

Behold His Humanity

John 1:14

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What you believe about Jesus Christ is probably the most important thing that you can believe about anything. Jesus turned to His disciples at one point and said, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” That question, “What think ye of Christ?” is all important. Let me give you a couple of reasons why what you think about Jesus is important. First of all, it’s important because it’s inescapable, your opinion about Christ. Either you bow your knee now and declare Him to be Lord and it means salvation, or you will bow your knee later and it will mean your condemnation, Philippians 2. The Bible says, “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” You either declare Him to be Lord tonight, or when you die, you will declare Him to be Lord and it will mean your condemnation. It’s also important because it determines the quality of your life both now here and also in eternity. The two most important things that you can understand about Jesus Christ is: He was God and He was man. Theologians call it the hypostatic union, hypostatic meaning two natures, so the hypostatic union of Christ—fully God, fully Man in one Person.

We saw last week in John 1:1 (and I want to go back there to get us started), “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Verses 1, 14, and 18 are three of the greatest verses on the Person of Christ in all of the Bible. Here we saw three things about Jesus. First, He is the eternal Word—“In the beginning was the Word.” At the beginning of time, the Word was there. It doesn’t say the Word became, the Word was. It teaches us that Jesus is eternal, that He pre-existed creation, and we’re going to see in the text as well that He is the Creator of all creation, but it’s basically trying to teach the eternity of Christ, that He is eternal, which is an attribute of God. He’s the eternal Word, and we looked at that Word. It’s the word logos. It has the idea of reason, the idea of communication, so the hidden God that cannot be known or understood is revealed through Jesus who is the living Word. The Bible is the written Word. Jesus is the living Word, the logos, the communication of God. He is the eternal Word.

Secondly, notice we saw in John 1:1 that He is the personal Word, “and the Word was with God.” That word “with” literally means face-to-face and supports the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible teaches that God is three in one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each one of the Persons of the Godhead are separate Persons, and each one are divine—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—so He’s with, face-to-face, God which denies the doctrine of what’s called Modalism, that there’s only one personality in the Godhead and He takes on different modes. He goes from God the Father, God the Father becomes God the Son, and God the Son becomes God the Spirit. That’s not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that we have an eternal Father who is God, an eternal Son who is God, and the eternal Spirit who is God.

I know what you’re thinking right now by the way you’re looking at me. You’re thinking that you’re already getting a headache trying to figure this out. You don’t have to figure it out, you

just have to worship God for who He is, okay? I don't understand my phone, I just thank God for it. I don't understand my television, I just use it. I don't understand my car, but I drive it. I don't understand an elevator or an airplane, but I use those things. How much more is the transcendent God, this eternal God, beyond my understanding or my finding out. God is infinite, we are finite, so if you can't understand three-in-one, don't sweat it, just worship God for who He is.

The third thing, and I won't tarry on it because we looked at it last week, was that He is the divine Word. Three things, He is the eternal Word, He is the personal Word, and He is the divine Word, "...and the Word was God." It's even stronger in the Greek. It actually starts with God for emphasis, "God was the Word," and it conveys the idea that the Word is divine, that the Word is Jesus who is God. He is divine. We have His eternity, He's the eternal Word, the personal Word, and the divine Word. How beautiful to jump to verse 14, "And the Word," same reference to Christ, the logos, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we," John referring to himself and the other apostles, the other believers in Christ, "beheld his glory," and what a glory it was, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Verse 14 is John's account of the virgin birth and the incarnation. He doesn't give us the narrative or the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary and the story about it or Joseph and all that goes on. He just tells us that the Word became flesh. In the Greek it would actually read like this, "and the Word, flesh became." What this means is that the eternal Word, the personal Word, the divine Word actually took on (and I use that term very selectively) humanity. The word "flesh" there isn't a reference just to our inanimate skin, bones, and physical body, it means that He took on full humanity.

One of the things that we fail to realize when we think about the humanity of Christ is that He was fully human. He had human emotions and feelings. He had to grow, and He had to develop. He had a human spirit and soul. He had the human immaterial part of Him as well, which is beyond our comprehension. There was no diminishing or weakening or lessening of Christ's humanity from ours other than one thing, that is, His was without sin. Because He was born of a virgin, He was the sinless Son of God. Then, He lived for 33 years without ever sinning. How's that? He died a substitutionary death on the cross, was buried, and three days later He rose from the dead; and the Father rose Him from the dead, He rose Himself from the dead, and the Holy Spirit rose Him from the dead as well. I want you to understand that in verse 14, when it says, "And the Word was made flesh," it means He took on human nature—sinless, human nature—and I want to emphasize this, that He did not stop being God. One of the attributes of the divine is that God is immutable. What that means is He can never change. He is eternal and immutable. At no time did Jesus ever stop being God. It wasn't like He left heaven, became a man, and then went back to heaven, gave up His humanity, and took back His deity.

