

The Incarnation and Human Living of the All-Inclusive Christ

by John Campbell

The entire Bible reveals that God has a good pleasure (Eph. 1:5, 9), which is His heart's desire. The desire of God's heart is to have an enlargement of Himself as His expression to be displayed to the whole universe. In eternity, according to His good pleasure, He formulated a purpose, a plan (1:9; 3:11), and to carry out His purpose He made an economy (1:10; 1 Tim. 1:4). The center and circumference of God's pleasure, plan, and economy is Christ. In everything Christ has the preeminence (Col. 1:18), and He is everything in God's economy. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rev. 1:8; 22:13). He is the hub, the spokes, and the rim. Therefore, He is all-inclusive. Before we progress any further in our understanding of the divine revelation, we must be clear on this. Christ is everything to God and everything in God's economy.

God's economy is to dispense Himself into man, whom He created as His particular vessel. This dispensing begins from man's spirit (John 3:6), proceeds through his soul (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2), and eventually reaches his body (Phil. 3:21). Moreover, this dispensing is of a corporate nature through the process of building (Eph. 4:16). Ultimately, this dispensing culminates in the universal and eternal expression of God in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-11), which is the consummation of the union of God and man. As this brief summary of God's economy indicates, man is a key factor in God's plan. Therefore, in order to carry out God's economy for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose, Christ had to become a man, live the life of a man, and fulfill His ministry as a man. Because of Christ's incarnation and human living, we can positively affirm that Christ is not only everything to God but also everything to man, as man, and for man.

Christ's "Becoming"

John 1:1, speaking of the eternal, ever-existing Christ, says,

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In this excellent introduction to his Gospel, the apostle John affirms that Christ was with God in eternity past and that Christ was God. In His essence and in His place in the Divine Trinity, Christ is immutable. According to His intrinsic essence, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, even forever" (Heb. 13:8). However, it is a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith that the eternal Word joined Himself to humanity and took the form of a man. John says this most succinctly in 1:14a: "And the Word became flesh." The Word who was God became a man in the flesh. The vocabulary of the holy Word cannot be plainer or simpler in declaring the mystery of the Word-become-flesh. In this declaration, John states in the most direct of terms that the Word became something that He had not been in eternity. Andrew Murray in his classic work, *The Spirit of Christ*, restates this fundamental truth as follows:

We know how the Son, who had from eternity been with the Father, entered upon a new stage of existence when He became flesh. When He returned to Heaven, He was still the same only-begotten Son of God, and yet not altogether the same. For He was now also, as Son of Man, the first-begotten from the dead, clothed with that glorified humanity which He had perfected and sanctified for Himself. (38)

The Son, though immutable in His intrinsic essence and perpetual, unchangeable, and unchanging in His person, entered upon "a new stage of existence," so that from that time unto eternity future He ever shall be "not altogether the same" as He was with the Father in eternity past. This is the glory and the mystery of the incarnation of Christ.

Christ, the God-man

That Jesus Christ, God-become-flesh, is the very God is

fundamental in the divine revelation. The Gospels show us that in His earthly ministry of three and one half years He exercised His divine authority to heal every disease and infirmity, cast out demons, rebuke the winds and the sea, know the thoughts of others, feed the thousands, walk on the sea, raise the dead, and declare His oneness with the Father, manifesting in full His deity in its glory and honor. Likewise, that the incarnate Word is a genuine human is equally axiomatic to the faith. We see how Christ hungered, thirsted, required rest, became angry, groaned, wept, agonized, and showed compassion and affection, displaying His humanity in its virtue and perfection.

Therefore, in speaking of Christ, we must acknowledge His two natures, the divine and the human. According to His divine nature, which He possessed from eternity, Christ is God; according to His human nature, which He acquired in time, Christ is man. Therefore, He is the God-man. The two natures of Christ designate Him as the unique and wonderful person in God's economy.

