

“Jesus Christ: Entire Man”

John 9:10-41

Purpose:

Your students will come to love their Savior more as they understand better the importance of the truth to their lives, that He was as human as we ourselves are.

In a Nutshell:

John 9 gives the account of an argument that does not end amicably. On the one hand, the man born blind took the position that Jesus was from God because Jesus had healed his eyes (vv. 17, 30-34). On the other, the Pharisees argued that Jesus was a sinner because He had done this miracle on the Sabbath Day (vv. 16, 22-29). In the end, the Pharisees expelled from their synagogue the man who could now see, which led to his personal faith in Christ as the Son of God (vv. 34-38). They did so because they were the ones who were truly blind (vv. 39-41).

That heated argument notwithstanding, there was a truth about Jesus that both sides agreed on, taking it for granted as patently obvious. The blind man (vv. 11, 31, 32, 33) and the Pharisee (v. 16) both understood that Jesus was a man. John’s account calls Jesus a man, just like it calls the blind man a man (vv. 1, 2, 3, 6, 17, 22, 24, 30). In fact, Jesus agreed that He was a man (v. 4). Passages like these throughout the Gospels demonstrate the truth that Jesus “was no more or less human than the rest of humanity” [McCune, p. 135].

Though obvious to His contemporaries, the full humanity of Jesus Christ came under attack shortly after His ascension to heaven. The first denial of biblical Christology was not unbelief that He is fully God, but rather that He was fully man. That heresy was called *Docetism*, a label from a Greek word meaning *to seem* or *to appear to be*, and it taught that Jesus just seemed to be a man to others, but really He was not. John dealt with this false teaching forcibly (2 John 7-11).

Three topics are especially important to an orthodox understanding of the human nature of Jesus Christ: (1) His theanthropic personhood as God incarnate, (2) His sinless obedience as our Redeemer, and (3) His sympathetic intercession as our Mediator.

To the Testimony!

The Theanthropic Personhood of Jesus Christ as God Incarnate

John 1:14	1. Remember that one of the important doctrines related to the deity of Christ is His eternal pre-existence [Lesson 6; question 4]. John’s name for the pre-existent
1 John 1:1-4	Son of God is “The Word,” or in Greek, “The Logos” (John 1:1). The Word was in the beginning with God, and was God, but He also became flesh or human (v. 14), what we call <i>incarnation</i> . What are some results John mentions of this incarnation of the Word?

Answer: The results of the incarnation of Christ are that (1) the Son of God dwelt [*tabernacled*;

see note below] among us; that (2) we beheld the glory of the unique Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14); that (3) the apostles saw the eternal life of the Son of God lived out in His bodily human life (1 John 1:1-2); and that (4) the apostles wrote about what they saw in this regard so that we could have fellowship with the Father and the Son and so that our joy may be full (1 John 1:3-4).

Application: Our study of the human nature of the incarnate God should result in our ability to see better the glory of the pre-existent Son of God, to have fellowship with Him and the Father, and to experience the joy only that revelation can bring. The word *dwelt* in John 1:14 is actually a verb meaning *to tabernacle*. John uses it in reference to the special nearness of the shekinah glory experienced by Israel through the ministry of the tabernacle in the Old Testament (Exod. 29:42-46). It was at the tabernacle that God met with His people, spoke to them, sanctified them, dwelt among them, and helped them to know that He is their Redeemer. This verb, *to tabernacle*, appears also four times in Revelation, twice of God's eternal dwelling with His people (7:15, 21:3). Studying the human life and nature of Jesus does for us what the tabernacle was designed to do for Israel, behold the shekinah glory, and it shall continue to do so throughout all eternity.

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1 Cor. 15:21, 15:45 2. As God incarnate Jesus Christ corresponds to the first Adam in terms of His human nature. Jesus is the second Adam, and *Adam* means *man*. He is a man in the same sense that the first Adam is a man. And yet He is also God. Examine the passages below for evidence that Jesus was both man and God.

Passage:	Evidence of Unlimited Deity	Evidence of Limited Humanity
Acts 20:28	He is God.	He shed blood.
1 Cor. 2:8	He is the Lord of Glory.	He was crucified.
Matt. 8:24-26	He calmed the storm.	He fell asleep in the boat.
Mark 11:1-6	He knew where and how to get a colt.	He needed a colt to ride.
Mark 11:12-13	He ruined a fig tree with a curse.	He was hungry for some figs.
John 4:6-7, 13-18	He knew the Samaritan woman's past and offered her eternal life.	He needed the woman to get Him some water because He was thirsty.
John 11:38, 43	He raised Lazarus from the dead.	He asked that the stone be moved out of the way.