In Philippians 2, when it talks about Him laying aside His glory, it means that He laid aside the manifestation and demonstration of His essence as being God or being divine. He did not lay aside His deity. He voluntarily, temporarily laid aside the use of His divine attributes—only used them when and need be in the Father's will to perform miracles—and He used them according

to the Father's plan and will, but He lived as a man among us. So, that "made flesh" literally means He took on full, sinless humanity, and notice what He did, "and dwelt among us," isn't that great? Think about that. God actually moved in with us. Isn't that cool? God left heaven and came down to earth.

Now, this phrase, "...and dwelt among us," (I mentioned it last week, and I know this is repetition but bear with me) means that He pitched His tent among us. There are several things that this could possibly mean and one of them is our bodies are likened unto tents. Read 2 Corinthians 5. It's a whole section where it talks about our bodies being like tents and that we're one day going to leave these tents and get new bodies in heaven that are eternal, not made with hands. When I think of a tent, I think of something that is kind of leaning, frail, flapping in the wind, kind of temporary and weak; so we live in these bodies, but they're not permanent. There's a sense in which the body that Jesus had 33 years on earth was only temporary. It was just a tent, but in the resurrection (and we spent a long time studying this in 1 Corinthians 15 on Sunday morning), that same body was transformed into a resurrection spiritual body and became a prototype of the bodies we will have when we are resurrected from the dead, but it was a tent in that it was frail, weak, and temporary.

There's another imagery that a lot of scholars like to point out, and I think it's fascinating. In the Old Testament the Jews had in the camp what they called the tabernacle, right? That was a tent. In the tabernacle was the holy of holies, and in the holy of holies was the presence of God—the Shekinah glory over the mercy seat behind the veil. The tabernacle represented the presence of God in the congregation. At night they could look over the tabernacle and there was this pillar of fire, and during the day there was this cloud of glory over the tabernacle. It represented the presence of God. It could be that John is trying to convey that idea that it was God tabernacling among us, that God who dwelt in the tabernacle has now moved into the Person of Jesus Christ who has come and taken on flesh. He pitched His tent among us. He dwelt among us.

Notice what John says, "and we beheld," the word means we studied very intently, we gazed intently upon. It wasn't just a casual glance. The word "behold" literally means to stare at intently. We get our word theatre from this word. Now, the idea is that when Jesus was among them sometimes, no doubt, they would find themselves just staring at Him thinking, Wow! What manner of Man is this? Remember when He was on the Sea of Galilee and calmed the sea, and the waves and the wind, and there was a great calm. The disciples looked at Him in the boat and said, "Wow! What manner of Man is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?" I imagine that sometimes they just found themselves gawking at Jesus. When they're crashing under the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, I can almost imagine on a bright moonlit night, maybe sometimes they'd just go over and looked at Him when He was sleeping.

As a parent, have you ever looked at your kids when they're sleeping? That's one of the most glorious experiences you can ever have. They're so sweet when they're asleep, not always so when they wake up. They just kind of glow. I used to go in at night and pray over my kids when they were asleep and just thank the Lord for my children. They always looked so heavenly and

so angelic, you know?

I can imagine they must have just looked at Jesus and thought, What manner of man is this that this God would become a man and tabernacle and dwell among us. John says, “and we beheld his glory,” we saw Him raise the dead. We saw Him turn the water into wine. We saw Him walk on water. We saw Him cleanse the lepers. We saw Him give sight to the blind, and we saw His glory. By the way, John, who I mentioned, had a brother named James. James, John, and Peter were part of an inner circle with Jesus. They went up on Mount Transfiguration and saw Jesus transfigure before them. It could be that John is alluding to the transfiguration when Jesus pulled back the veil of His humanity and allowed His deity to shine forth, and they saw His majesty and His glory on that mountain. He says it’s, “...the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.”

When we read that phrase “only begotten,” you’re not to think in terms of being born—that Jesus didn’t exist and that He came into existence or was born. The term has the idea of unique or special. He’s the chosen One, the unique One. I think the best term would be to think of it in terms of the only unique Son of the Father or begotten of the Father, and notice He’s full or overflowing with “grace and truth.” The eternal Word, the personal Word, the divine Word, the creative Word now becomes the incarnate Word.

