

God Manifested in the Flesh—Fulfilling God’s Purpose in Man’s Creation

- 1 Dear Lord Jesus, we adore Thee,
 “Seed of woman” Thou became;
 Of the virgin wast begotten,
 Called e’en with a human name.
 Taking thus the human nature,
 Thou as man the serpent trod;
 By the Cross his head Thou bruised
 And fulfilled the plan of God.

 Lord, we see Thy glory,
 Shown in human beauty,
 Full of splendor, manifested
 In humanity.
- 2 As a man, by incarnation,
 Flesh and blood didst Thou partake
 To destroy the devil, Satan,
 In our stead and for our sake.
 With the name of Jesus given
 And Emmanuel callèd too,
 Thou becam’st our precious Savior,
 Bringing us salvation true.
- 3 Thou, “Last Adam” wast entitled,
 And wast called the “second man”,
 Head of all the new creation,
 Better than the first man.
 On this earth in life and conduct
 Thou indeed wast Son of man;
 Now in heaven with this nature
 Thou dost still appear as man.
- 4 In the time which God appointed
 Thou wilt come, dear Lord, again,
 With the glory of the Father,
 Still appearing as a man.
 Even on the throne of judgment
 Son of man Thou still wilt be;
 And with this, our human nature,
 Thou forevermore wilt be. (*Hymns*, #62)

It is an astounding and glorious fact in the Holy Scriptures that the unique God determined in eternity past that He would enter into and become an intimate part of His own creation. God’s fulfillment of this purpose in His economy through the incarnated Jesus Christ is abundantly revealed in the Bible. This Jesus lived among men, being one with man in order that He might become our precious Savior for the fulfilling of God’s good pleasure. Concurrent with the scriptural revelation of God’s participation in His creation,

the Bible also reveals that Satan, as the adversary of God, opposes God’s authority and plan. Satan’s main opposition to God is focused on the man God created for His purpose. The conflict between God and Satan involves the struggle to gain the heart of man; Satan’s goal is to subvert God’s expression through man. Early in the Bible we are introduced to the clash between the promised seed of woman and the subtle serpent, Satan. The fierce conflict between Jesus, the genuine seed of the woman who embodies God, and God’s adversary is introduced in Genesis, grows and develops throughout the Old and New Testaments, and reaches its ultimate climax in the book of Revelation, in which we see Christ’s decisive conquest when Satan is cast into the lake of fire.

The above hymn, written by Witness Lee, is a portrait of the man Jesus in the splendor and the glory of His person and work for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose. The hymn unveils the Lord Jesus as a genuine man in His incarnation, in His victory over Satan, in His becoming our precious Savior, and in His being the last Adam and the second man as the Head over the new creation. Furthermore, it reveals that He is still a man in ascension, that He will appear as a man when He comes in His glory, and that He will be a man even on His throne of judgment and in eternity. The hymn underscores the truth that God is not merely a supreme One, far removed in the heavens, relatively untouched by and only sovereignly involved with the events in human history; rather, He is a living, moving, purposeful God in man, who, in Christ, even became a mingled God-man. Our God-man Savior, Jesus Christ, did not temporarily assume a form of humanity in order to accomplish redemption and then divest Himself of the human form and nature; He became a genuine man who passed through human living, death, and resurrection as a man. After He rose from the dead, He did not go back into the heavens to resume a divine status apart from His humanity. He is still a man today, He will be a man when He comes again, and He will eternally exist as a man among men (the totality of all His regenerated, transformed, and glorified brothers).

The Glorified Jesus, Full of Splendor Manifested in Humanity

The chorus reverberates with exultant praise to Him as the

glorified Jesus, a man possessing the glory of divinity in human beauty: “Lord, we see Thy glory, / Shown in human beauty, / Full of splendor, manifested / In humanity.” To enter into the revelation and encouragement of this hymn, we need to receive the clear vision of Jesus Christ as a man who was God coming through incarnation, living a life of a man by the divine life and nature within Him, dying, resurrecting, ascending, and ruling as a man filled with the divine glory. “Lord, may we see Thy glory, shown in human beauty!”

When God created man, He expected and intended to see Himself expressed in and through His own creation. The purpose of God in man is clearly indicated by the creation narrative in Genesis 1: “God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion...over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (v. 26). It was in the heart of God that in and through humanity, He, as the God-man Jesus Christ, would become an intimate and intrinsic part of creation by becoming a man. Such a man would be mingled with God to become His perfect expression in a created being. Through incarnation the Lord Jesus, who is eternally God, became a man and lived on earth a life of human virtues that were filled, strengthened, uplifted, and enriched by the divine attributes, a life that was the mingling of man with God and God with man.