The truth of His dual natures has for close to two millennia evoked, on the one hand, the worship, praise, and adoration of His genuine believers, and on the other hand, the most serious and intense of oppositions and controversies. Along with the mystery of the essential and economical Trinity, the person of Christ in His two natures has sparked the greatest debates in all of church history. The arguments of and against the heresies related to the divine and human natures of Christ are much too numerous and ponderous to be treated here. Moreover, in touching these controversies in too great a detail we place ourselves in danger of diverting our focus from the all-inclusive, incarnated God-man to historical and academic debate. For now, we allow Martin Chemnitz, the chronicler of these debates and a contemporary and co-worker of Martin Luther, to summarize the orthodox view:

The true teaching of Scripture concerning the human nature in Christ is this: that the Son of God in the fullness of time joined to Himself, in a perpetual union which shall not be dissolved for all eternity, a human nature, true, complete, entire, of the same substance as ours, possessing a body and a rational soul which contain within themselves all the conditions, desires, powers, and faculties proper to and characteristic of human nature. This nature

is pure, without sin, incorrupt and holy, yet in it are all the infirmities which have befallen our nature as the penalties of sin. This He willingly and without imperfection assumed at the time of His humiliation, for our sakes, that He might be made the victim for us. (64-65)

The points of this summary, as Chemnitz reminds us, "are no longer in controversy, though they all have been in dispute at some time" (257).

The Seed of Woman

In the prophecies concerning Christ as a man in His humanity in the Old Testament, Christ is revealed as a three-fold seed: the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15), the seed of Abraham (Gen. 17:7-8), and the seed of David (2 Sam. 7:12). These three great prophecies touch the essence of the divine revelation because they unveil how God dispensed Himself into man through the incarnation of Christ. The threefold seed links Christ as God to man and Christ as man to God, making Christ the mingling, the blending, of God and man as one entity (Lee, *Central Line* 91-92). The threefold seed can be seen in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1. Verse 1 speaks of Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham, and verses 18-23 speak of Mary, the human virgin. We must pay special attention to the seed in these three prophecies.

The seed of woman specifically refers to the incarnation of Christ, which involved the dispensing of

God Himself into humanity. When God created man, He set him in front of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9), indicating His intention to be life to man, and commanded the created man to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv. 16-17). Shortly afterward, however, Satan tempted man to sin and rebel against God. At the same time, he imparted himself in his sinful nature into man to be man's nature. This was the origination of the fall of man, which constituted man a sinner (Rom. 5:19), causing him to become dead in his spirit and making him one with Satan (Matt. 16:23). Rather than condemn man, God came to seek out the fallen man and to preach the gospel to him (Gen. 3:9-15). In His gospel, God made a promise, especially by cursing the serpent. God told the serpent, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (v. 15, KJV). Here, in the first prophecy and the first gospel preaching

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in the history of God and man, Christ is revealed as the seed that would be born of a woman. God Himself would become a human seed, and this seed would destroy the evil one, Satan.

Thousands of years later, God confirmed His promise of the seed of the woman: “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” (Isa. 7:14). Isaiah 9:6 says, “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.” These landmark prophecies refer to a child born of a human virgin and a son given by the Eternal Father. The One prophesied here is a child and a son, and He is also the Mighty God and the Eternal Father. To be sure, this is wonderful! A child is the Mighty God, and a son is the Eternal Father. This child is a God-man child, possessing the natures and the statuses of both God and man.

Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled in Matthew 1:18-25. Mary, after she was engaged to Joseph but before they came together, was “found to be with child of the Holy Spirit” (v. 18). Joseph intended to send her away secretly, but an angel appeared to him and said, “Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit” (v. 20). This account is repeated in Luke 1:26-35. Here the messenger angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God” (v. 35). The Spirit of God had come into the womb of the human virgin, causing her to be with child “of the Holy Spirit.” Mary’s husband was Joseph, but Christ was not born of Joseph. The source of Christ’s conception was the Holy Spirit; therefore, the element of the “holy thing,” the incarnated Christ, was divine. Moreover, through the virgin Mary He put on flesh and blood, the human nature. In this way, God was born into Mary and, according to the natural law of the human life, He remained in Mary’s womb for nine months. After this, Christ as a human child was born with the divine nature, out of a human virgin, to be a divine-human God-man. The birth of Christ as the seed of the woman is confirmed in Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law.” According to His great economy, God was born of a woman, a human virgin, as promised in Genesis 3:15. This was the dispensing of God into man.

The fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6 can be seen in John 3:16. This verse says that God so loved the world that “He gave His only begotten Son.” The only begotten Son of God given in John 3:16 is the son given in Isaiah 9:6. Christ as the Son was given through His incarnation, that is, by

coming with His divinity to be born into humanity. This God-man child was given two names. First, He was called Jesus—Jehovah the Savior (Matt. 1:21). *Jesus* indicates that He was not only man but Jehovah Himself becoming our salvation. As the Savior, Jesus saves us from sin and saves us to God. Christ’s saving work in the flesh is typified by the coats of skins which God used to cover Adam and Eve after they sinned (Gen. 3:21). In His flesh, Christ became the sacrifice (John 1:29), shedding His blood (Heb. 9:22) for the redemption of fallen man, covering him with Himself as his righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9) and making him alive (Rom. 1:17; 5:18b), and He opened the closed way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24; Heb. 10:19-20) for man to partake of God as the source of the divine life. Second, Christ as the God-man child was called Emmanuel, which is translated “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Christ was not only God but God incarnated to tabernacle (John 1:14), to dwell, among men. The praise of the seed of woman is expressed beautifully in a hymn by Charles Wesley. Stanza 2 says

Christ, by highest heav’n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord:
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail th’incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel. (*Hymns* 74-75)

Stanza 4 begins, “Come, Desire of nations, come! / Fix in us Thy humble home: / Rise, the woman’s conqu’ring seed, / Bruise in us the serpent’s head.” Christ as the promised seed of the woman destroyed the devil, the ancient serpent, through His death in the flesh. Hebrews 2:14 says, “Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil.” Christ destroyed the devil in man’s flesh through His own death in the flesh on the cross. In so doing, He saved the believers in Christ from sin and death (Matt. 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:53-57). This is the final fulfillment of the gospel preached to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. The top item of the gospel is that God has put on human flesh, dispensing Himself into humanity and joining Himself to humanity, and died the death of the cross, putting Satan to death, accomplishing redemption for fallen man, and annulling the satanic nature within man.

The Seed of Abraham

The Bible also reveals that Christ in His humanity is the seed of Abraham (Matt. 1:1b). Following God’s promise to Adam and Eve concerning the seed of the woman, God did not move quickly to fulfill it. Instead, He allowed

many centuries to pass in which man fell to greater and greater depths. By the time of the building of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, man had fallen to the lowest level and had altogether rejected God. At this juncture in human history the God of glory appeared to Abraham and called him to be the father of a new people, a chosen race. Upon calling him, God promised Abraham that not only would he be blessed but all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him. Later, after appearing to Abraham again a number of times, God clarified His blessing and confirmed it with a covenant: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (17:7, KJV). God's covenanted blessing was to Abraham and to his seed. Moreover, God's promised blessing to all the nations of the earth would be fulfilled not through Abraham directly but through his seed. In Galatians 3:8 Paul called this promise "the gospel."

The immediate fulfillment of God's promise concerning the seed of Abraham came in the birth of Isaac. In this regard, Isaac was an Old Testament type of Christ. Isaac came out of his father, and he inherited everything of his father. In the history of Isaac two features of his life stand out. First, Isaac was offered as a sacrifice to God by his father Abraham. The account of Isaac's sacrifice is rich with the typology of Christ. Isaac was the only begotten son of Abraham and Sarah, and he was Abraham's well beloved son. He bore the wood which was to be used for his sacrifice, and he went to the altar willingly and obediently at the word of his father. Finally, he was slain (in type) as a sacrifice and was received back from the dead. The second prominent event in the life of Isaac was his marriage to Rebekah (Gen. 24:61-67). Abraham's servant went into the Gentile land to bring one of Isaac's own kind to be his bride, signifying how the Spirit was sent from the Father to seek and gain a people out of the Gentiles to be the bride of Christ.