Application: Jesus lived His life as a single person with two natures. He was all that God is and all that man is, and yet was still just one person, not two. This truth is called the doctrine of the theanthropic personhood of Jesus Christ [*the* (Gr: *theos* = *God*) + *anthropic* (Gr: *anthropos* = *man*)]. Trying to explain how that worked is tantamount to trying to explain how a great miracle works. We cannot do that. Theologians have speculated about whether Jesus had one or two wills and one or two levels of consciousness. Those speculations endeavor to explain the inexplicable. Still, some important truths about the theanthropic person of Jesus Christ are clear and must be kept in mind.

1. The Son of God was eternally a person before He was incarnate. He is the second person of the Trinity, and so the God-man Jesus never ceased being that person. That person took on human nature, body and spirit, but not a new personhood. The theanthropic person, Jesus Christ, is indivisible. He is one person, not two.
2. Jesus's deity was not lessened by His humanity, nor was His humanity made superhuman by His deity. The natures of the theanthropic person were His without confusion or combination, so that in His deity He remained all that God is, and in His humanity, He became all that man is.
3. When the Son of God became Jesus, that incarnation enabled Him to choose to do things that God cannot do, such as mature (Luke 2:40, 52), experience ignorance (Mark 13:32), experience surprise (Matt. 8:10), learn by investigation (Mark 11:13), change His mind (John 7:8-10), experience weariness, hunger, and thirst (John 4:6-7, Matt. 4:2), suffer (Luke 22:44), sleep (Matt. 8:24-26), and die (John 19:30, 34).
4. Jesus is still everything that other humans are, and He shall be for eternity (Heb. 7:24-25).

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Interesting Insight!

The Definition of Chalcedon – A. D. 451

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but

one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

Application: History gives us great creeds of the Christian faith, for which we should be thankful. It also gives us warning in the example of some whose interpretations were not according to Scripture. Here are some examples of historical heresy when it comes to the doctrine of the theanthropic person of the Son of God incarnate: (1) Docetism denied the true humanity of Christ; (2) Modalism denied the triune personhood of the Godhead; (3) Arianism denied the deity of the pre-existent Son of God; (4) Apollinarianism denied that Jesus had a human spirit; (5) Nestorians denied that Jesus was one person, asserting that He was two; (6) Eutychians denied that Jesus had two natures, confusing them together instead (along these lines, Lutherans still today teach that Jesus’s deity divinized His humanity after His resurrection, making His body omnipresent wherever the Lord’s Table is celebrated); and (7) Adoptionists denied the incarnation of the virgin birth, asserting that Jesus the man became united with the Son of God at His baptism.

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The Sinless Obedience of Jesus Christ as Our Redeemer

Gal. 4:1-5 3. The apostle Paul affirms both the pre-existence and the humanity of Jesus when he writes that He was made of a woman (Gal. 4:4). How else does Paul describe the “making” of the God-man (v. 4), and why was that aspect of His becoming a man important to His work of redemption (v. 5; 2 Cor. 5:21)?

Answer: In addition to being made of a woman, the virgin-born God-man was made under God’s law. Part of becoming man for Christ involved becoming subject to God’s law. He did this to redeem sinners who were under the condemnation of God’s law. Paul would explain elsewhere that the God-man “became obedient unto death” as God’s servant (Phil. 2:7-8). An important part of His being perfected as the author of eternal salvation was learning obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb. 5:8-9). Simply put, obeying God’s law for man can only be done by a perfect man. Jesus was that sinless and perfect man who took our sin upon Himself. He died for us because He did not have to die for Himself (2 Cor. 5:21).

Application: When we think of our salvation, we often think primarily about the fact that we have been saved from the penalty of sin. That is called the *passive obedience* of Christ – He certainly bore the penalty of our sins on the cross in obedience to the will of His Father who loved us. But that wondrous blessing is only half of the picture of redemption. We are also saved from the sinfulness of sin, from its presence and influence in our lives. This is what Paul meant when he said that Jesus was made under the law in order to redeem us. He obeyed God’s law. That is His *active obedience* in our redemption. So the exchange made in the

atonement work of Christ for us is not only His life for our death, but also His righteousness for our sinfulness. Our old man – the slave of sin – died with Him on the cross so that from now on we should no longer be slaves who serve sin (Rom. 6:6). Has that salvation been your salvation experience? It is the only one offered by the Redeemer.

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Matt. 4:1-11 4. Obedience to God's law required the God-man to resist temptation to sin. The Gospels share with us an episode that illustrates the kind of temptation Jesus must have endured throughout much of His life (Matt. 4:1-11). Temptation often stops when we succumb to it, so as the Holy One who never did succumb, our Lord must have faced more severe temptation than we can imagine. And yet, His experience is similar to ours when we are tempted, with an important difference (Heb. 4:15). State that difference, and explain how it made Jesus's temptations different from our own. Then describe how our temptations are similar to those of the Lord according to 1 Cor. 10:13.

