

Fully Man

Incarnate: Why the Manger Matters

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This morning we continue our series on the incarnation. We're following our Statement of Faith on the Person of Christ.

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life....

Last week we considered the deity of Christ. This week we'll cover his humanity. Next week we'll see how he's Israel's promised Messiah. And the week before Christmas we'll cover the virgin birth. Then on the last week of December Chris Holding will cover the sinless life of Jesus.

Why is it important to affirm that Jesus is fully man? For one, 1 John tells us that if you don't believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, then you don't have the Spirit of God (4:2). In other words, in order to be a Christian, you have to believe that Jesus is fully man. But why? Well, if Jesus isn't fully man, then he's not qualified to save us. Last week we learned that because Jesus is fully God, he's *able* to save us. This week we'll see that because Jesus is fully man, he's *qualified* to save us.

You see, all of us are sinners. And the penalty for our sin is death. In order for God to be just, he has to punish sin. So, we're all in deep trouble. We need salvation. And as we learned last week, only God can save us. We need God's help. But that creates a serious problem. God has to punish sin, and that punishment requires death. And only God can save us, but God can't die. C.S. Lewis puts it this way:

Unfortunately we now need God's help in order to do something which God, in his own nature, never does at all—to surrender, to suffer, to submit, to die. Nothing in God's nature corresponds to this process at all. So that the one road for which we now need God's leadership most of all is a road God, in his own nature, has never walked. God can share only what he has: this thing, in his own nature, he has not.

But supposing God became a man—suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God's nature in one person—then that person could help us. He could surrender his will, and suffer and die, because he was man; and he could do it perfectly because he was God.¹

And that friends, is why Jesus who was fully God, also became fully man. That's why the Word took on flesh. If Jesus isn't fully God, then he's not able to save us. But if he isn't fully man then he's not qualified to save us. He couldn't live the life that men are called to live. And he couldn't die the death that men deserve to die.

But Jesus is fully man; therefore, he is qualified to save us. That's my sermon in a sentence. To organize our time this morning we're going to start by looking at the first part of this sentence: Jesus is fully man. We'll very briefly consider a number of passages in the New Testament that support this claim. Then we'll look at the second part of the sentence: how his full humanity qualifies him to save us. To support this, we'll look at Hebrews 2.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 57-58. It would be better to say that his human nature was "added to" God's nature.

JESUS IS FULLY MAN.

Let's begin with the statement that Jesus is fully man. Hebrews 2 tells us that he was made like us in every way (v. 17). But how do we know that? Stephen Wellum says that we need to look at both his outer life and his inner life to see that he's fully man.²

Outer Life

As we look at his outer life, we see a number of things that establish his humanity. First of all, he developed physically as a human.

He was born like all human babies (Lk.2:7, 16). Sure, he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, as we'll talk about in a couple of weeks. But that doesn't take away the fact that he was born like all babies. "[Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger..."³ Like Rick said at the Christmas program last Sunday, Mary never had any doubt that Jesus was fully human. She had to change his diapers. He then grew as a child (Lk.2:39-40). After Jesus was presented at the temple, we're told that he "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom." He grew into a pre-teen (Lk.2:42, 52). We learn that Jesus was twelve years old when he was confounding the elders at the temple. And at the end of that story Luke tells us that "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." Eventually he became a full grown man (Lk.3:23). Luke tells us that he began his ministry at about thirty years of age. Then he suffered and died, as a man (Lk.23:26-56). Granted, he also rose from the dead. But even his resurrection was physical (Lk.24:39).

Not only did he develop physically like a normal human, he also experienced normal human needs. He suffered hunger and thirst (Mt. 4:1-2; Mk.11:12). He experienced fatigue (Mt. 8:23-24; Jn. 4:5-6). And he was tempted (Lk.4:2, 13).

Inner Life

But Jesus wasn't only physically human. He also had a human mind and a human soul. He experienced the full range of human emotions. He was moved to pity, compassion, love, and affection (Mt. 9:36; Mk.1:41; 8:2; Lk.7:36-50; Jn. 11:5; 13:34; 15:9-13). He was distressed (Mk.7:34; 8:12; Lk.22:15, 44). He became angry (Mk.3:5; Jn. 11:33, 38). He experienced joy (Lk.10:21; Jn. 15:11). He got annoyed (Mk.10:14). He was surprised (Mt. 8:10; Mk.6:6) and disappointed (Mk.8:17; 9:19).