In his Gospel, John testifies of this dramatic occurrence in human history:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality. (1:1, 14)

The fact that the Word became flesh and dwelt among men produced an indelible impression in the heart and mind of the apostle. Later, in his first Epistle, he testifies,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us). (1:1-2)

John’s report is the firsthand account of one who had the direct experience of being with the Lord Jesus for three and a half years. His firm testimony is that the One whom they had heard, seen with their eyes, and handled with their hands was the eternal life, which was with the Father from the beginning in eternity. They saw God’s glory expressed and lived out in a genuine human being, the man Jesus!

The Fulfillment of the Old Testament Promised Seed of the Woman

Stanza 1 declares the coming of the Savior who was promised in the Old Testament. This stanza references the scene in Genesis 3, indicating that the Lord Jesus is the promised “seed of woman” who came to bruise the head of the serpent. After Adam and his wife succumbed to the temptation of the serpent, God then pronounced judgment on the serpent: “I will put enmity / Between you and the woman / And between your seed and her seed; / He will bruise you on the head, / But you will bruise him on the heel” (vv. 14-15). The curse upon the serpent was at the same time a promise of redemption. It is significant that although God warned Adam that eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would result in death, he still called his wife’s name Eve, meaning “living.” Clearly, Adam believed and expected that a child would be born of the woman and that this child would bring life to humanity. Throughout the succeeding generations, many have faithfully held firm to this conviction, expecting and eagerly awaiting the coming Savior who would rescue them from the devastating effects of the fall.

In addition to the promise concerning the seed of woman, the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 further points to the humanity of the expected Redeemer: “Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.” At the beginning of the New Testament, this promise was fulfilled in the birth of the child Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, begotten of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-23). Joseph, the betrothed spouse of Mary, was instructed by the angel that this child was to be given a human name, Jesus, meaning “Jehovah the Savior,” or “the salvation of Jehovah” (v. 21). And He would be called Emmanuel, denoting “God with us” (v. 23). Plainly, this child was the joining of God with man. Based on the promises in the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the birth of Jesus, the hymn rejoices with adoration of the promised seed of woman: “Dear Lord Jesus, we adore Thee, / “Seed of woman” Thou became; / Of the virgin wast begotten, / Called e’en with a human name.” He is the promised Messiah, conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin. He has a human name because He has put on human nature. He is both sent by God and is God Himself coming into the world to be our Savior. The last half of the stanza further declares that He has fulfilled the plan of God by defeating the serpent, bruising his head as God had promised: “Taking thus the human nature, / Thou as man the serpent trod; / By the Cross his head Thou bruised / And fulfilled the plan of God.”

Being Incarnated to Destroy the Devil

Stanza 2 focuses on the God-man Savior’s incarnation, which was His first step in joining and mingling God with

man. In this stanza we can see that God partook of blood and flesh with the purpose of destroying the devil, Satan. The writer of the book of Hebrews pronounces this objective: “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” (2:14). According to this portion of the Word of God, one of the express goals of the incarnation was the termination of the usurping adversary of God—the destruction of the devil. A note from the Recovery Version of the Bible is helpful to realize the significance of the term *destroy*:

Or, bring to nought, make of none effect, do away with, abolish, annul, discard. After the devil, the serpent, seduced man into the fall, God promised that the seed of woman would come to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). In the fullness of the time the Son of God came to become flesh (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3) by being born of a virgin (Gal. 4:4), that He might destroy the devil in man’s flesh through His death in the flesh on the cross...This was to abolish Satan, to bring him to nought. Hallelujah, Satan has been abolished and done away with! (Heb. 2:14, note 1)

It requires a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see the significance of the thought that He partook of blood and flesh in order to destroy the devil. We need to realize that the Lord Jesus in His incarnation was sent in the “likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin” (Rom. 8:3). He became flesh (John 1:14). Although He was without sin in His flesh (2 Cor. 5:21), we must still acknowledge with awe this mystery—the sinless God-man was a man in the flesh. Furthermore, we need to realize that Satan, the ruler of this world (John 12:31), injected himself into man’s flesh in the fall. The effect of the fall can be seen in Paul’s testimony and lament in Romans 7:14-18:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am fleshy, sold under sin. For what I work out, I do not acknowledge; for what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do. But if what I do not will, this I do, I agree with the law that it is good. Now then it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

In me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells speaks of a foreign element in us, sin, which takes hold of us and makes us a captive to the law of sin in our members. This sin in our members is the very nature and will of Satan in the 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. (Recovery Version, v. 18, note 2)

When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He bore the likeness of the flesh of sin. The flesh of the incarnated Son of God was nailed to the cross and thereby put to death. Because the Lord Jesus partook of blood and flesh, being made “like His brothers in all things” (Heb. 2:17), and “has been tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin” (4:15), the flesh that He took to the cross included the flesh of all mankind and thereby Satan, who indwells the flesh of man. Therefore, the Scriptures say, “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” (Rom. 8:3). When the Lord Jesus was put to death in the flesh on the cross, the sinful nature within fallen man was terminated. Through Christ’s death as a man in the flesh, Satan was dealt with and destroyed (John 12:31-33; Heb. 2:14).