God's promise concerning the seed of Abraham is explained clearly in Galatians 3. In verse 16, Paul says, "But to Abraham were the promises spoken and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to the seeds,' as concerning many, but as concerning one: 'And to your seed,' who is Christ." In the clearest terms, the New Testament declares that the seed of Abraham is Christ, the all-inclusive One. God's word to Abraham became His promise, and His

promise became His covenant, a covenant of blessing. God's covenanted blessing is Christ. As the promised seed in humanity, Christ blesses all the nations with the gospel of Christ. First, He bore the curse of the law for us: "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf; because it is written, 'Cursed is every one hanging on a tree'" (v. 13). Through his sin, man broke the law of the righteousness of God and came under the curse (Gen. 3:17). Christ became a curse by being made sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21a) to be judged by God in His flesh on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24) for us. In so doing, He redeemed us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21b).

Following this, in Galatians 3:14, Paul brings his exposition of the seed of Abraham to a high peak. Christ has redeemed us, he says, "In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The final fulfillment of the blessing promised to Abraham is that we, the Gentiles, in Christ Jesus would receive the promise of the Spirit. God's covenanted blessing is the Spirit, "the Spirit being the thing promised" (Alford, 28).

Paul's polemic word to the distracted Galatians emphasizes the gospel which he preached by God's revelation (1:6, 12, 16), the focus of which is the all-inclusive Christ, who replaces the law and is versus religion and tradition. His extract and summary of the gospel, according to chapter three, is that we receive the Spirit by faith.

The Spirit is a unique term in the New Testament, to be distinguished in its details from other inspired designations, such as *the Holy Spirit* or *the Spirit of God*. It denotes the Triune God after passing through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Spirit is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18), the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:11), the compound Spirit (Exo. 30:23-25), and the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6). Christ as the seed of Abraham became not only our Redeemer and Savior but also the Spirit. As such, He is a transfigured descendant of Abraham to be the consummate blessing of the gospel to us.

Thus, the ultimate blessing of the full gospel preached through the revelation of God is the consummated Spirit, as the consummation of the processed Triune God for the dispensing of Himself into the believers of Christ. This is the

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highest and final interpretation and application of the fulfilled prophecy of Christ as the human seed of Abraham.

The Seed of David

In the prophecies concerning Christ as a man in His humanity, Christ is also revealed as the seed of David. When David aspired to build a house for God, God appeared to Nathan the prophet and gave him a word of correction for David. God told David that it was not he who would build a house for God, but the son who would come from his body. He said:

When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. (2 Sam. 7:12-14a, KJV)

Solomon, the son of David, as a type of Christ, inherited the throne and kingdom of David, built the temple of God, and spoke words of wisdom. According to Jeremiah 23:5-6, the seed of David is the righteous Branch, who will reign as King and execute judgment and righteousness, whose name will be called the Lord our righteousness. The genealogy of Christ declares that this human seed is Jesus Christ, "the son of David" (Matt. 1:1).

The truth of Christ as the seed of David is particularly profound in revealing Christ as a divine and human person. Second Samuel 7:12-14 says that Christ is the seed of David. *Seed* in verse 12 denotes a human offspring, referring ultimately to Christ's humanity. However, verse 14 indicates that the human seed is the Son of God (Heb. 1:5), denoting His divinity. Romans 1:3-4, as the continuation and fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7, is a high peak in the revelation of the divine and human seed: "Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we see the two sources and the two natures of the God-man Christ. The two sources of Christ are indicated by the use of *out of* in these verses. That Christ is out of the seed of David indicates the human source of Christ (v. 3). That He was designated out of the resurrection of the dead denotes His divine source (v. 4). His two natures are indicated by *according to* in both verses. Christ in His humanity is according to the flesh (v. 3); in His divinity He is according to the Spirit of holiness (v. 4). In incarnation Christ put on human flesh, the human nature. In resurrection His human nature was sanctified, uplifted, and transformed; that is, Christ was "sonized," designated the Son of God with His humanity (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5). In this way, Christ, the only

begotten Son of God, became the firstborn Son of God, possessing both divinity and humanity. In Him divinity and humanity are mingled together as one person, who is at the same time the Lord of David and his human progeny (Matt. 22:42-45), both the Root of David and his Offspring (Rev. 22:16).

