

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

- That God became a man is one of the most crucial doctrines in all of Scripture
- Somehow in a way we cannot fully fathom Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person
- The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD affirmed that Jesus is truly man and truly God and that the two natures of Christ are so united as to be without mixture, confusion, separation, or division, each nature retaining its own attributes.
- Question: Why was it necessary for Christ to be fully man?

Hebrews 2:14-18 ~ *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 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.*

Hebrews 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.*

Christ's humanity was like ours. He became a man "for our sakes." He entered into our situation to act as our Redeemer. He became our substitute, taking upon Himself our sins in order to suffer in our place. He also became our champion, fulfilling the law of God on our behalf.

R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, 82

MARKS OF HUMANITY

Human Birth

Predicted in the Old Testament

Genesis 3:15 ~ *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."*

- Emphasis is on the woman's seed

Isaiah 7:14 ~ *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.*

- Revised Standard Version (R.S.V.) says "a young woman."
- The Hebrew word (*alma*) can mean a married young woman or an unmarried young woman (a virgin)
- This verse speaks of this "young woman" being a sign, this would therefore imply that it is speaking of an unmarried young woman conceiving - a miracle
- When Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14, he uses the Greek word for virgin (*parthenos*), and not the Greek word for woman (*gune*).

Taught in the New Testament

Matthew 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.*

Hebrew Marriages

- Matthew's explanation can best be understood in the light of Hebrew marriage customs.
- Marriages were arranged for individuals by parents, and contracts were negotiated.
- After this was accomplished, the individuals were considered married and were called husband and wife.
- They did not, however, begin to live together.
- Instead, the woman continued to live with her parents and the man with his for one year.
- Jewish betrothal was as binding as modern marriage. A divorce was necessary to terminate the betrothal (v. 19) and the betrothed couple were regarded legally as husband and wife (v. 19)—although physical union had not yet taken place.
- The waiting period was to demonstrate the faithfulness of the pledge of purity given concerning the bride.
- If she was found to be with child in this period, she obviously was not pure, but had been involved in an unfaithful sexual relationship. Therefore the marriage could be annulled.
- If, however, the one-year waiting period demonstrated the purity of the bride, the husband would then go to the house of the bride's parents and in a grand processional march lead his bride back to his home.
- There they would begin to live together as husband and wife and consummate their marriage physically.

The Betrothal Compromised?

- Mary and Joseph were in the one-year waiting period when Mary was found to be with child.
- They had never had sexual intercourse and Mary herself had been faithful (vv. 20, 23).
- While little is said about Joseph, one can imagine how his heart must have broken. He genuinely loved Mary, and yet the word came that she was pregnant.
- His love for her was demonstrated by his actions. He chose not to create a public scandal by exposing her condition to the judges at the city gate.
- The phrase "a just man" is a Hebrew way of suggesting that he was a true believer in God who had thereby been declared righteous, and who carefully obeyed the law.
- Such an act could have resulted in Mary's death by stoning (Deut. 22:23-24). Instead he decided to divorce her quietly.

The Angels Visit to Joseph

- Then in a dream (cf. Matt. 2:13, 19, 22), an angel told Joseph that Mary's condition was not caused by a man, but through the Holy Spirit (1:20; cf. v. 18).
- "The Child Mary carried in her womb was a unique Child, for He would be a Son whom Joseph should name Jesus for He would save His people from their sins." These words must have brought to Joseph's mind the promises of God to provide salvation through the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-37).
- The unnamed angel also told Joseph that this was in keeping with God's eternal plan, for the Prophet Isaiah had declared 700 years before that the virgin will be with Child (Matt. 1:23; Isa. 7:14).
- In light of this declaration Joseph was not to be afraid to take Mary into his home (Matt. 1:20).
- There would be misunderstanding in the community and much gossip at the well, but Joseph knew the true story of Mary's pregnancy and God's will for his life.

Christ's birth

- As soon as Joseph awakened from this dream, he obeyed...He violated all custom by immediately taking Mary into his home rather than waiting till the one-year time period of betrothal had passed.
- Joseph was probably thinking of what would be best for Mary in her condition.
- He brought her home and began to care and provide for her. But there was no sexual relationship between them until after the birth of this Child, Jesus.

Luke 2:6-7 ~ *While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Galatians 4:4 ~ *But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law*

Philippians 2:7 ~ *but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

- The conception of Christ was clearly miraculous, but physically his birth was normal in every respect, taking place after the expected period of pregnancy
- The shepherds came and saw lying in the manger a real, newborn baby

The Virgin Birth

- Scripture clearly indicates that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary by the supernatural, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit without a human father
- Christ's miraculous birth tells us much about his nature...that he was born of woman demonstrates that He was indeed human and became one of us. His humanity however was not precisely the same as ours
- The doctrine of the virgin birth determines whether Christ was mere human or supernatural

Matthew 1:18, 20, 25 ~ *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...But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit...but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.*

Luke 1:35 ~ *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.*

- Why is the virgin birth so important?
 1. The virgin birth is essential to the trustworthiness of the Messianic prophecies and of the Gospels
 2. The virgin birth protects Jesus from the curse on the line of Coniah.

