

6. THE DIVINE SON: EXPLORING MESSIAH'S DEITY IN HEBREWS 1 (The Son Died)

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After he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high ... (NRSV) (Heb. 1: 3).

Professor William Barclay makes the glowing claim that this long introductory sentence of the first four verses to the Letter to the Hebrews is the most grandiloquent Greek of the entire NT;

This is the most sonorous piece of Greek in the whole New Testament. It is a passage that any classical Greek orator would have been proud to write. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews has brought to it every artifice of word and rhythm that the beautiful and flexible Greek language could provide. (¹)

Such glowing praise makes one daunted to do justice to this most exquisite sentence! So, let us gird up the loins of our mind (KJV English) or in modern speak, put our thinking caps on as we continue to unlock its inexhaustible treasures.

The majority of commentators, including our representative trinitarian David Wilber, believe they find rich nuggets of gold for Christ's Deity here. However, contra Wilber, I do not see any evidence in this long opening sentence to the book of Hebrews for a Son who is himself 'the God' of the Bible. This is especially so as we continue with the next phrase in the sentence ... After he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high ... (NRSV) (Heb. 1: 3).

This verse presents a number of serious difficulties for David Wilber and trinitarian commentators. How so? After all, they do believe most sincerely that Christ died for our sins, knowing that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9: 22). But in my discussions with them it becomes obvious they do not realise why the death of "God the Son" to make purification for sins is problematic for their 'Deity of Christ' scheme. Let me explain.

ONLY CHRIST'S 'HUMAN NATURE' DIED?!

Although Wilber passes quickly over the death of Christ in his article, other trinitarians are not so hasty. For example, well-known Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul asserts that the Second Person of the Trinity was spared real death, and that we should shrink in horror from the idea that the divine entity died on the cross. (²) What?

¹ The Letter to the Hebrews: The Daily Study Bible, The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, Sixth Impression, 1966, p

² Sproul, R.C., Did God Die On The Cross? Ligonier Ministries, 14 April 2014. Web. 27 October 2014. (Sproul's emphasis is original.) I acknowledge this and the following quotes are sourced from Kegan Chandler's The God of Jesus In Light of Christian Dogma, pp97

Read that quote again: The Son **was spared real death**: Shock! Horror! Nor is this an aberration. How about this from another evangelical voice: **Death is something that is experienced only by the human nature ... The Son, the second Person of the Trinity, left the body He temporarily inhabited on earth, but his divine nature did not die, nor could it.** (³) Whew. Shock. Horror again!

And one more for good measure: **On the cross the divine spiritual nature left the body it had possessed.** (⁴) **Kagan Chandler** summarises what's going on here perfectly by quoting **Bart Ehrman**; **Trinitarians have taken expressly to the Gnostic view, for according to both the Cerinthian and Valentinian Gnostics: Before Jesus died (since the divine cannot die), the Christ left him.** (⁵)

So, trinitarian dogma asserts the Divine Son of God **was spared real death** because he only **temporarily inhabited** a human body whilst he was here on earth!!! **His divine spiritual nature left the body it had possessed!!!** **WHAT???**

After reading these “orthodox” statements about the (non) death of Christ, trinitarians have no grounds whatsoever to criticise the **Jehovah's Witnesses** for teaching that just before Jesus died the angel-spirit Michael returned to his heavenly abode leaving Jesus the Nazarene to suffer and die abandoned and all alone. Both trinitarians and Jehovah's Witnesses appeal to Jesus' cry of anguish, **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?”** as proof that his divine self — essence — did not really die (**Matt. 27:43**).

THE SON DIED.

Observe then, that the alleged “two natures” of Jesus Christ — his putative divine and human ‘hypostatic union’ — lead our “orthodox” friends to a denial of the death of the Son of God. We ask them then, Who died on the cross? Was it a real person, Jesus of Nazareth, a real human being, or was it just impersonal “human nature”? And if it was only “the human nature” that died (if that is at all possible) what becomes of our redemption?

Trinitarian doctrine which says “only the human nature of Jesus died”, because his God-nature could not die, directly cancels the Bible's clear and simple statement that it was **the Son who died** (**Rom.5: 10; 8:32**)!

Trinitarian doctrine which says Christ “descended into hell” to preach in his Spirit-consciousness — before he was reunited with his physical body to emerge from the grave three days later — directly abolishes Jesus' unambiguous testimony, **“I was dead”**, — NOT “my human nature was dead”, NOT just “my body was in Sheol” — but **Me, Myself, “I was dead”** (**Rev. 1:18**)!

So, there is no get-out clause for the “two natured” proponents who say, “Ah, but it was only the human nature of the Son which died”.

³ *Did God Die? Got Questions Ministries*. Web. 16 December, 2014.

⁴ **Frederic Dan Huntingdon** (ed.), *The Monthly Religious Magazine*, Vol. 15 (Boston: Leonard C. Bowles, 1856). p198.

⁵ **Ehrman, Bart**, *Lost Christianities*, p15.