Becoming Our Precious Savior through Incarnation

The second half of stanza 2 shows that through incarnation the Lord Jesus became our precious Savior: “With the name of Jesus given / And Emmanuel callèd too, / Thou becam’st our precious Savior, / Bringing us salvation true.” To become our Savior, taking the sins of the world upon Himself, the Lord Jesus had to be a man. When Paul was speaking in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, he stressed the fact that the Lord Jesus is of the seed of David, a fact that is repeated in a number of passages in the New Testament. Paul affirmed God’s promise to Israel:

He raised up David for them as king, to whom also He testified and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man according to My heart, who will do all My will. From this man’s seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus. (Acts 13:22-23)

From this man’s seed is an essential component in the Lord Jesus’ qualification to be our Savior. Before His incarnation He was God, unlimited in time and space, unable to be touched by sin or death, and incapable of being touched with the feeling of our weaknesses. But as a man He was restricted in a physical body for thirty-three and a half years. He was able to be tempted and to triumph over temptation as a creature. Furthermore, He was able to shed His blood on the cross for our sins. He truly is Jesus, Jehovah our salvation.

Becoming the Second Man in Resurrection

Stanza 3 speaks of the God-man Christ Jesus becoming the second man in resurrection. He is still a man, but in resurrection He has a new title and a new designation to match His new status. The apostle Paul writes of this in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, in which he reviews in depth the matter of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:

The first man is out of the earth, earthy; the second man is out of heaven. As the earthy is, such are they also that are earthy; and as the heavenly is, such are they also that are heavenly. And even as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. (vv. 47-49)

As the last Adam, Christ terminated the old creation. In resurrection as the second man, He is still a man, but now He is a man with a spiritual body, the first of many who bear the image of the heavenly; He qualifies all believers to bear this same image by giving to them the resurrection life. As the second man, He is the beginning of the new creation. Just as the first man was the beginning of created mankind, the second man is the beginning of another “race”—another species of mankind. As the Head of this new creation, Christ encompasses all His chosen and redeemed. Just as we were a part of the first man by birth, we become a part of the second man through regeneration. And as we have borne the image of the first man, the earthy, so we now begin to bear the image of the second man, the heavenly. Eventually, even our physical body will become like His, a spiritual body in resurrection (vv. 52-54; Phil. 3:21). In light of such a great unveiled mystery, it is no wonder that the hymn soars with exultant admiration: “Thou, ‘Last Adam’ wast entitled, / And wast called the “second man”, / Head of all the new creation, / Better than the first man.”

Appearing as a Man with the Nature of Man in the Heavens

Stanza 3 continues with the confirmation that even in the heavens He continues to be a man: “On this earth in life and conduct / Thou indeed wast Son of man; / Now in heaven with this nature / Thou dost still appear as man.” When He was walking on the earth, He clearly was the Son of Man. But after His resurrection and in ascension, the Lord Jesus is seen as a man sitting on the right hand of God on the throne of glory. Many may think that since Christ has returned to the heavens, He no longer has the form of a man; rather, they may think that He has cast off His human nature in order to express the sublime and transcendent glory of His divine nature, deity. But the hymn confirms, as does the Bible, that in the heavens today, He still has man’s nature and appearance (Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13).

The Epistle to the Hebrews reveals that the Son, whom God appointed Heir of all things, has now sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (1:2-3). The One who is bearing this responsibility in the divine administration is a man! Stephen saw the Lord in heaven not as the Christ or as the Son of God; he saw Jesus, the man, standing: “Being full of the Holy Spirit, he looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). John also saw the Lord in His ascension as the Son of Man walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands; the lampstands represent the local churches to which He gives administrative attention in His resurrected and ascended glory as a man (Rev. 1:13). Even in heaven the Lord Jesus continues as a man to carry out God’s purpose in His divine economy.

Coming Again as a Man and Being a Man on the Throne of Judgment and for Eternity

Stanza 4 shows that the Lord Jesus will still be a man at His coming again, on His throne of judgment, and for eternity:

In the time which God appointed / Thou wilt come, dear Lord, again, / With the glory of the Father, / Still appearing as a man. / Even on the throne of judgment / Son of man Thou still wilt be; / And with this, our human nature, / Thou forevermore wilt be.”