Answer: The difference is explained by the phrase *yet without sin*. That phrase means at least two things. First, it means that unlike us (Jam. 3:2), Jesus never yielded to a temptation to sin. Not a single deed done, not a single word uttered, not a single desire felt ever violated God's law, in spite of the enemy's relentless attacks upon Him. Second, it means that Jesus never had to contend with a sinful human flesh when facing temptation the way we have to. For Him, temptation was a battle altogether external. For us, our temptations often rise from within. In this way, Jesus's temptation experiences were more like those faced by Adam prior to the Fall of man than they are like ours faced afterwards.

A third difference is sometimes cited called the *impeccability* of the God-man. This doctrine teaches that because God cannot sin, and because Jesus is God, it was therefore impossible for Jesus, the God-man to sin. Certainly, there is also a sense in which God cannot be tempted (James 1:13-15), but also a sense in which He can be (Matt. 4:7). Here we see in the experience of the Godhead the internal-temptation vs. external-temptation distinction. God can be tempted externally (Matt. 4:7), but not drawn away by His own lusts internally (James 1:13-15).

Certainly, becoming man enabled the God-man to do and experience things God cannot do, like suffer and obey His law for man. Did becoming man enable the God-man to also have the potential not to obey that law? Could He as God be sinless while having the potential to commit sin as man, just like He could as God be omniscient, while as man not know something? I do not know, but however our speculations may answer these questions, we must remember two important truths in this regard: (1) Jesus's temptations did not cause Him to sin; and (2) Jesus's temptations were truly human so that He understands perfectly well what our temptations are like. Good men have disagreed about the impeccability of Jesus Christ.

Application: Jesus's temptations were those that are common to all mankind. What we

sometimes miss, however, is that every such temptation includes a way of escape that a man might be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13). Jesus never fell to temptation because He employed the way of escape that is available to us all. He used God's Word and the power of God's Spirit (Matt. 4:1-11). None of us need be the God-man in order to have victory over the temptation to sin that He had. We have no excuse, because we too have the Word and the Spirit.

Notes: Examples of orthodox theologians that doubt the impeccability of Christ include Charles Hodge and Millard Erickson. Examples of those that affirm the doctrine include Roland McCune and John Walvoord. See McCune's treatment (2:149-153).

The Sympathetic Intercession of Jesus Christ as Our Mediator

Heb. 2:17 5. The Bible tells us that having become a man, God-incarnate is our Brother (Heb. 2:17). Having been tempted and having suffered, He understands perfectly well how to minister to our need for help with His mercy and grace (4:15-16).
4:15-16
7:24-25 We can cast our burden upon Him, because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). As wonderful as it is that we can pray to Him, how much more wonderful is it that He makes intercession for us (John 17:1-26; Heb. 7:24-25). How many mediators like this does a believer have between himself and his God? (1 Tim. 2:5).
1 Pet. 5:7
John 17:1-26

Answer: There is one and one only Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. As the God-man, He represents God before men and men before God. He alone meets the qualifications to provide comfort and provision for the needs of His people.

Application: Will we visit the throne of grace and find mercy and grace there today? Shall we cast our care upon Him truly knowing that He cares for us? These sympathetic intercessions from our great Mediator are available to us each and every day.

Interesting Insight!

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:410-411:

"After the middle of the fourth century [the Catholic church] overstepped the wholesome Biblical limit, and transformed the 'mother of the Lord' [Luke 1:43] into a mother of God, the humble 'handmaid of the Lord' [1:38] into a queen of heaven, the 'highly favored' [1:28] into a dispenser of favors, the 'blessed among women' [1:28] into an intercessor above all women, nay we may almost say, the redeemed daughter of fallen Adam, who is nowhere in Holy Scripture excepted from the universal sinfulness, into a sinlessly holy co-redeemer. . . .

"The Romish devotions scarcely utter a *Pater Noster* without an *Ave Maria*, and turn even more frequently and naturally to the compassionate, tender-hearted mother for her intercessions, than to the eternal Son of God, thinking that in this indirect way the desired gift is more sure to be obtained. . . . It is one of the strongest expressions of the fundamental Romish error of unduly exalting the human factors or instruments of redemption, and obstructing, or rendering needless, the immediate access of believers to Christ, by thrusting in subordinate mediators. Nor can we but agree with nearly all unbiased historians in regarding the worship of Mary as an echo of ancient heathenism. It brings plainly to mind the worship of Ceres, of Isis, and of other ancient mothers of the gods; as the worship of saints and angels recalls the hero-worship of Greece and Rome. Polytheism was so deeply rooted among the people, that it reproduced itself in Christian forms."