John not only says, “Behold His deity,” (verse 1) but now he says, “Behold His humanity,” and we see the incarnation. The word “incarnate” is Latin and means to become flesh. I want to read (I don’t often do this) to you a definition of the incarnation from the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. I think it’s so spot on. It is, “In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature and one Person, Jesus Christ, yet with two natures remaining distinct, whole and unchanged without mixture or confusion, so that the one Person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly Man.” All those distinctions are so important. He has two natures but one Person. Now, we can’t understand or comprehend that. I don’t know how the Bible can be the Word of God written by men. I don’t know how God can be three Persons in one. I don’t know how God can become a Man and God at the same time, but that’s what the Bible actually teaches. The incarnation is not an easy doctrine, but it is indeed a great mystery.

Write down 1 Timothy 3:16. Paul says, “...great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,” there’s a direct statement about the incarnation of Jesus Christ—the infinite became the finite, and the invisible became the visible. This is a very important doctrine. Robert G. Gromacki said, “To deny either the undiminished deity or perfect humanity of Christ in the incarnation is to put oneself outside the pale of orthodoxy,” and all the cults do this—they either deny the deity or the humanity. To deny either one puts you outside of orthodox Christianity.

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God (1 John 4:2-3), “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” that’s God in the flesh, “is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of

antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” All of your false religions and cults deny the deity and/or the humanity of Jesus Christ. About the time that John wrote this gospel, which was about 60-64 A.D., about 30 years after Jesus died and went to heaven, false teaching had come into the church known as Gnosticism.

The Gnostics were basically Greek in their thought. They basically taught that matter was evil and only spirit was good, and that's with us pretty prevalent today. What we call the New Age, New Age Mysticism, it's the same thing—matter is evil, spirit is good. A branch of Gnosticism, known as Docetism, taught that therefore Jesus couldn't be God in the flesh, He was God but didn't have a body. He was just a spirit. Another branch of Gnosticism taught that He was man but not God. Really, what you have today is the same kind of teaching in the Jehovah's Witnesses and different cult groups that deny the deity or the humanity. Today, more prevalent, is the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ. They don't believe that God could become flesh or that God could touch with flesh or interact with flesh, and it very well could be (John was writing from the city of Ephesus) that he was thinking in terms of combating this Gnostic heresy, this Greek philosophy that was so prevalent and coming on the scene; but as we wrap up this teaching right now, in just a minute we're going to bring it all together, the implications for the incarnation and humanity of Christ.

Write down Galatians 4:4. It's interesting. In Galatians 4:4 it says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,” so God sent His Son, born of a woman. Do you know the incarnation was prophesied in the Old Testament in Isaiah 9:6? If you haven't read it in the Bible, you read it on a Christmas card, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Well, you see both there His humanity, “For unto us a child is born,” and you see His deity, that He is, “...a son is given,” so we have both His humanity and His deity.

How did God take on humanity and give up His deity but He took on full humanity? The answer is the virgin birth. In Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,” which means God with us. Isn't that cool? Christmas is God with us. The incarnation is God with us, so Isaiah spoke about His incarnation. Jesus' conception was supernatural, yet His fetal growth and development and birth were natural. Now, try to think about that. That fetus in the womb of Mary was divine. God had an umbilical cord. Isn't that amazing to think about? Jesus developed as a natural human being. In Luke 2:52, it says, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

As I pointed out, the only thing different about Christ's humanity and ours is that He was always obedient to and did the will of God the Father, and He was without sin. If you deny the virgin birth, you completely destroy Christianity. You don't have Christianity without a virgin-born Christ. If Christ was not born of a virgin, then He was a human being like anyone else—sinful—and did not die on the cross for man, the creature's, sin; but we see that Christ was fully man in these ways, if you want to write them down. This is an abbreviated list. He was hungry. Think

about that. God became a man, and He was hungry. If I were God in the flesh, I would build my own In-N-Out Hamburger restaurant in my backyard. I would never be hungry. In Matthew 4:3, "...If thou be the Son of God," the devil said, "command that these stones be made bread." Why? Because it said, "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred." Jesus was hungry, so He was a man.