Coming Again as a Man

Shortly before the Lord was betrayed by Judas, condemned by the Jews, and sentenced to death by Pilate, He told His disciples that the impressive temple in Jerusalem, which had been built under Herod’s direction, would be utterly destroyed. The disciples responded by coming to Him privately, asking, “When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming and of the consummation of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). He replied that the coming of the Son of Man would be like lightning that clearly appears from east to west (v. 27).

Our Lord will come again as a man with power and great glory. According to religious concepts, His coming again will be in the pristine glory of His status as the Son of God. But the Bible reveals that His coming again will be as a man. While the Lord was on trial before the Sanhedrin, He declared, “From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (26:64). In His incarnation He came as the Son of Man in the flesh to carry out the economy of God on the earth, and His being a man is also essential for completing God’s plan to establish His kingdom on the earth and to obtain His expression on the earth through man. He will return to the earth as a man.

Judging as a Man

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that the Father has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). He later said that the Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man (v. 27). This indicates that the Lord's being a man is a crucial factor in His assignment to carry out the Father's administrative judgment. According to the Bible, there will be several different times of judgment, each of which He will preside over as the Son of Man.

First, there is the judgment at the judgment seat of Christ, which will occur before the millennium after the Lord returns (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). From His judgment seat in the air, the Lord will determine the reward or punishment related to all His resurrected and raptured believers. This judgment will decide the destiny of the believers during the millennial kingdom. In 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 Paul warns the believers that their works will establish whether they will receive a reward or suffer punishment at the time of this judgment: "If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward; if anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." *Saved* in this context refers to salvation from perdition, which is eternal, unchangeable in nature, and can never be lost (Heb. 5:9; John 10:28-29). However, there is still a matter of judgment in these verses which is related to our Christian life and living and which determines our receiving the kingdom reward. In this judgment our works will be judged based on whether they are of gold, silver, and precious stones or whether they are of wood, grass, and stubble. Gold, silver, and precious stones refer to our genuine experiences of Christ through His divine life and nature operating in and through us; materials produced from this source are good for the building up of the Body of Christ. Wood, grass, and stubble refer to the natural living of the believers apart from the divine life, according to their understanding and realization based on their natural background, religion, and culture. These materials not only are useless for the building up of the Body of Christ; they severely damage it (1 Cor. 3:17). Believers whose works are approved will receive the reward of ruling with Christ for one thousand years. Believers whose works are not approved by the judging Lord will suffer the loss of the reward of ruling with Christ in His millennial kingdom.

Another period of judgment will be carried out at the throne of His glory, which will occur when Christ, after His return, has destroyed those Gentiles who follow Antichrist at Armageddon (Matt. 25:31-46). All the remaining Gentiles will be gathered and judged at the throne of His glory on the earth before the millennium begins. Peter in the house of Cornelius proclaimed that God "has charged us to proclaim to the people and

solemnly testify that this is the One who was designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1). This judgment of the Gentiles who are alive and remaining after Christ deals with all the living followers of Antichrist will be Christ's judgment of the living before the millennium. Based on this judgment those who cared for the Lord's people during the tribulation, the "sheep," will be "transferred into the millennium to be the people living under the kingly ruling of Christ and the overcoming believers (Rev. 2:26-27; 12:5; 20:4-6) and under the priestly ministry of the saved Jews (Zech. 8:20-23)" (Recovery Version, Matt. 25:34, note 1). But to the "goats," those who ill-treated the Lord's "little ones" during the tribulation, the judging Lord will say, "Go away from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). This is the judgment of the living. Following the thousand years of reigning in His earthly kingdom, the Lord will once more execute judgment, this time over all the dead unbelievers. They will be sentenced to eternal punishment in the lake of fire. This is the judgment at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15).

Being a Man with the Human Nature Forevermore

Our dear Lord Jesus will eternally express the mingling of humanity and divinity. The Lord Jesus did not make an appearance as a man in time with a view to divesting Himself of His human nature in order to return to the heavens and serenely reign as God for eternity. He became a man, and as a man, He will forever be incorporated with the Triune God. When the Lord was incarnated, He brought God into humanity; then, in His resurrection, He brought humanity into divinity.

We can only praise and wonder that our Lord and God has come to be a man! As a man He accomplished redemption and defeated God's enemy, Satan. As a man He resurrected from the dead and became the second man to head up the new creation, which is the corporate continuation of Himself as the firstborn Son among the many brothers. As a man He is now in the heavens carrying out His heavenly ministry in and through His many brothers on the earth. As a man He will come again to bring an end to the usurping Satan. As a man He will judge the living and the dead and bring in the new heaven and the new earth. And as a man He will eternally be seated on the throne of God and of the Lamb as the source and the supply for all the redeemed in the New Jerusalem. "Lord, we see Thy glory, / Shown in human beauty, / Full of splendor, manifested / In humanity."

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Works Cited

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