Jesus was fully human, body and soul. But why was it necessary for Jesus to be fully human to save us? That's the question we now turn to.

JESUS IS QUALIFIED TO SAVE US.

Hebrews 2:5-18

⁵Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere,

*"What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?"*

² Stephen J. Wellum, *God The Son Incarnate*, 210-217.

³ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version[®] unless otherwise noted.

⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
 you have crowned him with glory and honor,
⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹²saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
 in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

¹³And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore 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. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

This is the Word of the Lord.

The author of Hebrews is making an argument that Jesus is fully man; therefore, he’s qualified to save us. His humanity qualifies him to do two things that we desperately need. The first comes out in verses 5-13. The second in verses 14-18.⁴

Jesus’ Life

Let’s begin with verses 5-13. This teaches us that Jesus lived the life that we’ve failed to live. The author of Hebrews makes his argument by tracing the story of humanity and the story of Christ. The story of humanity is seen through our creation, fall, and redemption. And the story of Christ is seen through his pre-existent exaltation, his incarnation, and his post-resurrection exaltation.

Let’s begin with the story of humanity. Our story begins with our creation. Hebrews refers to Psalm 8:6-7 to remind us that we were created with glory and honor.

Hebrews 2:6b-8

^{6b}What is man, that you are mindful of him,
 or the son of man, that you care for him?
⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels;

⁴ For more on this passage, see Josh Black, “[How Human is Jesus?](#)”

*you have crowned him with glory and honor,
⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet.*

Humanity is the pinnacle of God's creation. We were created in the image of God. We were created to glorify God through reflecting God's character in our lives and through being obedient to God. And as the pinnacle of God's creation, we were not only created to live under God's dominion; he also created *us* to have dominion over his creation. He put everything in subjection under our feet.

But man rebelled against God. Man fell from God's glory. And everything fell apart! That's why the author goes on in verse 8 to say, "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."

Humanity was created to flourish and facilitate flourishing in this world. But we don't see the fullness of flourishing now. Instead of everything being subject to man, we see frustration in this life, hopelessness, death, and fear of death. Millions die of disease every year. The twentieth century witnessed 100 million people murdered apart from war and disease. This isn't the way it's supposed to be. We don't see everything under man's feet; we see everything out of control. Many of you have lost loved ones recently or have experienced significant health challenges. Marriages are falling apart. People have lost their jobs. Women and children are abused. People live in bondage to addictions. Many are depressed and discouraged. Things are not the way they're supposed to be. We don't see everything yet underneath man's feet.

But, as verse 9 says, "...we see [Jesus]..." Jesus is the solution to the human problem. In verse 8, the author applies the Psalm to man's progression from creation to fall. But in verses 9-10, the author applies the Psalm to Jesus to show us that he's the solution to human failure.

So let's look now at Jesus' story. Watch how his story parallels our story. Watch how Jesus lives the life that we've failed to live.

In chapter 1 we learn that Jesus was exalted above the angels. He was God. But then Jesus became a man. "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." (2:9).

Jesus was made like us in every way, except he was without sin (Heb. 4:15). Jesus lived the life that we have failed to live. But he also died to pay the penalty for us failing to live the life that we were meant to live. Then he was raised from the dead and is now crowned with glory and honor. All things are under his feet. He is king of creation. And all things will one day be fully subject to him when he returns.

We can be restored to glory and honor, if we are in Christ. Look at verse 10. "For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering."

As Athanasius, the great defender of the incarnation, said: "The Son of God became a man, so that man might become sons of God." Jesus has run the race that was set before him. And he was crowned with glory and honor. Now, anyone who places their trust in Jesus can go the way that he went. We can also be crowned with glory and honor.

This is reiterated in verses 11-13. Look at verse 11. "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers."

When it says that Jesus calls us brothers, it *is* reiterating that Jesus is human. He's like us in every way. But it's saying more. It's also saying that because Jesus is fully human he can also make us holy. The Holy One (the sanctified one) is also the one who makes us holy, who sanctifies us. So we're not just Jesus' brothers in our shared humanity. We are his brothers in sharing his holiness. The Son of God became a man so that men can become like the Son of God.

This is truly amazing. The thought that sinful humanity could be made holy is incredible. The fact that the Holy One says that he is not ashamed to call us brothers is unfathomable.

