

How Can Jesus Be Both God and Man?

We are in a vital series of messages on the great doctrines of the Bible. In the past few weeks, we have discussed why we believe in the God of the bible, God and creation, how can God be both one and three, and today, we most to the name that is the most loved and the most hated name in history, tht is, Jesus of Nazareth.

In the first century, Jesus was a common name among the Jewish people. The name literally means “God saves,” or “salvation of the Lord.” It is the same as the OT name “Joshua.” Today the name “Jesus” is a common name among Hispanics. There are some _____ major league baseball players with the name Jesus, and some _____ in the minor leagues. Many boxers are named Jesus. It is kind of strange to be watching two boxers on teelviosn, both with the first named Jesus beating up on each other. My wife, Judy, taught first gradcde and “Je—sus” was in her class. Of course that is spelled “Jesus.” Je-sus wrote his name on his paper, turned it into Judy, a nd toher frist greader saw the spelling of it, and said, “Wow, Mrs. Warpula, look at this, I didn’t know Jesus was in our class.”

To distinguish Jesus of the NT who was born of Mary in Bethlemhem and died on the cross for our sins, we say “Jesus of Nazareth.” That’s the way today that Jesus is known among historians because he grew up in Nazareth, a little, red-neck hill-billy, obscure village in Galilee.

For a while, it was popluar among some to say, “We cannot even prove that there ever was such a person as Jesus. He could be just the product of the overactive 8imagination of the NT writers.” Today, that spurious clzim has been proven totally false. There is not a credible historian in the world who doubts that Jesuz of Nareth is a historical person. Noted NT scholar, F. F. Bruce, wrote a book entitlte Jesus and Non-Christian Origiins. In this book, he writes some 200 pages proving from non-biblical sources that Jesus was indeed a person of first century Judiasm. He quotes references from Greek authoris, Roman authors, Jewish authors, Jewish commentaryies and Jewish codified laws, and Muslims to the effect that Jesus of Zazaeth was a real person, as reall as you and me. There are some _____ pagan authors and many Jewish sources that refer to Jesus. We can take all the writings of the pags and Jews of the first and centond centuries and prove that Jesus was the

founder of a religion, that he taught the people, that he did many wonderful deeds, that he practiced great works of magic (as they termed the miracles), that he died on a cross and that on the third day, the tomb was empty, and that he was reported to have been seen alive by his followers, and that on the first day of the week before sunrise his followers met together and sang hymns to him as a god, and they partook of food together (evidently a reference to the Lord's supper). All of these facts are verified without the Bible in pagan and Jewish histories of the time. For example, Josephus, a Jewish historian who was born _____ and died _____ and wrote Antiquities of the Jews, Wars of the Jews, and _____, refers to John the Baptist baptizing in the Jordan River, to the brother of Jesus named James and his martyrdom. He says this of Jesus: ----- . Bruce says this may have been somewhat edited by Christian sources, but the facts remain that Josephus does attest to the existence of Jesus. Tacitus a Roman historian who lived ____ to _____ and wrote _____, says of Jesus: _____ . Suetonius, a friend of the emperor _____, who wrote, about _____ wrote that _____ . The Jewish Gemara, a commentary on the Jewish rabbinic laws, the Mishnah, says, _____ . There is no credible historian in the world who doubts the existence of Jesus.

Of course, then, we have the NT documents which were all written within 25 to 65 years of the death of Jesus, anywhere from 45 to 95 A.D. These documents should be received as much as any documents. A person may discount the belief of the church but the historical documents do speak of Jesus. The NT documents should be received as credible witnesses of Jesus because they have all the signs of truth, they never speak of anything, any person, any place, or any event of the times, that cannot be verified by other sources. Or that in harmony with all that we know of the times. The NT is the best attested book of ancient history. We have over 5000 Greek mss or portions of mss of the NT. The early church fathers of the second and third centuries quote so much from these documents that almost every word of the NT could be written by copying from the church fathers, even if all the mss of the NT documents were lost. F/ F/ Bruce, whom I mentioned earlier has written another book entitled, The NT Documents: Are They Reliable?. In this book, he shows that we have only a handful of copies of the works of some ancient writers, and some of these copies were made a 1000 years after the fact, but yet no historian doubts the authenticity and reliability of these documents. Yet he points out that we have over 5000 mss of the NT, copies of original documents that all date within the lifetimes of

the apostles. He concludes that the NT is the best attested book of history. We have more proof of the existence of Jesus of Nazareth than we do of Julius Caesar.