As the divine-human seed of David, Christ builds the house of God. The house of God is first the incarnate Word Himself (John 1:14), who made human nature the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, and the resurrected Christ as the temple of God raised up on the third day (John 2:19). This house of God was enlarged to be the church, the dwelling place of God in spirit, through the indwelling of the Father and the Son, to be the spiritual house composed of the believers as the living stones. Consummately, the house of God is the eternal New Jerusalem as the true tabernacle of God with men (Rev. 21:2-3).

Christ as the better Solomon (Matt. 12:42), the seed of David in His humanity, is also the King of the kingdom of God for the consummation of God's eternal economy. As the King anointed by God, Christ brought the kingdom of the heavens to the earth and defeated all His enemies. He holds the keys of the kingdom in its reality today, and when He comes, He will set up the kingdom in its manifestation as the fulfillment of Isaiah 32:1, Jeremiah 23:5, and Zechariah 14:9, 17. At that time, Christ as the Son of Man will receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14; Luke 19:12, 15), and the kingdom of the world will become "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). His reign will be first in the millennial kingdom (20:4) and then in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (22:1, 3). Moreover, Christ will share His reign with His overcomers in the millennium (20:4, 6; 2:26-27), after which, He will deliver up the kingdom to His God and Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Ultimately He will reign with all His redeemed ones (Rev. 22:5) as His co-kings for eternity. This is the final fulfillment of Christ in His humanity as the seed of David.

What has been presented in this and the preceding two sections is the truth concerning Christ as the threefold seed in humanity. As the seed of the woman, Christ brought God into humanity, mingling divinity with humanity, and He destroyed Satan. As the seed of Abraham, He became the Spirit, the consummation of the Triune God, as the full blessing of the gospel. As the seed of David, He builds the house of God and makes His chosen people His kingdom. All this was accomplished and is being carried out by Christ as the God-man in His humanity, which He took upon Himself in His incarnation, carried through death, and uplifted and transformed in His resurrection.

Christ, the Man in God's Economy

God's intention with man is revealed in Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." The phrase *let Us* indicates that before the creation of man there was a conference held by and among the Godhead. The creation of all the other items and lives required only God's word, but the forming of man required the private counsel of the Triune God. Such a conference implies the crucial place of man in God's creation. The purpose of the particular creation of man was that man would, in a corporate way, express God in His image inwardly and His likeness outwardly and represent God for His dominion with His authority over all things. The psalmist, marveling at God's creation, prophetically confirmed God's great intention. He ponders:

What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him, / And the son of man, that thou dost care for him? / Yet thou hast made him a little lower than God, / And dost crown him with glory and majesty. / Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; / Thou hast put all things under his feet. (Psa. 8:4-6)

This word is a prophecy not merely of man in general but of the incarnated Christ.

Shortly after his creation, the man created by God fell under Satan's temptation. As a result, man's spirit became deadened, his soul became corrupted, and his body was polluted. Such a man was no longer able to bear God's image and exercise His dominion. The corruption of man was the master stroke of God's enemy Satan. However, God will never be frustrated in the fulfillment of His eternal plan. Eventually, Christ was incarnated to become the man of God's economy. Although Adam, the first man, failed to accomplish God's purpose, Christ replaced the first man and fulfilled God's purpose for His desire in man as revealed in Genesis 1:26-28. As such, Christ became the fulfillment of the prophetic allusion in Psalm 8. This is confirmed by the writer of Hebrews, who after quoting this Psalm adds, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything" (2:9). As a man in humanity, Christ was limited in space

and time and was subject to the natural frailties of humanity, though without sin (2 Cor. 5:21). In this sense, He was for a time inferior to angels for the purpose of tasting the death of the cross on behalf of all creation. Just as the first man Adam was the head of the old creation, Christ, through the processes of incarnation, death, and resurrection, became the second man (1 Cor. 15:47) as the Head of the new creation, representing it in resurrection and thus fulfilling God's original intention with the man of His creation.

