

The Offense Of The Incarnation

Long ago in a very important meeting of church leaders it was proclaimed that in Jesus Christ there is a union of two distinct and separate natures united in one Person forever. These two natures are his divine nature, He is God, and his human nature, He is also a man, a human being. A wise man has said that the idea of a God has never offended anyone. All societies recognize some sort of a God, be it a good god or a bad god. What is offensive to the human mind is the idea of a man who claims to be God. Jesus is exactly that. And this Person with two natures that is Jesus is at the same time difficult to understand and the most wonderful truth that there is to know. As Christians we are not excused from considering who He is. In this lies all of our salvation.

Now, 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. Then He is 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 can not 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.” 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 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.

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