Secondly, He was weary. John 4 tells us that Jesus, when passing through Samaria, was weary and tired and sat down on Jacob's well; so when you're tired and you're weary...I find myself the older I get telling people, "Let's sit down and talk." I remember when my son was about six or seven years old. He was so full of energy. He was born when I was 40, so I was a little old to have an energetic son. He would always say, "Come on, let's wrestle, Dad. Come on, Dad, let's wrestle!" And I figured out a way to do it. I would just lay on the floor and let him jump all over me and get a massage. He used to say, "No, you gotta try, Dad, you gotta try! You gotta try to wrestle against me!" I'm like, "I am, Jared, I am," but I remember, This is great. I'll just lay down and let him jump all over me and it'll be kind of therapeutic, you know. Jesus was weary and sat down on the well at Sychar, and in the same passage of John 4, it says that He was thirsty. The woman of Samaria came and He said, "Would you give me a drink?" So, He was hungry, He was weary and tired, and He was thirsty. He who was all-powerful, He who was living water, sat weary on the well.

Then, one of our favorite verses in John 11 tells us that Jesus wept. He was fully human. He felt the emotions. At the grave of His friend Lazarus, Jesus wept, and the Scripture means that His eyes just moistened and a tear ran down His face. I think what a picture that is of the Son of God—God in flesh—with a tear going down His face. How could you accuse God of not caring or feeling our pain?

Jesus also slept (that's one of my favorites) in Matthew 8:34. It's scriptural. It also says He slept on a pillow. I used to travel with a little pillow. People used to get down on me, "What's that?" "That's my pillow. Don't laugh at me." I had this little feather pillow that I had for years, and it got real flat and small. I used to be able to put it into a thin briefcase and get on an airplane with my own little pillow. I could sleep so good with my little pillow, and people would cap on me like, "What's this pillow you carry?" I told them, "Jesus carried a pillow." It says in the gospels that He was asleep on a pillow. There it is. It's biblical. You see Jesus carrying His little pillow into the storm and He's sleeping. He was so tired that the waves were crashing over the boat, yet Jesus was asleep. He had a human body, as we're going to see, so that He could go to a cross and suffer and die for us. The list could go on.

Now, Jesus had a human spirit and soul, so His humanity included the immaterial part of man as well which included human emotions. He groaned in the spirit. He was grieved by some of their unbelief. You say, "But, John, if Jesus was God in the flesh, why didn't people believe in Him?" The answer is because of their sin and hardened heart, but His deity was veiled in His humanity, so He was God incognito. Jesus did not glow in the dark. Jesus did not have a halo. I hate to mess up your picture of Jesus. Some of you are going to go home and look at your picture on the wall and think, Oh man, John messed it up for me. He didn't have a reverb in his

voice, "I am the way, the way, the way, the way, the way." He didn't glow in the dark. There was no beauty that we would behold of Him. He looked just like what He was, a peasant carpenter from Galilee. That's why in Philippians 2, the famous kenosis passage, where it says being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

If Christ had not yielded His pre-incarnate glory, mankind would not have been able to behold Him. If He hadn't set that glory aside and veiled His deity in flesh, we couldn't have gazed upon Him and seen His glory. It would've been the same as John, when he was in Revelation 1 and saw the risen and glorified Jesus. John said he fell at His feet as though he were dead. They were able to look upon His glory because it was veiled in flesh.

The deity and humanity of Christ is infused together for all eternity. When we get to heaven, we will see the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We'll see the Jesus we read about in the Bible. When we get into heaven, it's not just going to be like a glow up on the throne, you're actually going to be able to hug Him and see Him. You're going to be able to look into His eyes and reach out and touch Him. Faith will turn to sight.

Years ago, when I had one of the most radical near-death experiences I've ever had, I was convinced that I was going to be shot and killed. I was car-napped at gunpoint, held at gunpoint in a car for a couple hours. They threatened that they were going to kill me, and I was pretty convinced that I was going to die. I had this amazing sense of, I'm going to actually look right into the face of Jesus Christ! I just had this sense of, I'm going to be looking at Jesus! How amazing that was, and that's going to be so cool! When we get to Him, He's going to be the same Jesus who died for us on the cross.

Let me wrap this up by giving you five reasons for the Word becoming flesh. This isn't exhaustive, but it's pretty thorough. First, why did the Word become flesh? To provide an example for our lives. How shall we then live? Like Jesus. What does a man look like? He looks like Jesus. What should a woman look like? She should look like Jesus. Jesus is our example. In 1 Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." I know that in context there Peter is talking about His suffering and that we should follow the example of how He suffered, but Jesus is our pattern—His kindness and His mercy and His love and His hatred for sin and all that Jesus said and did. He's a pattern of what a man looks like and what a person looks like. He's a pattern. God became a man. I want to know what He was like. That's the perfect pattern.