For this reason, Satan and the demons are loath to recognize the humanity of Christ. In Satan's threefold temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11), he sought to lure the incarnated God-man to abandon His position as a man and assume His position as the Son of God. First, he tempted Christ to make a show of Himself

as the Son of God to do a miracle to bid the stones to become loaves of bread (v. 3). Christ responded by taking His position as a man, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God'" (v. 4). In his second attempt, Satan tempted Christ to jump from the wing of the temple so that God would, in an impressive and supernatural way, command His angels to bear Him up (v. 6). Once again Christ overcame the devil by taking the position of a man, who should not test the Lord His God (v. 7). Finally, when Satan tempted Christ to worship him, Christ again stood on the ground of a man to worship and

serve only God (vv. 9-10). Such a standing by the incarnated Christ defeated Satan, and he left Him.

In the same principle of Satan's temptations, the demons addressed Jesus as the Son of God (8:29) but did not acknowledge Him as a man. Similarly, the evil spirits do not confess that Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3). This strongly indicates that Christ as the man of God's original purpose, holding fast the standing of His humanity, has overthrown Satan's subtle strategy in order to glorify God and accomplish God's economy.

The Son of Man

In speaking of Christ as a man in His humanity, the New Testament often calls Him the Son of Man. *The Son of Man* is a particular term, and because of the economy of the utterance in the divine revelation, we should not oversimplify

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it by equating it with *man*. *The Son of Man* reveals Christ's intimate relationship and detailed involvement with humanity (Lee, *Crystallization* 27). Christ as the Son of Man is full of relationships and involvements with man. Some of the details of Christ's involvement with humanity can be seen in His genealogies in Matthew and Luke. Matthew 1, as an abstract of the entire Old Testament, reveals Christ as the issue of forty-two human generations in three sections, the sections of the fathers, the kings, and the civilians. Luke traces Christ's genealogy all the way back to Adam (3:38). How dear it is that Christ descended from both kings and commoners! The intricate history of each of His human ancestors enriches our knowledge of the Christ who is certainly all-inclusive. As the issue of so many human generations, Christ participates in full in the life and history of humanity. It is Christ as the Son of Man who came to seek and save the lost sinners, who has the authority to forgive sins, and who came to save lives and to serve with His life. It is the Son of Man who was betrayed, delivered up, and crucified in His humanity, and it is the Son of Man who was raised from the dead for His glorification (John 12:23; 13:31-32). The Son of Man ascended to the heavens in His humanity to sit at the right hand of God (Matt. 26:64), and He will return as the Son of Man (16:27; 24:37). In the coming ages, Christ will execute judgment as the Son of Man (John 5:27-29), He will rule as the Son of Man in the millennium (Matt. 19:28), and for all eternity He as the Son of Man will be the heavenly ladder bringing heaven to earth and joining earth to heaven (John 1:51).

God Became Flesh

Christ in His all-inclusiveness became a man, possessing genuine humanity. However, the most direct and succinct utterance in the New Testament on the incarnation of Christ speaks not of humanity as such, but rather of the "flesh." John 1:14a says, "The Word became flesh." Christ, as the only begotten Son of God (v. 18), is the eternal Word who is God (v. 1) and was with God in eternity (v. 2). As the Word, He is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. In the fullness of time this eternal Word became flesh. In the vocabulary of the divine revelation, *flesh*, in all its connotations, is not a synonym for *man* or *humanity*. *Man* is a positive term, but *flesh* is negative. For this reason, we must have a careful consideration of the remarkable and profound truth of the Word becoming flesh.

God created man in His image and according to His likeness. Although the man according to God's original creation was finite, limited, and bound in space and time, he had no sin; that is, there was no sinful element within him. Soon after his creation, however, Satan tempted and seduced man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a symbol denoting Satan himself, the evil one.

When man ate of the fruit of this tree, the evil nature of Satan was injected into him, causing his body to be transmuted into the flesh. After the fall of man had progressed to greater depths, Genesis 6:3 records that God referred to man as flesh. Prior to the fall man had flesh in the sense of his God-created body. After the fall, man himself was flesh. In the eyes of God, fallen man is simply flesh.

