

The Wonder of Jesus
The Reality of His Humanity

Lesson #3 for April 19, 2008

Scriptures: John 1:14; 19:5; Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:7; 1 Timothy 2:5; 3:16; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15,16; 1 John 4:1-3.

1. This lesson focuses on the humanity of Jesus Christ. During His lifetime here on earth, is there any evidence that anyone questioned His humanity? Do we have any real reason for questioning His humanity?
2. At the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, the Christian church agreed that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man. Their statement said, "We all with one voice teach that... our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same God, the Same perfect in Godhead, the Same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man,... [one] with the Father as to his Godhead, and... [one] with us as to his manhood; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted." -- cited in Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abington Press, 1970) page 390.
3. Is it possible to understand in a fairly simple way, using ordinary human language, how His divinity and His humanity worked together? Review *Desire of Ages* p. 664 from the lesson for last week. Is it correct to say that His humanity was fully and completely like ours? Or was His humanity in some way different from ours? Did He—as a child or even as an infant—have access to His divine power?
4. Did He ever exercise His divine power on His own behalf? Did He exercise His divine power on the behalf of others?
5. If we say that He was fully and completely human, are we implying that human beings like us theoretically could live a perfect life like Jesus lived? Did having access to divinity make the life of Jesus easier or more difficult? Is it possible that His worst temptations were temptations to use His divinity?
6. Did Jesus perform His miracles using His own divinity? Or is it possible that His relationship with the Holy Spirit and with the Father was so close that His miracles were performed using Their power?
7. Did Jesus perform any type of miracle that was not performed by prophets in the Old Testament?
8. Sinful human beings have struggled with the divinity-humanity issue in the life of Christ for almost two thousand years. If He was really fully human, then why haven't any of us lived the kind of life that He lived? Is it because His divinity gave Him an advantage? Are we just looking for an excuse for our sinfulness? Is it too much to believe that a completely human Jesus could have lived a sinless life here on this earth?
9. Surely we should do everything possible to understand the humanity of Christ because Ellen G. White said, "The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us." *Selected Messages*, Book 1, page 244.
10. In the days of Jesus, there were numerous other human beings claiming—to a greater or lesser extent—to be divine. The Caesars claimed divinity. The Pharaohs claimed divinity. So what was different about Jesus Christ? Instead of demanding worship, He came to serve us! And after living the life of a perfect servant, He died the death of a common criminal!
11. Let us be clear. The Gospels speak about Jesus' humanity and His divinity in unequivocal terms.

