

## The Offense Of The Incarnation

If we wish to avoid offense and still retain a belief in God, the easiest thing to do, and this is in fact what has been done widely in the church for centuries, is to affirm His divine nature loudly and forget his human nature. When we do this, however, the entire wonderful mystery of “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1: 14) is forgotten.

Believers will easily accept His divinity and even fight vigorously to defend it. But if you try to “flesh out” a true understanding of Christ’s humanity, a humanity that was just like our own, the sparks begin to fly. This is because the humanity of Jesus offends people. And it offends precisely because of his divinity. The idea of a man who claims to be God is offensive. He is then no longer remote. He is no longer apart from us. He is no longer far away. He is not avoidable. This offended religious people in Jesus’ day. It still offends religious people. They cannot keep him at bay. It should not be offensive, however, to anyone who really wants to know Jesus and walk with him as a way of life. To that person his humanity is good news indeed.

It is good news because he has walked in our shoes. He has felt our limitations, lived with them, felt the helplessness, the helplessness that we feel when a beloved relative or friend dies, like Lazarus. If not for the shortest verse in the New Testament, we might be tempted to think that Jesus was clinically detached from Lazarus’ death because he intentionally let him die so that he could raise him back to mortal life. But, “Jesus wept.” (John 11:35) How many times have we been told that he was weeping because of the unbelief of Mary and Martha and the other Jews. Or that he was weeping because he knew that this miracle would target him for eventual crucifixion by the leaders of the Jews. But what is wrong with the most obvious meaning? Does God indeed give us the scriptures to confuse us? Or are they a revelation? Jesus wept because his good friend went through the pain and suffering of being sick and dying. And Jesus was helpless to stop it because the Holy Spirit hindered him from doing anything. Now, he would raise Lazarus but Lazarus would have to die yet again to wait the final resurrection into a glorious body.

Jesus identified with us so that we could identify with him. So that he could represent us before the Father as a faithful high priest. So that we could have what he has. The man Jesus is an eternal part of the life of Almighty God. And he is our big brother. We are related by blood, natural and redeeming blood.

## Jesus Was Like You And Me

The one thing that is hardest to hold in our minds is the fact that Jesus was, always was, and is really God, and also that he became a man. He was no less God for becoming a man and he was no less or more of a man because he was God. When he was on earth for those 33 years, he was both the revelation of God and the concealment of God. He was the revelation of God because He still had the character of God. No one else had that. He was the concealment of God because he left his power behind voluntarily. Because he left his power behind, his glory was concealed. His glory could be seen in his character but not in his power. So his glory was at the same time both revealed and concealed. In other words, people of a childlike faith could see his glory in his character, in his love and understanding and lowliness; "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls." (Mt. 11:29) But no one could see his glory in his power because he left it in heaven.

Sure, he did miracles among them, or rather, God the Father did as Peter said, but these were done by the Holy Spirit which came upon him as a man at his baptism. We can do similar things by the power of the Holy Spirit just as he did. So you cannot say that Jesus was half God and half man because he was all God and all man; only he emptied himself of his power and the glory associated with his power before he came. Only once did the Father allow men to see a glimpse of this power and glory and that was when he was transfigured before Peter and James and John (Mt.17:2). When he was restored to his glory after the ascension, he was restored to all that he had as God before he emptied himself, plus his manhood was also glorified as the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:28). Now we can look forward to sharing this glory with him in the resurrection.

However, when it comes to the true humanity of Jesus, that is often another story. This is not well believed and it is to our detriment. If we do not see the true humanity of Jesus, we do not understand our relationship to Him. As a matter of fact, once we have accepted God as our heavenly Father, as Jesus teaches us to do in the gospels, we have more need of a human Jesus than a divine one. We have a loving Father who is God Almighty and not a man. We need a brother who is not only God but fully human. We can identify with a big brother who knows what it is like to walk in our shoes. The only way to get into trouble here is to say that Jesus sinned because He did not. In every other way He was as human as we are. His

mother Mary was no different than any other wholesome teen-age virgin. Jesus gets his humanity honestly from her.

