

THE PERSON OF JESUS

“Philip said ‘Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.’ Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?’”

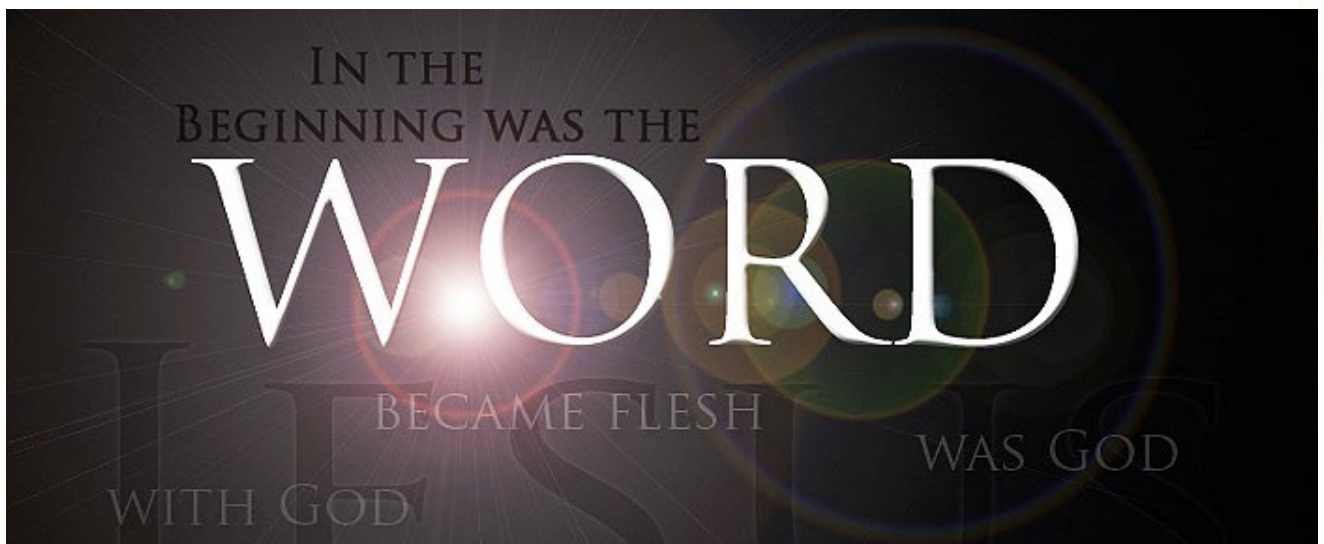
John 14:8-10

PART 1: THE DEITY OF JESUS

The disciples must have freaked when Jesus said that. “What does that mean, Jesus? How can you stand there and act as if you are a perfect image of God the Father?” That moment was indelibly burned into John’s memory, such that he would write of this event some fifty years later, and it raises the question that we’ll examine in this study: **who do we understand Jesus to be?** Is He mostly human, and somewhat divine? Mostly divine and only appearing to be human? The purpose of this study is to examine the incarnation, deity, and human of Jesus, the Son of God.

THE INCARNATION

Incarnation literally means “in-fleshing,” the coming of the Son of God to earth—Jesus becoming human. When John wrote his gospel, he began with these powerful words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). By starting his gospel with the same three words that Genesis 1:1 opens with, John is wanting to be very clear about when Jesus’ story begins; not in a stable around 4 B.C., but in eternity past, as Jesus the Son of God dwelt in relationship with God the Father. This is critical to understand what John says a few verses later, “The Word of God became flesh” (John 1:14).



It's as if God the Father and God the Son were discussing the fall of humanity, when God asked, "So who will go for us?" And Jesus steps up and says "Send Me! I'll go. I'll lose my life in pursuit of people."

The significance of the incarnation is that it not only reveals who Jesus is, it reveals the passionate love of God for a lost world. If you miss this, you miss everything. It is for this reason that **Martin Luther said, "The only God I know is the God made flesh."** The eternal Word entered into time. The un-created entered the creation. The Son of God became a first-century Jew named Jesus. Several Old Testament prophecies capture the mystery of incarnation, describing both the humanity and deity of Jesus in a single verse:

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." Micah 5:2

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." (meaning, "God with us") Isaiah 7:14

- *Were you taught in your upbringing about Jesus' eternality, His existence prior to becoming human?*
- *How do the verses above effect you?*

THE DEITY OF JESUS

Interaction:

Looking at the words in bold, what 10 things does this section of scripture reveal about Jesus?

*"**In the beginning** was the Word, and the Word was **with God**, and the Word was **God**. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 **Through Him all things were made**; without Him nothing was made that has been made. 4 **In Him was life**, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. 11 **He came to that which was His own**, but His own did not receive Him. 12 Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—*

*13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but **born of God.** 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...16 From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, **has made Him known.**" John 1:1-18*

1. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 1)
2. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 1)
3. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 1)
4. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 3)
5. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 4)
6. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 11)
7. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 12-13)
8. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 14)
9. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 16-17)
10. Jesus Christ _____ (vs. 18)

5 REASONS TO BELIEVE JESUS IS GOD

#1: Jesus' words claimed equality with God

"Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." John 8:58

#2: Jesus' actions claimed equality with God

"And Jesus...said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:5-6.