Do we read anywhere in all of Scripture that only “the human nature” of the Son died? My Bible says we **have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son (Rom. 5: 10). God’s Son died.**

The way trinitarians so effortlessly switch back and forth between the Divine nature of Jesus and his human nature (which can be tempted but can’t be really tempted; which can know but doesn’t really know; which is all-powerful but is really weak and hungry and exhausted unto sleep; which can die but really doesn’t die, etc.) is positive proof that Jesus cannot be both God and man *simultaneously!*

To say the Son died but did not really die would be like the witness in the courtroom who says he did not see the crime because he is blind — when all along he saw with one eye but not the other!

IT’S A MYSTERY!

The trinitarian “God the Son” is really two incompatible opposites. He is both mortal and immortal. If you can swallow that you can swallow any deadly poison! You can create your own make-belief! As **Eric H.H. Chang** observes, **The notion of the “hypostatic union” of the two natures, divine and human, is not only unbiblical but also unintelligible. But nonsense by definition, also defies comprehension, for anything that makes sense can be comprehended.**

But this is not something that would seriously trouble trinitarians because they would usually shunt the issue into the realm of “mystery” despite the fact that unintelligibility is not an aspect of the NT meaning of ‘mystery’. [The Bible] uses “mystery” to speak of things hidden in the past but now revealed by God ...

Chang anticipates the usual objection: **Some will say that everything is possible with God, and that we are using words here with their human meanings. This is true. Everything is possible with God. We believe that. If you tell me God did such and such and He is such and such I cannot say it is impossible.**

But what if you say “God did and did not,” or “He is and He is not?” Your statements are meaningless. When you say that Jesus is perfect God and perfect man at the same time you are saying two opposite things. Therefore, I reply, “Impossible!” (⁶)

My trinitarian friends try to tell me that because “a mere man could not die for the sins of the whole world” that I have no salvation. They tell me only a God-man was sufficient to save all mankind. But I wonder whether they realise that by denying the death of the alleged “God nature” of Jesus, that they are the ones who actually cancel out the basis for their own salvation — the atoning death of the Son?!?

Trinitarian doctrine cancels out Biblical soteriology, for *if the Son of God did not die then we are still in their sins.*

⁶ **Eric H. H. Chang**, *The Only Perfect Man: The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*. 2014, p276, p466.

The death of God's Son proves Jesus cannot be "fully God", cannot be **Wilber's preincarnate Son**, and cannot share the essential immortal nature of God. The God of the Bible is described as ... **eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God ...** and that **God alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen ...** (1 Timothy 1: 17; 6:16).

By definition and by Scriptural revelation **the only God** cannot die. And just by the way, did you notice here the juxtaposition of immortality with invisibility? Jesus the Son was mortal and visible therefore, cannot be **the only God** Who is by definition both **immortal and invisible** *at the same time!* **Both** immortality and invisibility *together* are essential qualities of the One Who is **the only God**. And that is a mystery I do believe because the Bible says so! What God has joined together, man must not separate.

Notice carefully what words **Wilber** uses here ... **The preincarnate Son who created the world "for a little while was made lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9) when he took on human flesh and suffered.**

Once again we come across words added to the Scriptural testimony in order to prop up a man-made theory. Can you find anywhere in the Bible where it says "God took on flesh, God took on human nature"? It makes the pre-incarnate Son sound just like he put on a suit of clothes. It sounds like the Gnostic heresy the apostles warned against, does it not? For, to deny that Jesus the Messiah was a real human being who died is to totally depersonalise the Son of God.

BUT ...!?

It will be rejoindered; *but* **John 1: 14** says, **And the word became flesh!** Now observe: It does NOT say "the Son *took on flesh*." In the OT "the word of God" is never a Second Person but, in its approximately 1,450 occurrences, is always Yahweh's spoken word, His command, His decree, His fiat, His wisdom expressed with effective creative power: **By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host ... He spoke, and it was [done] (Ps. 33: 6).**

Again, **John 1: 14** does NOT even say, "the word *took on flesh*." Read it carefully, for it declares **the word became flesh**. This is a beautiful declaration that all of God's prophecies and promises to bring His Messianic Son into being **in these last days** have finally been realised in the human being named Jesus. God's word has come to pass!

By insisting the word was **the preincarnate Son who created the world** (instead of it being God's purpose which brought the world and its aeons into existence by His spoken command) do trinitarians realise they have forever transmuted the **immortal and invisible** God into a transhuman hybrid who is neither the one God nor a real man?

By imagining a Jesus of two-natures are trinitarians aware they are really saying that Jesus "the God-man" is "the **God-creature**"?! There is strong condemnation for any who

wish to **exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for an image of corruptible man (Rom. 1: 23)!**

As we pointed out in the last article, trinitarian doctrine has created a contradiction between its two core doctrines, **1) That God is three persons in one unchanging substance or essence and ... 2) That God the Son became a second essence or nature ... “flesh”.** God cannot have one unchanging nature and yet two different natures *at the same time!?!*

That’s not a mystery, it’s as plain a contradiction as it would be to say that a man is a married bachelor, or that a triangle is a square at the same time. No. Let’s stop such nonsense, let’s repent of our idolatrous God-man image and let’s stick with the clear testimony of our holy Scriptures and affirm that the Son of God died ... **After he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

WILL THE REAL HERETICS PLEASE STAND UP?

