

Jesus Is Fully Man (John 1.14-18)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. At the heart of the historic Christian confession is a great paradox: **Jesus Christ is *fully God* and *fully man*.**
- B. The revelation of both truths of this paradox are foundational to the Christian faith and the message of the gospel. Each of these truths have been contested and confronted throughout most of the church's history. Yet, holding fast to these truths are *essential* to rightly understanding, worshiping, following, and living in accordance with Jesus Christ.
- C. We must remember that in seeking to understand such *mysteries*, the goal is not ultimately comprehension. Rather, the goal must be ***reverent submission*** and ***awe-filled worship***. These paradoxical truths of Christ's full divinity and full humanity are given by revelation and must be received as God's gracious gift of making known himself in a way that we can live in communion with him.

II. REVIEW: THE WORD OF GOD

- A. John's Gospel begins by showing us the person of the Word of God. As we saw last week, this Word of God is (1) ***eternally existent*** ("In the beginning was the Word"); (2) ***distinct from God the Father*** in some manner ("and the Word was *with* God"); and (3) ***Himself God*** ("and the Word *was* God"). These three truths establish the boundaries around the doctrine of Jesus' divinity.

- B. This Word, according to John, is also the ***glory of God*** and the ***Son of God***.

¹⁴and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (John 1.14)

- C. This passage (along with the remainder of the Biblical confession) has led to the establishment of the doctrine of the ***Trinity***. Simply stated, the doctrine of the Trinity establishes that there is ***one God*** who exists eternally in ***three Persons***.
- D. Applied to this passage, we see that the Word (or Son of God) exists eternally as the Second Person of the Triune God.

III. THE WORD BECAME FLESH

¹⁴And the Word became flesh (John 1.14)

- A. John tells us that at a moment in time, the eternal Word ***became flesh***. In this one statement John describes a theological ocean of reality. This truth is what is known as the ***incarnation*** — the act through which the Son of God (the Word) assumed a ***full human nature*** in order to fulfill God's purposes of redemption.
- B. Whereas the eternal Word has no beginning or end and cannot change, the incarnate Son (Jesus of Nazareth) began to be at a moment in time and is subject to the full reality of human existence except for sin.
- C. Elsewhere in the Gospels, we see the act of creation that describes Jesus' conception as a ***demonstration*** of his full divinity and full humanity.

²⁶the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin... [named] Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"... ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David... ³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy — the Son of God." (Luke 1.26-35)

1. This passage demonstrates for us that Jesus is *truly conceived* within the womb of Mary. This establishes the true and full humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. This man is not partially human as if a type of apparition of a divine being in human form. Rather, Jesus is **conceived** in Mary's womb — knit together as each other human with a body, mind, soul, will, etc.
 2. This passage also demonstrates for us that it is the **Son of God** who is assuming humanity within the womb of Mary. Because this is an act of pure creation (*similar to Adam*) Jesus is able to be *who he truly is* in eternity — namely, the Son of God.
- D. Throughout history the church has sought to give shape to the reality of the incarnate Son of God by declaring that in this **one Person** (Jesus of Nazareth) exists **two natures** (human and divine) that are not confused.
- E. This teaching rules out several potential distorted ways of understanding the life of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God.
1. Jesus was merely an apparition — and therefore not truly a human. This doctrine filled the early church, and John writes explicitly in his epistles to counter this heretical teaching.

²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus [in this manner] is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4.2-3)

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 7)
 2. The Son of God does not simply fill a body. Many early heretical teachings in the church sought to understand the immaterial part of Jesus (his thoughts, soul, will, etc.) as being the Word, and that the Son simply took a human body.
 3. The eternal nature of the Son of God does not become intermixed with the nature of Jesus' humanity as if to create a type of third nature.
 4. In response to many of the early misrepresentations of the humanity of Jesus, early church theologian Gregory of Nazianzus rightly declared concerning the necessity of believing in the full human nature of Jesus: "*For that which He has not assumed He has not healed.*"
- F. We must see from the Scripture that it is the Person of the eternal Son who exists as a true and full human being precisely in the fullness of what it means to be human (i.e., human nature, limitations, mutability, ability to suffer and die, etc.). As we look at the life of Jesus, we must understand that this is the Son of God existing within a human life and human nature.
- G. To seek to comprehend this completely pushes our intellectual capacities to their limits because there is no simple analogy elsewhere in creation to help us comprehend this reality. It must be received by faith — welcoming us into a posture of humble worship and adoration of the Son of God who has assumed a truly and fully human existence in Jesus.

*"Anyone contemplating the life of Jesus needs to be newly and more deeply aware every day that something impossible, something scandalous has occurred: that God, in his absolute Being, has resolved to manifest himself in a human life (and is in a position to make this resolve effective!). He must be scandalized by this, he must feel his mind reeling, the very ground giving way beneath his feet; he must at least experience that 'ecstasy' of non-comprehension which transported Jesus' contemporaries (Mk 2:12)."*¹

¹Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 159.

IV. THE WORD DWELT AMONG US

A. The Scriptures present a beautiful portrait of the *human life* of Jesus Christ. Although there is great mystery to this portrait, we are invited to see that the Son assumed what it means to be truly human from his conception and throughout his whole life.

B. *Infancy, Childhood, and Obscurity*

1. Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary and grew from embryonic form through a whole period of normal human gestation.

⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth (Luke 2.6)

2. As an infant, Jesus was vulnerable and needed to be cared for and protected by his parents.

⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger (Luke 2.7)

¹³Now when [the Magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him. ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt (Matt 2.13-14)

3. Jesus remained, as a child, submitted to his parents.

⁵¹And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them (Luke 2.51)

4. As a child, Jesus grew in knowledge, wisdom, understanding, stature (mentally, emotionally, spiritually), and in the experience of God's favor.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2.52)

5. Jesus lived for thirty years in near obscurity and steadfast obedience before he was anointed to fulfill his ministry to proclaim the kingdom and bring redemption.

²³Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age (Luke 3.23)

C. Jesus *experienced a full range of human experiences, emotions, and limitations*

1. Jesus experienced hunger and thirst.

²he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry (Luke 4.2)

²⁸After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." (John 19.28)

2. Jesus experienced human emotions and thoughts.

³⁵Jesus wept... ³⁸Then Jesus, deeply moved again (John 11.35, 38)

¹⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick (Matt 14.14)

⁵And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart (Mark 3.5)

²¹In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will" (Luke 10.21)

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled (Matt 8.10)

3. Jesus needed to sleep and rest.

³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion (Mark 4.28)

4. Jesus declared that there was information that he did not know.

³⁶But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. (Matt 24.36)

D. Jesus was *anointed by the Spirit to fulfill his ministry*

1. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at his baptism in order to fulfill his ministry.

¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him (Matt 3.16)

³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (John 1.33)

2. Jesus himself understood that he was endued with power by the Spirit to accomplish the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes.

¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and give it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4.18-21)

3. Jesus' ministry was *limited* according to the will of the Father and *hindered* at times by the hardness of human hearts.

¹⁹So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (John 5.19-20)

⁵And he could do not mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. (Mark 6.5)

¹⁷On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. (Luke 5.17)

E. Jesus *suffered and died*

1. Jesus suffered agony and horror facing his impending death and the experience of bearing the sins of the world. He experienced this at such a great level that he had to *submit his will* to the will of the Father.

⁴¹he knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22.44)

2. Jesus experienced real pain, suffering, and death upon the cross.

⁶⁵Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him (Luke 22.63)

³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵He who saw it has borne witness — his testimony is true, and... he is telling the truth — that you also may believe. (John 19.33-35)

V. WHY CHRIST'S HUMANITY MATTERS

- A. Similar to the divinity of Jesus, his humanity is not an obscure or meaningless theological doctrine. This truth is absolutely essential for us to receive by faith as we seek to know Jesus, follow him, and live our lives in obedience to his commandments.
- B. Even though contemplation on this doctrine may press the limits of our comprehension, our acceptance of this truth has profound and eternal implications. There are significant effects that this doctrine has on our lives as Christians.

C. The humanity of Jesus *affirms God's commitment to his creation*

- 1. The Biblical testimony declares and affirms the initial goodness of all creation.

³And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (Gen 1.31)

- 2. Because of sin, creation is subjected to a curse and must be redeemed.

¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope, ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. (Rom 8.19-22)

- 3. In the incarnation, God demonstrates his eternal commitment to his own creation. God has joined himself forever to the created order in assuming a human nature in the man Jesus Christ. The resurrection (i.e., that he was raised again *humanly*) demonstrates the commitment of God to not cast off his creation, but to restore and renew it.

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Rev 21.5)

D. As a man, Jesus *fulfills the purpose of mankind*

- 1. God's intention for all of creation was that humans would act as his image bearers and fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory. Because of this, he subjected the world to the rule and dominion of *mankind*. However, because of the sin of our first parents, that dominion and rule was fractured and usurped.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in your image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth..." ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen 1.26-28)

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet (Ps 8.3-6)

- 2. Paul demonstrates that Jesus is the "Last Adam". This means that he is the representative head for the new creation.

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... ¹⁴death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through the one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for man. (Rom 5.12-15)

3. Because of this, we can look to Jesus as the “ideal” human. Jesus Christ is the portrait of what it means to be truly and fully human. Anything less than this portrait is to be sub-human.

E. As a man, Jesus provides *redemption* and *mediates between God and man*

1. As we saw earlier, the early church understood that in order to provide full redemption to our humanity, the Son of God must assume a full humanity. As a man, he redeems every part of us — our bodies, our souls, our spirits.
2. Paul declares that the work of mediation between God and man happens exclusively in the person of Christ Jesus, who is fully God and fully man.

⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim 2.5-6)

F. As a man, Jesus *leads many to glory*

1. Closely tied to this truth is the fact that in God’s economy, the “head” of the new creation must be a man himself.
2. The author of Hebrews makes the glorification of “many sons” contingent on the incarnation of the eternal Son.

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Heb 2.10)

G. In his humanity, Jesus *reveals God*

1. The humanity of Jesus is the *means* through which God has chosen to reveal himself in the fullest expression. This is God demonstrating his own being in a “form” that we can understand, see, hear, touch, and experience.

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us... (1 John 1.1-2)

2. John declares that in the life of Jesus, the eternal Son of God has *made God known* (declared him).

¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known (John 1.18)

H. In his humanity, Jesus *defeats sin and death*

1. Jesus’ body was broken in order that the chastisement to bring peace would rest on him.

⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed (Isa 53.5)

2. Jesus’ blood was shed to bring forgiveness of sins by the new covenant.

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (Eph 1.7)

3. Jesus overcame the curse of death through his death.

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2.14)