12. We need to remember that the Roman Catholic Church saw such a gap between divinity and humanity that they developed the doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception.” They believe that Christ’s divinity was so perfect that He could not dwell in a sinful human body even as a fetus! Therefore, somehow, Mary had to have been born sinless so that she could give birth to that perfect Child. What does that tell us about the thinking of people in the early centuries after the birth of Christ? Matthew 1:18-24 and Luke 1:26-35 make it very clear that He was “born of” an ordinary human mother. John 1:1 and 1:14 make it clear that the very essence of God, the Word, became “human flesh.” Galatians 4:4 repeats the notion that He was born of a human mother. And Philippians 2:5-11 summarizes the incredible condescension of Jesus Christ all the way from His position as the Creator and Ruler of the universe down to His death as a common criminal.
13. Do you think the early disciples and apostles struggled with the divinity-humanity issue? Did they have any idea how contentious this issue would be in later generations? Having lived with Jesus for over one year, they were absolutely certain that He was fully and completely human. After His amazing death and resurrection, they recognized that He was fully God. When that knowledge fully impacted their thinking and they readjusted their ideas accordingly, they were willing to die for those ideas! Would we be willing to do the same?
14. It was not long after Jesus’s departure to return to heaven that people began struggling with the issues we are talking about. A group of early Gnostics known as Docetists taught that Jesus was never fully human. They taught that He was God—just pretending to be a human being. They thought it was impossible for divinity and humanity to cohabit the same body. Review other views that took place down through the generations. (See ***The Humanity of Jesus***)
15. The apostle John realized that those Gnostic ideas were beginning to surface even while he was still alive. Read 1 John 4:1-3.
16. In the early centuries, the argument seemed to be primarily over Christ’s deity. Could He, in fact, have been truly divine? If so, how was His divinity similar to or different from the divinity of the Father? In later centuries, the focus was on His humanity. Was it even possible for divinity and humanity to exist in the same person? As different ideas and beliefs rose to prominence, those who disagreed were condemned as heretics or in some cases even killed.
17. Let us look back to some of the evidence in the Gospels that Jesus was, in fact, human like us. After a long day’s work, Jesus fell asleep in the bottom of the boat. (Matthew 8:24) After a busy day and a good night’s rest, He was hungry the next morning. (Matthew 21:18) After walking for a long period of time in the heat, He was tired and thirsty. (John 4:5-7). At the graveside of one of His closest friends, He wept in sympathy with others. (John 11:33-35)
18. There are many questions we would like to ask about the details of this divine-human issue. But the Gospels writers and the other New Testament writers did not answer all of those questions. In a kind of summary, Ellen White wrote, “Christ did not make-believe take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature.” {*RH*, April 5, 1906 par. 4; *1SM* 247.1; *5BC* 1130.7; *LHU* 74}
19. In your thinking, what difference would it make if Jesus had come to this earth as an angel or messenger and just “*appeared*” as a human being? Angels have appeared as human beings on a number of occasions that we know about. So, why did God need to come into our world in the form of human flesh?
20. In the book of Hebrews, Paul tried to deal with some of the major issues involved in the debate. Read Hebrews 2:9,14-18; 4:14-16; 5:8,9. Do you agree with the following views? He became a

human being, lower than the angels, so that He could experience death. That was necessary so that He might “destroy” the Devil—answer the arguments of the Devil—who has the power over death and so set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death. He became a human being so that He could become a faithful, merciful High Priest—forgiving us our sins. He can now help us “tempted ones” because He Himself was also tempted and suffered. Now we can come with great confidence to the throne of God because we have a High Priest who understands us. Having suffered and remained obedient, He became a source of our eternal salvation if we obey Him. **What is implied by those statements? Is it possible that Jesus understands some things that the Father and the Holy Spirit do not understand? Is omniscience really limited? What did Jesus need to learn by becoming a human being? Or was the problem not on the side of divinity but on our side? Was it necessary for Jesus to become fully a human being so that we could comprehend and get to know Him as a Friend? If we did not have the record of the Gospels, would it be possible for us to understand God nearly as completely as we do?**

21. Was Jesus, in fact, tempted in every way as we are? Was He ever tempted to indulge a bad habit? Was He tempted to watch TV? Did He lose His temper with His children?
22. Having become a human being and having lived a life here on this earth, why will it be necessary for Jesus to retain His humanity throughout eternity? Read Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:10,11; 17:31; 1 Timothy 2:5. These Bible writers made it clear that the One who is “at God’s right hand,” the One who will conduct the judgment at the end, the One who will finally bring God and man together, is still human.
23. By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us.” {DA 25.3}
24. We can only stand amazed as we consider the incredible mystery that we have been studying. What difference does it make in your life? Is it easier to live the Christian life if you know that Jesus was fully God and also that He was fully man?
25. To answer the questions that Satan raised in the great controversy, this divine-human demonstration that we call Jesus Christ was absolutely essential. Satan had claimed that no human being could live a sinless life. He had claimed that anyone who was really independent from God—living as a human being—would sooner or later follow his own selfish ways. Satan had claimed that Jesus was not in any way superior to him. By arising from the grave “in His own power,” Jesus proved His divinity. While there are many, many aspects of this whole discussion that we will be talking about for eternity, at least these basic points must be clear. Are they clear in your mind?

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