

D. **Jesus' Human Limitations**

1. *Jesus Had Human Physical Attributes and Limitations*

- a. **Mt. 4:2** And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.
- b. **Mt. 8:24** And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.
- c. **Mt. 9:11** When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"
- d. **Mt. 21:18** Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry.
- e. **Mt. 26:37-38** And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."
- f. **Lk. 8:23** But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.
- g. **Lk 22:43-44** Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.
- h. **Lk. 24:36-43** While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them,

“Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them.

- i. **Jn. 1:14** And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- j. **Jn. 4:6-7** and Jacob’s well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.”
- k. **Jn. 8:40** “But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.
- l. **Jn. 11:35** Jesus wept.
- m. **Jn. 19:28** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.”
- n. **Rom. 1:3** concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,
- o. **Rom. 9:5** whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.
- p. **I Cor. 15:3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

2. *Jesus’ Human Intellectual Attributes and Limitations*

- a. **Lk. 2:40, 46, 52** The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . 46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. . . 52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
- b. **Mk. 9:21** And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood.
- c. **Mk. 11:13** Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

- d. **Mk. 13:32** “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.
- e. **Jn. 12:27** “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.
- f. **Jn. 13:21** When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”

3. *Jesus’ Human Spiritual and Moral Attributes*

- a. **Heb. 2:18** For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.
- b. **Heb. 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
- c. **Mk. 1:35** In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.
- d. **Acts 10:38** “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.
- e. **Jn. 19:30** Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

E. **Jesus’ Human Names**

- 1. **Mt. 21:11** And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”
- 2. **Mk. 6:3** “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him.
- 3. **Lk. 19:10** “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

4. **Jn. 8:40** “But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.
5. **Acts 2:22** “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—
6. **I Tim. 2:5** For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST¹¹**

- A. Jesus was only half man.
- B. Jesus wasn't fully man.
- C. Jesus wasn't of the same substance as man.
- D. Jesus doesn't know what it is like to be a man.
- E. Jesus can't relate to our situation because He was God.
- F. Jesus can't relate to us because He was sinless.
- G. Jesus was an angel who became a man.

V. **APPLICATION OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST**

- A. Because Jesus was human, His sacrifice can save us.
- B. Because Jesus was human, He can sympathize with our weaknesses. He has experienced all the emotions that you have but without sin.

¹¹A more detailed discussion of the errors concerning the deity of Christ will be addressed in the next lesson on the hypostatic union.

- C. Because Jesus was human, He modeled for us what perfect humanity is like.
- D. Because Jesus was human, we know that God is willing to meet us where we are.

“Why did he come? That he might take our flesh, and redeem us; that he might instate us into a kingdom. He was poor, that he might make us rich. He was born of a virgin, that we might be born of God. He took our flesh, that he might give us his Spirit. He lay in the manger that we might lie in paradise. He came down from heaven, that he might bring us to heaven. And what was all this but love? If our hearts be not rocks, this love of Christ should affect us. Behold love that surpasses knowledge!”¹²

¹² Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 196.