It says in Philippians 2:7 NASB that Jesus “emptied himself” when he became a human being. He grew for nine months in Mary’s womb and was born into our world. An understanding of this “emptying” is the only sensible way to understand how Jesus was truly a man with the limitations of a man while He lived and ministered for over 33 years among us. Once we understand this, the actions of Jesus in the gospels will make sense to us more than they ever have before. We will then be able to see Him as a man of faith operating by the power of the Holy Spirit just as He expects us to do. We will no longer say when we sense that a certain thing is expected of us, “Well, that was Jesus!” But before launching into this you need to be ready to be stretched a little. You need to be willing to re-think some things that you may have always believed. It may seem threatening or even disrespectful at first until you begin to understand and “balance up” again.

### The Three Omnies

In order to become one of us Jesus gave up three of the most important characteristics of God. I call these The Three Omnies; Omni-presence, Omni-potence, and Omni-science. When these words are divided in this way, it is easier to understand them. The prefix “Omni” simply means “All” or “Completely”. God is All-present, or everywhere at the same time. In order for Jesus to become one of us he had to give this up for 33 years to live in time and space with human beings. This is obvious because he took a localized body like every human being has. He could only be in the place where that body was located. He got this body from his mother Mary. It was a body like her body, a human body. When Jesus gave up one Omni, he also had to give up the other two. Omni-potence means to be all powerful. Jesus gave up his all powerful ability to become a man. His heavenly Father retained his power and the Holy Spirit kept his also, but Jesus gave his up for those 33 years. Omni-science means to know all things. Jesus also gave this up to become a man and the gospels are full of examples of things that he did not know. For instance, the time of his return (Matt. 24:36), who touched him when he was in the crowd (Luke 8:45), and the location of Lazarus’ body (John 11:34).

Jesus left the three Omnies behind for 33 years. He had them again after his death on the cross and the resurrection. We will get to that also. Another important thing that Jesus left behind in order to become a man was his glory. One way we know this is because he talked to the Father about when he would get his glory back (Jn.17:5). Another obvious way that we know he left his glory behind is in the

gospel record. Jesus appeared very much like other men. When the soldiers went to arrest him, they waited for Judas to identify him (Mt.26:48). There was no halo around his head like we see in the old paintings. At the transfiguration (Mt. 17) his glory was seen by a special act of the Father and the Holy Spirit by the three: Peter, James and John. But this was a one time happening. Jesus left his glory behind to become a man. This, like the three Omnies, was not a hiding or a veiling but an actual leaving behind. Consider, if Jesus had not left his glory behind, it would not have been possible for people to even look at him for the brightness of his glory. All would have know immediately that he was God. Faith would not have been necessary. It would have been like the children of Israel in the wilderness when they asked not to be exposed to God but rather that Moses should speak to God for them (Heb.12:19-20). Jesus left his glory behind to become a man. But he got it back at his resurrection. And believers get everything back that Adam lost and much much more. Eternal life on a new heaven and a new earth in a resurrected body that cannot die.

Some may ask, “How is this possible? What you are and what you have are yours, unless you become disabled in some way.” Jesus did not become disabled in the sense of getting sick or old or infirm. God the Son in agreement with the Father and the Holy Spirit has the ability to give up anything he wants by a simple act of his will. This is not a pretend giving up but a real parting with these abilities. Exactly because he is God, he can do things that we cannot do. Why did he do this? His reason for doing this, giving all this up for a time, is his great love for his people. It is not because he failed or became weak but because he loves us so much. “But,” someone might also ask, “what about the things Jesus did and knew that were supernatural? After all, he was able to do and to know things that must have needed the very powers that you are saying that he left behind in order to become a man.” Those things which Jesus did which were obviously supernatural, he did by the power of the Holy Spirit. These days we call such things the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit which are given to the body of Christ on earth, the believers. Jesus did these wonderful things as a man by the power of the Holy Spirit just as he expects us to do them today.