The New Testament is very clear about the nature of the flesh. In Romans 7:5, Paul tells us that "when we were in the flesh, the passions for sins, which acted through the law, operated in our members to bear fruit to death." By the phrase *in the flesh*, Paul indicates that the flesh is not merely the physical substance of our body but a realm in which sin operates according to its nature unto death. He goes on to say, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells" (v. 18). The *nothing good*, according to verse 17, is sin. Moreover, this sin is personified in that it seizes opportunity (vv. 8, 11), works (vv. 8, 13), revives, that is, becomes alive (v. 9), deceives and kills (v. 11), and dwells, that is, makes a home (v. 17). No doubt, this personified sin is Satan himself, operating according to the evil nature of his life. The following exposition summarizes the biblical use of *flesh*:

The flesh here is the fallen and corrupted human body with all its lusts. This flesh was not created by God but is a mixture of God's creature and sin, which is the life of Satan, the evil one. God created man's body a pure vessel, but this vessel was corrupted and transmuted into the flesh by Satan's injecting himself into it at the time of the fall. Now Satan as sin personified is in man's flesh, making his home there and ruling as an illegal master, overruling man and forcing him to do things that he dislikes. It is this indwelling sin, which is the unchangeable evil nature, that constitutes all men sinners (5:19). (Recovery Version, Rom. 7:18, note 2)

The New Testament often speaks of the flesh in relation to lusts, weakness, corruption, all manner of evil, and death. Moreover, since the flesh is related to Satan and sin, it is also related to the world. The physical earth created by God was good, but due to the fall it became the *kosmos*, the anti-God world system (1 John 2:15) of which Satan is the ruler (John 12:31).

The Likeness of the Flesh of Sin

In this light, it is therefore remarkable that John boldly declares that "the Word became flesh." In Romans 8:3 Paul gives us the key to unlock this mystery: "For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." By this clarifying word, he adds significantly to the divine revelation concerning the incarnation of Christ.

Although Christ became flesh, He became flesh only in the likeness of the flesh of sin. The likeness of the flesh of sin is typified by the brass serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (Num. 21:9; John 3:14). The serpent is the archetype of Satan (Gen. 3:1), but here it also signifies the fallen, sinful Israelites (Matt. 3:7; 23:33) who had been "bitten" by Satan and injected with his "poison." The serpent which Moses lifted up, however, had only the form of the serpent; being of brass it did not have the poison of the serpent. Because of this, it is worthy to serve as a type of Christ. Christ, though in the likeness of the flesh of sin, had nothing of the sin nature in Him. He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21); that is, He did not know sin in an experiential, personal way, and although He was tempted in all respects like us, He remained always without either the nature or the deeds of sin (Heb. 4:15).

Satan, sin, and the world are involved with the flesh of Christ indirectly. By becoming flesh, Christ joined Himself to the sinful flesh, yet He was without sin. Ryrie confirms this understanding of being joined to sinful flesh:

Jesus Christ was unique, for He was God from all eternity and yet joined Himself to sinful humanity in the incarnation. The God-man possessed all the attributes of deity (Phil. 2:6) and the attributes common to humanity (apart from sin), and He will exist forever as the God-man in His resurrected body (Acts 1:11; Rev. 5:6). Only the God-man could be an adequate Savior; for He must be human in order to be able to suffer and die, and He must be God to make that death effective as a payment for sin. (John 1:14, note)

We may speak of the sphere of the flesh as a realm for the activity of the life and nature in the flesh.¹ The element of sin dwells in the sphere of the flesh (not Christ's flesh), but God dwelled in the sphere of the flesh of Christ. During the thirty-three and a half years of Christ's earthly ministry, however, Satan tried time and again to penetrate into the sphere of the flesh of Jesus, but he could not do it. When Satan tempted the Lord after His forty days and nights of fasting, he was fighting to inject sin into His flesh. Moreover, Satan's fighting was behind every attack, trial, temptation, opposition, and deprivation which the Lord endured. However, at the end of His earthly ministry Christ could still declare of the evil one, "The ruler of the world is coming, and in Me he has nothing" (John 14:30). Finally, when Christ went to the cross in His

flesh, He brought Satan and sin to the cross with Him, putting the entire sphere of the flesh to death by injecting death into it (Heb. 2:14).