At the Catholic **Council of Ephesus** in 431 AD the idea that the human and divine natures of Jesus could be separated was pronounced as heretical. This was called **The Nestorian Controversy**; Nestorius was anathematised because he was uncomfortable calling Mary “the Mother of God” and instead called her the “Mother of Christ” only, meaning she was the mother of the human nature only, not of the God nature. But the orthodox party argued that since the two natures of Christ were necessarily united, Mary was the mother of both natures as both natures simultaneously experienced the birth. The later **Council of Chalcedon** in 451 CE solidified for orthodoxy the notion that “the one person Jesus Christ [has] two natures ... and that these two natures are organically and indissolubly united.” ^(7)

Chandler draws the inevitable conclusion: **What orthodox Trinitarianism actually professes here is that the human and divine natures are united in such a way that one side cannot undergo an experience while the other side is completely segregated and unaffected; this would, as the synods agreed, create two different persons within Christ. Therefore, the *one person* of Jesus cannot have a God in only one nature but not in the other ... ^(8)** Today’s trinitarians are thus condemned by their own synodial predecessors!

THE PIONEER OF OUR SALVATION

What a thrilling story. Our sins have been purified and we stand cleansed in God’s sight through the death of a perfect and sinless human Messiah: **The lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world!** The proof of our justification is that there is now a glorified and immortalised man **at the right hand of the Majesty on high.** God even calls him His **right hand man (Ps. 79: 17).**

⁷ **Augustus H. Strong**, *Systematic Theology*, Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1985, p673 (As cited by **Chandler**, p318).

⁸ Ibid. p318

Jesus himself says, "I overcame and sat down with my Father **next to (ie., beside) His throne**" (Rev. 3: 21)! Jesus has been exalted to a place no man has ever been before.⁽⁹⁾ He sits now at God's right hand and exercises all the executive power of the one God whom he still calls **my God and Father**.

Scripture also calls Jesus **the pioneer (archēgos) of our salvation** (Heb. 2: 10). As **the firstborn from the dead, Jesus is the first man ever to receive immortality as a gift from God — the first man ever to receive the reward of eternal salvation!** Jesus Christ is **the firstborn among many brothers** and **the firstborn from among the dead** (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18). He is **the first fruits** and after that those who are Christ's at his coming (I Cor. 15: 23).

The world doesn't know it yet. Satan does. The demons do. Certainly the angels in heaven do. Jesus himself knows it, of course. And the Church is to base her testimony on this fact. Indeed this very book of Hebrews informs us that the Son of God, **having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet** (Heb. 10: 12-13).

Christ's sinless and selfless death, burial and resurrection was a pioneer's work *for himself* and for all God's people to follow in his faith. In Australia we would say, 'you could bet the farm' on the fact you never heard this in Church!

THE SON'S REWARD

The Bible says that the human Jesus has been eternally rewarded for his loyalty and faith to God his Father. After skipping over the wonderful announcement that **the Son made purification for our sins**, Wilber writes that **the incarnate Son rose from the dead and ascended to God's throne, thus becoming superior to the angels in status**.

Note! Wilber assures us that **the incarnate Son** ascended back to his original abode in heaven ... presumably having put his human nature which left him at crucifixion back on!? For trinitarians this means that the Son is forever different to what he eternally was, for he has two natures forevermore? As the glorified **incarnate Son**, this logically means the one essential substance of "the Triune God" has forever been changed into two natures!

Wilber wants us to believe that the reason the Son became superior to the angels is because he suffered while walking as man here on this earth. The NT has a far simpler and much more convincing explanation. For the first time a fully obedient man has achieved what no other human being since Adam has ever achieved: Perfect righteousness before God. As the first New Man, Jesus is what God originally created man to be ... God's immortalised human overlord of all creation.

⁹ Contrary to popular misunderstanding **Enoch** and **Elijah** did not precede Jesus into heaven. Both died and still await their resurrection. For a detailed explanation see pp 304 (Second Edition) of my book, *They Never Told Me This in Church!*

As **Hebrews** says, God has not given such honour to any of His mighty heavenly angels. He has given it as the reward for the Son's **obedience to death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2: 8)**. **After he had made purification for [our] sins the Son sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high and that he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 1: 3; 8:1; 12:2)**.

Hebrews 1: 3 shows how the Son has fulfilled what the prophets predicted of David's human descendant whom David calls "**lord**" in the defining Christological Psalm; **The LORD (Adonai)** says to **my lord (Adoni)**, '**Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool (Ps. 110: 1)**.

Look up! Can you see God's highly exalted right hand man? If by faith you see him there, rejoice greatly for you are **seated with him in the heavenlies** and you share in God's promise that you too will inherit the coming Glory in union with Jesus the Christ.

Oh, glory, glory, glory!

(Stay tuned for the next and final in our little series, **The Divine Son: Exploring Messiah's Deity in Hebrews 1 (The Son is Worshipped)**).