

8) Jesus Christ, Part 2

Jesus' Divinity & Humanity

Something happened to those first followers of Jesus after he died. The strategy behind his public crucifixion as a rebel was to destroy the movement he started. It was also aimed at discouraging any further resistance to the one rule of Caesar as Lord and saviour of the world, and the Jewish authorities collaborating with Rome remaining in charge. But something unexpected happened. It's as if fuel was poured on a flickering flame and a strong wind blew in to transform the Jesus movement into a roaring fire. What can explain this?

The New Testament answer to this question is that Jesus was resurrected. The first followers encountered the risen Christ and he further became manifest to them through a spiritual wind called Holy Spirit who inflamed believers to become Jesus' ongoing physical presence in the world. Jesus was not only alive, but alive now in a whole new way rising up within the lives of his followers as God's embodied love and compassion on the march. The one flame became a roaring fire spreading throughout Jewish-Palestine and into the wider world.

OK, so this is the historical and social phenomenon of what happened as those first believers experienced it and spoke about it. What is it that happened to Jesus specifically to bring this about? What happened in the minds and hearts of early believers that they encountered Jesus in this whole new way? And what may we be called to believe about Jesus so that we may become inflamed like those early believers and spread the flame of God's love in Jesus like them?

Jesus the Divine Human

Even as Jesus was fully a flesh and blood human being like everyone else, after his followers encountered him rise up beyond a terrible death, they also experienced him rise up as a new energy among them and within them which they named: Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that was also God and in Abba God. While Holy Spirit was the movement of Jesus' Spirit among believers inspiring and empowering them to become his hands, feet, voice and heart with each other in community and in the world, Jesus himself was also believed to have inaugurated his and God's kingdom reign by ascending into heaven and ruling alongside Abba God. The phrase: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" of our Lord's prayer is a call for the divine kingdom to come on earth in fullness to overwhelm all the evil and injustice in the current world order as we know it. In the meantime, Jesus has begun his kingdom reign in heaven and within the hearts and lives of all those who open their hearts to him in community and through the outreach of love in the world.

OK, but how more specifically do we think of Jesus as both divine and human? The divine part of Jesus is the ruling part, the power of love to raise up new life in a world of death,

compassion in the face of neglect, justice in the face of injustice and so forth. Jesus is the power of God moving as energy within and among us and in the world. But how this energy works and how it saves is very much tied to Jesus the human being. In our biblical and Christian narrative, Jesus as God's love must be fully human, for only a fully human saviour can be with us and among us so that all that makes us human is "redeemed" (liberated) and "saved" (healing toward resurrection wholeness).

The vulnerability in being human is not just weakness. Vulnerability opens us up to powerful compassion in a special way. It takes a special kind of love to embrace us in all our vulnerability and all our imperfection. It's easy to love good, gracious and kind people. What happens when we lose our way and lose our inner loveliness? How can we be saved unless a force of love can meet us in our lovelessness and walk us to a place of loveliness again? Who can truly forgive us for the wrongs and hurts we commit unless they stand among the victims of those wrongs and hurts and speak into us a forgiveness we cannot speak to ourselves? Who has earned the right to call us to repent and walk toward healing and hope for reconciliation with those wronged unless they have suffered wrong also along with victims everywhere? How can Jesus be that one unless he is fully human in solidarity with all suffering humanity?

The next part of our series on Jesus Christ is all about Jesus as Saviour, but at this point we need to understand that the dual confession of Jesus as divine and human arises out of the experience not only of the divine light in Jesus as the risen one people experienced through the Spirit moving in their hearts. It also arises because of how salvation (healing toward wholeness) is understood in a distinctly biblical and Christian way. Jesus is fully human. But Jesus is also the embodied love of God. On the cross Jesus' humanity shines bright as one crucified in solidarity with all human victims of injustice and evil everywhere. But on the cross Jesus' divinity also shines bright as the power of love to fully enter the deepest darkness of our world and raise up new life beyond it. What do you think?

Responses and questions welcome.

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