So there is no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was an actual historical personage.

In the NT we are presented with two startling claims: one that Jesus of Nazareth was a man, a real flesh and blood man, like us in every respect, except he had no sin; and two, that this same person, this Jesus of Nazareth was in fact God in the flesh. This is not an identity statement but a predication statement. He was not God the Father but he was of the same being, substance or essence of God. There is but one God but as we studied last week, God exists in three centers of consciousness, or three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is one in one frame of reference. He is one divine what. But God is three in another frame of reference, He is three divine whos. Let me illustrate it like this. Let's say you go to the store to buy some soft drinks for your family. When you return, I ask you what you bought, and you reply, "I bought six cokes; one six-pack." Now I understand that you mean that you bought "six and one." Now it would be contradictory to say you bought six and one in the same frame of reference because something cannot be both six and one at the same time in the same frame of reference. But you bought six and one, the statement is true and clear, when I understand that you mean six containers in one frame of reference and one six pack in another frame of reference. So you bought six and one, and we can all understand. So God is three and one. Three persons, three whos, but one essence, one being. Three in one frame of reference and one in another frame of reference. So God's oneness allows for a plurality of persons with an underlying unity.

The three persons of the Trinity bear fundamental metaphysical ties to each other, much closer than anything we know of as humans or on this earth. The Father, Son and Spirit are united in being. There is a necessary relationship between the three persons. It is not possible for one of the three to exist independently or without the other two. These three have necessarily harmonious wills. There are fundamental areas of agreement and no areas of disagreement. This does not mean that their wills are identical or necessarily the same but that there their wills are so necessarily aligned that there are no areas of disagreement. There are three persons, each having will, power, and full range of cognitive faculties but necessary

relations between them of being and will . This social trinitarianism emphasizes the triune nature of God. This may not be all that the unity of the trinity consists of but it is at least this. This side of eternity our minds will never fully capture all that there is about God. And even then when we no longer see through a glass darkly, as Paul phrased it, we still may not comprehend all there is about God.

All the heresies of the world deny either the deity of Jesus or they deny the humanity of Jesus. The Bible presents us one person Jesus, who has two natures: a divine nature, and a human nature, and these two natures, are both in the one person, Jesus of Nazareth, at the same time.

Notice in your bulletin today, page one. There are four Scriptures that plainly teach that Jesus is God in the flesh. (Read each of them and comment briefly)

For a clearer understanding, let's briefly talk more about the humanity of Jesus. By this we mean that Jesus was a man, homo sapiens, a real flesh and blood, bones and guts man. He was not an apparition, a ghost, a myth, a superstition, a half-man, half alien, or even a half God, half man. Jesus is not a humanized deity or is he a deified human. He is 100% God and 100% man. He is the God-Man.

On the back side of your bulletin, I have some references to the humanity of Jesus. Notice what these verses tell us about Jesus. (read through them).

There can be no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth really lived, that he was a human being in all respects as we are, except without sin.

That is one nature of Jesus, his humanity. But what about his other nature, deity?

Besides the references and thoughts we have already made from the headline article in the bulletin, look now at the further references to the deity of Jesus, also on the back page of the bulletin, right above the humanity of Jesus. Notice how what the Scriptures say about Jesus: (read through them).

So there was one person, Jesus, and yet we have two clear, distinct natures within that one person, Jesus. How can this be?