How many teenagers are ashamed of their younger siblings? Sometimes they simply embarrass them. But sometimes they don't even want to be seen with them or associated with them, especially if their reputation with their friends is at stake. Some teenagers don't want their siblings talking to their friends. Some don't want their siblings to talk at all! They're flat out ashamed of them.

But adults can be ashamed of their family as well. Are there certain members in your family that you're ashamed to be identified with? Maybe they're the black sheep of the family. Or maybe they just don't live up to your image. And so when they come around you're embarrassed to claim them. We know these attitudes aren't right, but we have to confess, all of us have been guilty at some point of being ashamed to be associated with a family member.

Wouldn't it be perfectly appropriate for Jesus, the Holy One, to be ashamed of us? But he isn't. The text says, "He's not ashamed to call [us] brothers." Instead of being ashamed of our sinfulness and brokenness, he has chosen to redeem us. He's chosen to make us holy!

This should give us hope. Though we've failed to live the life that we were meant to live, though we see tons of evidence all around us that things are not the way they're supposed to be, we can have hope. One day we will experience the whole world in subjection to Christ. One day we will be made perfect in glory. And one day everything will be made right.

And all of this is only possible because Jesus became fully man. That's the first thing we learn about Jesus' humanity.

Jesus' Death

Let's now turn to verses 14-18. These verses give us a second reason the full humanity of Jesus is necessary to fully redeem humanity. It teaches us that Jesus died the death that we deserve to die.

Our passage has already said that Jesus died and that through his death we have received grace (v. 9) and sanctification (v. 11). Verses 14-18 push into that reality a little more. Look at verses 14-15. "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."

One of the main reasons Jesus' full humanity is necessary to fully redeem humanity is that if he wasn't fully human he couldn't have lived the life that we failed to live. But another reason that the full humanity of Jesus is necessary to fully redeem humanity is that if Jesus wasn't fully human then he couldn't have died. Angels don't die. And God doesn't die. Humans die. Later in Hebrews we learn that blood is needed to make atonement. But God doesn't bleed. Humans bleed. Jesus had to be fully human to shed his blood and die.

And his death accomplished two things for us according to these verses. It destroys the power of death and it frees us from the fear of death.

We will all still die (unless Jesus returns first), but we no longer have to fear death.

It seems that the people Hebrews was addressing were afraid of persecution that would lead to death. But because of what Jesus did by his death and resurrection, Christians have no reason to fear death. They know what's on the other side of death—glory and honor.

Do you fear death? I heard a story this week of a man in this church who led someone to Christ. The person they led to Christ was afraid to die. And that provided an opportunity to share the gospel. I don't know exactly what he shared. But I know what we learn from Hebrews 2.

You don't have to fear death if you place your trust in Christ. Jesus became a man to die in your place. Apart from Christ, we have a reason to fear death. We all deserve the judgment of God. But verse 17 says that Jesus was made like us in every way so that he could make propitiation for the sins of the people. What that means is that Jesus' death satisfied the wrath of God. Jesus atoned for our sins. Jesus became fully man so that he could pay the penalty for us.

If you place your trust in Christ, you don't have to fear God's judgment. You're forgiven. You don't have to fear death. Christ has destroyed death by his death and resurrection. If you trust in Christ, death is no longer your master. Sin is no longer your master. Satan is no longer your master. You are free. You don't have to fear death, because you have eternal life.

And you don't have to fear those who oppose you because of your faith in Christ. That's what was going on with the people who first read Hebrews. They were being tempted to fall away from the faith because they were being persecuted.

Now, I don't think we fear persecution in America the way they did. We don't have the same threat of death. There *are* Christians whose lives are at stake, but for most of us, our lives are not at stake. *But* we still face the temptation to fall away.

So if it's not death, what tempts you to fall away? Is our reputation at stake, our comfort, our financial advancement? What do you fear you may lose if you're sold out for Jesus? I once heard someone say, "I believe in Jesus, but let's not take it too far." Is fear tempting you to not take your faith too far?

In light of the life we have in Jesus we shouldn't fear anything. And because Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers we shouldn't be ashamed to identify ourselves fully with him. We should live out our faith with boldness and perseverance. Verse 18 tells us that Jesus suffered when he was tempted, but he persevered because of the hope that he had. We're called to do the same.

You see, the main reason Jesus became a man was to save humanity from their sin, to save them from death. His humanity was the *means* of our salvation. But Jesus also came to give us an example of how to live. His humanity is a *model* for life. Let us persevere in faith without fear of death or man. Let us follow Christ in his humanity, knowing that we are secure in him.