In the flesh of Christ there was nothing of the poison of Satan, the contamination of sin, or the usurpation of the world. Rather, He was the very God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:15-16). Concerning his own flesh, fallen man must declare with Paul, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells" (Rom. 7:18), but concerning Christ, the Holy Word testifies that He was God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). For this reason, the Word becoming flesh is not only a major step in the process of God's economy; it is a crushing blow to the enemy of God. Therefore, the truth of Christ's becoming flesh through the divine conception is a touchstone for the orthodox faith. In warning against false prophets, John said, "In this you

know the Spirit of God: Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2). On the other hand, he who does not confess "Jesus Christ coming in the flesh" is a deceiver and the antichrist (2 John 7). Our God, the eternal Word, Jesus Christ, came in the flesh.

The God-man Living

As a man in the flesh, Christ lived a divine and human life on the earth for thirty-three and a half years. The human living of Christ fully bore the marvelous characteristics of His person of two natures, the divine and the human.

Christ was the embodiment of the

Triune God (Col. 2:9), living the life of God, but He lived such a life in humanity. John testifies at the end of his Gospel (21:25) that the many things which Jesus did in His human living and earthly ministry were more than could fill all the books in the world. Obviously, we cannot do justice in so short a writing to the details of the human living of Christ. Rather, here we focus on the principle of the God-man living, the living of the One who is both God and man.

The human living of the God-man was the living of a combined life, a life which was the mingling of the divine life and the human life. The divine life is the life of God Himself, and the human life is the highest life created by God, but in this one person these two lives with their two natures were joined. The particular, extraordinary life which the Lord Jesus lived was the issue of the union of these two lives. The divine life within Christ was the

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leading, dominant life in His living, while the human life was the expression of the divine life. The principle of the God-man living is that in His human living, Christ did not live by His human life; rather, He lived by His divine life in His human life.

The human life of Christ was genuine and perfect. He knew nothing of sin, moral defect, or ethical weakness. However, in all His living Christ denied His perfect human life to live by the life of the Father with whom He is one (John 10:30). Such was a life under the shadow of the cross, in which the Lord lived to die to Himself that He might live by Another. Christ as the Son was one with the Father, and having been sent by the Father (5:37), He was never alone because He came not only from the Father but with the Father (8:16, 29; 16:32; 6:46), that is, “*from with God*” (Vincent 152). He lived because of the Father (6:57) by the Father’s life. He worked with the Father (14:10; 5:17, 19) and in the name of the Father (10:25). He did not please Himself but always did that which was pleasing to the Father (8:29). He put aside His will and took the Father’s will (5:30; 6:38), and He did not seek His own glory but the Father’s (7:18). His speaking was not from Himself, but it was the Father’s working (12:49; 14:10); therefore, His teaching was not His own but the Father’s (7:16). In everything He was, did, and spoke, Christ expressed not Himself but the Father (14:7-9). Therefore, He could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (v. 9).

By such a living, Christ manifested the divine attributes in His human virtues. *Divine attributes* refers to what God is; God is love, light, righteousness, holiness, and all the unsearchable riches that are inherent in His nature. In His human living, Christ “expressed in His humanity the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic virtues” (Lee, *Co-worker* 17). By these aromatic virtues, Christ attracted, captivated, and charmed those who saw and heard Him. The indescribable sweetness and aroma which emanated from His humanity became a great light (Matt. 4:16) and a universal magnet to draw all men to Himself (John 12:32).

In the dual natures of the all-inclusive Christ and in His living, we see the excellency, loveliness, and worthiness of the God-man, who is everything to God and everything to man for God’s economy. May the Lord instill in us the

highest appreciation for this Christ, God-become-flesh, the Incarnate Word. AC

Notes

¹The notion of the flesh as a sphere is discussed and simply but elegantly illustrated in *God’s New Testament Economy* by Witness Lee. In the diagram on page 44, the sphere of the flesh, containing sin and Satan, is joined to the flesh of Jesus, which contains God. They are separated by what may be described as a semipermeable membrane, the boundary between the two spheres which was defined by the nature of Christ’s incarnation in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Satan was restricted within the realm of the flesh on his side of the “membrane” and was unable to penetrate that boundary. Christ, however, injected His death on the cross through the “membrane” into Satan’s sphere, thus destroying all the things in the sphere of the flesh, including Satan, sin, the flesh, the world, and the old man of the old creation.

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