This, of course, involves a problem in our understanding. Jesus is the unique, the one and only, but we still have logical problems trying to say that the second person of the deity who is the uncreated creator is at the same time in a created body. Now God is an intelligent God. God has established truth and rationality. No contradiction can be true. It is impossible for a person to believe a contradiction. One of the first laws of rational thought is the law of non-contradiction. Something cannot be A and not A at the same time in the same frame of reference. A contradiction cannot possibly be true. So if I were to say "A triangle has exactly four interior angles" that is a contradiction because the definition of a triangle is that it has exactly three interior angles. So nothing can be a triangle and have four interior angles. Now some want to apply this sane and sensible reasoning to Jesus. How can Jesus be both creator and creature in one person? Further, God is omnipotent but a human possesses only finite power. How can Jesus have both? And the other qualities of God are likewise incompatible with humanity. God is omniscience; humans are limited knowledge; God is not subject to space and time; humans are subject to space and time; God is a necessary being; a human is a contingent being. How can all of these divine attributes and human attributes exist at the same time in one person?

So it is true that contradictions are necessarily false, and if indeed the incarnation involves a contradiction then it is necessarily false. So how can we say that Jesus is both fully God and fully man, and yet not be guilty of the contradiction that says he is both created and uncreated?

Maybe the crux of this alleged problem is the meaning of being human. Perhaps the concept of being human does not include the concept of being created. Human may be construed as a natural kind concept like the word "tiger." A natural kind is something whose nature can be understood by natural sciences. While man is a natural kind, man is not a purely biological creature. According to the Bible, man has an immaterial part of him called the spirit so there is an important part of human nature that is outside the domain of the empirical natural sciences. The essence of human nature is not determined by analyzing the meanings of words or concepts. Our theory of human nature has to be informed by our best science and our basic worldview with which we are working.

So what this means is that God the Son was preexistent and took on human nature. Jesus Christ the human being is God the Son. This means that Jesus Christ was not created. Christ's particular human body and the human

nature he assumed were created, but this does not imply that Christ was created. So we cannot infer from the statement “X is created” from the statement “X is human.”

And this applies to the other divine attributes also. We cannot infer from the fact of humanity that by definition that someone is necessarily limited in power or knowledge. These are not required for being human. Being human means something else.

Now to help us further, please keep in mind that we must distinguish between things that are common and things that are essential. A common human property is a property that all or almost all humans have; an essential human property is a property that anything must have to be human. For example, consider being born on earth. Every human being who has ever existed so far has had this property. Yet being born on earth is not required for being human because it is possible that someday a human baby will be born on a space station or on the moon. If this is possible, and it is, then we know that being born on planet earth is not essential for being human. So what I am saying is that the limitation properties that are common to mankind are not an essential part of human nature. It is easy for us to infer that common properties of all humans are essential properties of all humans, but such is not the case.

So we as Christians are committed to the truth of the claims about God and about what is essential for deity, but we are under no pressure, even as a rational, educated person, to make general claims about what is essential for being human.

The Bible says in Phil. 2 that the second person of the Godhead “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” What did the second person of the Godhead, the Word, empty himself of? Some would say he emptied himself of all the attributes of God. That would mean the Jesus is “God minus”—God minus his attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. So this view says that during his earthly sojourn that the word surrendered his divine attributes. But if this is so, how can we claim then that Jesus is fully God? If the word empties himself of these, then is he still God? He is “God minus” whereas in the NT the writers present him as “God plus”—God plus humanity, not humanity minus God.

Another way to understand the person of Jesus is to say that he had two minds: one human and one divine. Jesus in the flesh has a divine mind as well as a human mind. The divine mind is omniscient; the human mind is limited. Similarly, the Incarnate Christ possessed the omnipotence of God but refrained from exercising more power than would have been exercised by an average human. In the same way, by taking on humanity, including a human mind, this required the masking of divine knowledge. Sometimes what goes on in our human mind is below the conscious level, so we might suppose that below the conscious surface of Christ there existed the omniscient mind of God. Jesus would not necessarily be limited to only the contents of the human mind. God the Father could have allowed the earthly mind of Jesus to have more or less access to the contents of the divine mind, as might be necessary for the completion of his ministry on earth. [For the above explanations and examples, I am highly indebted to Thomas D. Senior, "The Incarnation and the Trinity," in Reason for the Hope Within, ed. Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 238-260].