Jeremiah 22:30 ~ *Thus says the Lord, 'Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah.'*

3. The virgin birth protects Jesus and Mary from blasphemous alternatives.
 - Mary could have lied, Jesus had some unknown father, and he and she were crazy
4. The virgin birth supports our understanding of the Lord's sinlessness

Luke 1:35 ~ *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 ~ *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf*

- The doctrine of imputation of sin cannot be applied to the Son of God
- The sin nature is not passed on in the virgin birth
- Whereas all people are born with original sin, Christ was not

Could Christ have sinned?

- Christ was incapable of sinning, because his deity was not dependent on the weakness of humanity.
- To say Christ could sin would mean that it is possible for God the Father to sin.

John 5:19 ~ *Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.*

- Christ was/is fully God and therefore His deity in know way could be violated

Colossians 2:9 ~ *For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form*

- Virgin birth ensured that Christ's humanity did not possess a sin nature

What about Hebrews 4:15? How could he be tempted and yet not sin?

Hebrews 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.*

James 1:14-15 ~ *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

- James describes temptations that arises from sinful desires within us
- Christ's temptations were external, not from internal sinful desires

When we speak of Christ's sinlessness we generally refer to His humanity. It is unnecessary to plead the sinlessness of Christ's deity, as deity by our definition cannot and does not sin...The sinlessness of Christ does not merely serve as an example to us. It is fundamental and necessary for our salvation. Had Christ not been the lamb without blemish He not only could not have secured anyone's salvation, but would have needed a Savior Himself.

R. C. Sproul, Essential Truths, 83

5. The virgin birth best explains Christ's supernatural claims, "Son of God."

6. The virgin birth best explains the "incarnation."

- Explains how the uniting of full deity and full humanity can take place in one person
- God could have sent Jesus as a complete human being from heaven...but then it would be hard for us to see how Jesus could be fully human
- On the other hand, God could have allowed Jesus to be born in the same way we are and then join his divine nature to him later...but them it would be hard to see how Jesus could be fully God

The Messianic Line

"Messiah"

- The word "Messiah" (Hebrew, mashiach) means "the anointed one." The Greek equivalent is *christos* from which we get the word "Christ."

Key people in the Messianic line

- Adam and Eve - Their fall (Gen. 3:6) necessitates the coming of a Saviour. The first Messianic promise is Gen. 3:15.
- Seth (Gen. 4:25) - His descendants constitute the righteous line through whom the promised one shall come, including and especially Enoch and Methuselah.
- Noah (Gen. 6-9) - He was preserved from destruction by God.
- Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff.) - He is the father of the nation through whom Messiah came.
- Isaac (Gen. 17:19)
- Jacob (Gen. 28:14)
- Judah (Gen. 49:10)
- Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 1-4) - Their descendants are Obed, Jesse, and David (Ruth 4:22)
- David (2 Sam. 7:12-16) - He begins the royal line. The Messiah was to be "David's son." There are two lines of descent to be noticed

The Messiah's Genealogy of Matthew 1

- This line comes from Solomon and ends with Joseph.
- Emphasis on this line is to show Messiah's kingship, line of royalty.
- This line was cursed in the "Curse of Coniah" (Jeconiah, Jehoichim) found in Jer. 22:30, because of idolatry. He was to be childless and his descendants were not to prosper, nor sit on the throne. Joseph was a direct descendant of Coniah and therefore the first born of his house would be the heir apparent to the throne.
- Since Jesus was not actually the son of Joseph, he was not under the physical curse and would still be in the legal line to succeed the throne.
- Christ's royal line is passed through Jesus' legal father

The Messiah's Genealogy of Luke 3:23-37

- This is Mary's line from David's son Nathan.
- Nathan was Solomon's brother by Bathsheba (2 Sam. 5:14; 1 Chron. 3:5; 14:4).
- The emphasis here is on the humanity of Messiah all the way back to Adam.
- The problem is that Mary is not mentioned. In Luke's genealogy only the males are mentioned, therefore it would be inappropriate to mention Mary. Eli was Mary's father, but Joseph's name is substituted for Mary's.
- Christ's physical line from David is established by Mary's line

Human Growth and Development

Luke 2:52 ~ *And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom (mental) and stature (physical), and in favor with God (spiritual) and men (social).*

- Christ grew up like any other little child
- The only event we know of his childhood is found in Luke 2:41-51
- The mark of His mental development, unhindered by sin, is seen in his questions and answers, given at 12 years of age, to the scholars in the Temple

Human Body with Limitations and Weaknesses

John 4:6 ~ *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.*

John 19:28 ~ *After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."*

Matthew 4:2 ~ *And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.*

Luke 23:46 ~ *And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.*

Luke 24:39 ~ *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."*

Human Emotions

Matthew 8:10 ~ *Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.*

John 11:35 ~ *Jesus wept*

John 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.*

Eternal Humanity

- Christ retained the physical expression of His humanity in some way still after the resurrection

Luke 24:39 ~ *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."*

1 Timothy 2:5 ~ *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Acts 1:11 ~ *They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."*

Acts 17:31 ~ *because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*

Revelation 1:13 ~ *and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.*