#3: Jesus' followers claimed His equality with God

"Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" John 20:27-28

#4: God Himself called Jesus "God"

"But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.'" Hebrews 1:8

#5: There is no other honest response to His life

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else He would be the devil of Hell. You must make the choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up as a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." - C.S. Lewis

- *To believe that Jesus is God seems like a really big deal. It's ok to wrestle with it. Do you find yourself saying "I get this. I agree"...or "I'm not sure"... or "I'm not buying it." Why?*
- *Are there any words or actions of Jesus that you can point to that is inconsistent with Jesus being God?*
- *Are there any people you look to or respect that deny Jesus is God? What affect does that have on you?*
- *C.S. Lewis doesn't just say that if Jesus is God then we should believe in him- his language is much stronger. Lewis calls us to "fall at his feet and call him Lord and God." Does the thought of falling at someone's feet in worship make you uncomfortable? Does it feel a little too radical?*

ACTION POINT

This week consider what the implications of Jesus being God are, in your own life.

PART 2: THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

- *Who remembers the main points from part 1?*
- *Does anyone have any questions from what we've studied so far?*

When the Word of God became flesh, He became FULLY human. He took on a human body, with human emotions, a human will, and a human mind. Not only is this absolutely necessary for our salvation, which we'll look at soon, it makes Jesus Christ the most remarkable human in all history.

“As a child, I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene...No one can read the gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word.

No myth is filled with such life.”

Albert Einstein



JESUS' HUMAN BODY

"The Word became flesh" (John 1:14) means that Jesus took on a human body. He was born (Luke 2:7), He grew (Luke 2:40, 52), He grew tired (John 4:6), He got thirsty (John 19:28), He became hungry (Matthew 4:2). He became physically weak (Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26). We may be uncomfortable with the thought that Jesus was fully human, but the teaching of scripture is clear.

JESUS' HUMAN EMOTIONS

John Calvin once wrote, "Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh." The gospels record Jesus' emotions, fully alive, fully expressed. Jesus wept in sadness (John 11:35) and He experienced anger (John 2:13-16) In John 11:33-35, Jesus is "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" John 12:27 says, "Now is my soul troubled," and in John 13:21, he is "troubled in his spirit." The author to the Hebrews writes that "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7)

JESUS' HUMAN WILL

John 6:38 says, "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." In the garden of Gethsemane, hours before going to the cross, Jesus again submitted His will to the Father, praying, "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). Being fully divine, Jesus chose to live as a servant. He brought glory to God by saying, as Hebrews 10:7 records, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." This submission of His own will to the Father we could call "dependently omnipotent." Jesus was all-powerful, but depended upon the Father, to bring Him the glory.

JESUS' HUMAN MIND

Jesus also has a human mind. Luke 2:52 says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." He learned the same way that we learn. Despite growing in wisdom through normal means, there are numerous examples of Jesus knowing things a human could not know, like where a person was when he could not see him (John 1: 47-51). In reference to when Jesus would return, Mark 13:32 says, "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." If Jesus is God and God knows all things, how can Jesus not know this thing, when He was to return? The potential solution to this dilemma is what we've already discussed regarding Jesus submitting to the Father. This actually takes us deeper into the mystery, but Jesus didn't autonomously exercise His deity in knowing all things, but only in dependency upon God. Jesus knew all that God the Father desired Him to know, as He lived in complete dependence upon Him.

FULLY DIVINE. FULLY HUMAN

Because humanity brought sin into the world, humanity had to pay for our sins. Because of this, the Savior of the world had to be a human. However, since no sinful human can pay for the sins of another sinful person. Therefore, the Savior had to be divine. He needed to be fully human to take our penalty but fully divine (sinless) to pay the penalty for our sin. The God-man, Jesus took on a human body so that He could fully save that which had become fallen. Jesus took on a human body to save our bodies, a human will to save our wills, human emotions to save our emotions, a human mind to save our minds. Jesus had to become like us in every respect--in body, will, emotions, and mind--in every way, except for sin (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15). In the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, "That which he has not assumed he has not healed."

- *Why do you believe the deity of Jesus is important?*
- *In your own words, why is the humanity of Jesus important?*
- *Does this change your understanding of Jesus?*

SUMMARY

The person of Jesus is revealed through His incarnation, as fully man and fully God. And the fact that Jesus came down to earth totally shifts our understanding of God.

“Those who believe in God can never, in a way, be sure of Him again. Once they have seen Him in a stable, they can never be sure where He will appear or to what lengths He will go, to what ludicrous depths of self-humiliation He will descend in His wild pursuit of man.”

Frederick Buechner

- *God, the king of the universe came down to a life of pain and poverty for you. How does that change your understanding of Jesus?*
- *There is a man just like you who went before you, resisted temptation and conquered sin and death so that you could enter into the presence of God. How does that change your understanding of Jesus?*
- *Buechner says we can never, in a way, be sure of God again. Are you in awe of the King who humiliated himself to pursue you? Or does God fit into a nice neat box for you that you have “figured out” so that he is just one more thing on your list of things to think about occasionally?*

ACTION POINT

With a friend or person in this class, try to share in your own words why it is important that Jesus be fully human and fully divine.