Secondly, the Word became flesh to sanctify the value of human life, and boy do we need this message in the United States right now, right now at this time. We have lost the sanctity of life. I'm so weary of all the politicians' talk about the problems of these mass shootings and what we need to do to remedy them. We need a revival in America. We need to go get on our knees and turn back to God is what we need. We need to get back in God's Word and turn back to God. We need a spiritual awakening, but He does sanctify forever the value of human life. In the incarnation, God became a man—and He didn't become a cat or a dog or a giraffe or an

elephant or an eagle—He became a man. Man is unique there, the sanctity of life, and it sanctifies all of human life. Do you know that before Christianity the world was a very harsh, cruel place and life was devalued—life was not of value. The reason why in our culture today we see a devaluing of human life is because we see a lack of Christian influence. Without God and His Word, it's the net result.

Let me give you the third reason for the incarnation, so that He would be able to understand us. He would become a sympathetic and compassionate High Priest. Write down Hebrews 4:15-16, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He knows our weaknesses, our pain, and our sorrow. He knows what it's like to be tempted. He was tempted in all points like we are yet without sin. When you lose somebody—you have a loved one die and you're bereaved—He understands your pain. Someone said, "In every pang that rends the heart, the Man of Sorrows has a part." The incarnation involved a gaining of human attributes not a giving up of divine attributes. He feels everything that we did. He was hungry, thirsty, weary, and He slept. How important that is.

Here's the fourth reason for the incarnation. The Word became flesh in order to die for our sins. This is paramount. This is central. The reason that God became a Man was in order to die on the cross. He was born to die. God gave Him a body so that He could become the Redeemer, the Saviour of the world. He became what is called our kinsman redeemer. He was near of kin. He became a human. He had the price to pay. He was willing to die in our place. Write down 1 Timothy 2:5-6. It says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all." God was in Christ seeking to reconcile the world unto Himself. What a glorious truth that is! How can a man be justified before God? Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He became a Man in order to redeem man.

Fifthly, and lastly, the Word became flesh to manifest or demonstrate or display for us the love of God. In 1 John 4:9, it says, "In this was manifested," or displayed or demonstrated, "the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." This is the love of God manifested. In John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," so it demonstrates or displays the love of God. How do I know God loves me? He came from heaven for me. He came for you and me. He left heaven and came to earth, not only came to earth, but He came and was weary, tired, thirsty, hungry, and rejected; and there were times that Jesus was sad and even felt loneliness—all the emotions of humanity—so that He could become a sympathetic and compassionate High Priest touched with feelings of our infirmities. When you talk to God in your weakness, He understands. Do you know that Jesus knows and cares tonight? He loves you, knows and cares, and the very fact that He came into the world is a demonstration or display of His love; so we really don't need to doubt whether God loves us.

I just gave you five reasons for the incarnation of the Word becoming flesh, the list could be a

little longer, but I'm going to go back and wrap them up with three. They're the three Rs, and these are my favorite three points for Christmas, okay? Just a little mini Christmas homily. Why the incarnation? First, to reveal God. In verse 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The word "declared" means explained Him. Why did God become a man? To reveal God to us. Secondly, to redeem man to God. He came to reveal God to man, and, secondly, came to redeem man back to God or to reconcile us; so He had to have a body. Thirdly, and lastly, to reign on the throne of David—to reveal God, to redeem man, and to reign on the throne of David.

In the Old Testament we have what's called the Davidic covenant—a promise that God made to King David that through his lineage, through his seed, the Messiah would come and Messiah would sit on his throne. It would be an everlasting Kingdom that would last forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. Now, in order for that to happen, Jesus had to have a body so He could sit on the throne of David, and He had to come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He had to fulfill those messianic promises, so He came to reign and He will do that. He's going to come back in His Second Coming in power and glory, and He's going to sit on the throne of David for a thousand years and usher in the righteousness of God upon earth. Amen? Until that happens, there won't be peace. There won't be peace in our hearts (if you're not a Christian) until He reigns; in our homes, unless He's Lord of your home. In our nation and in our world, Christ comes to reign supreme. What a glorious day that is!

When we take this bread tonight and we drink this cup, the bread is a symbol of His body and the cup His blood shed for us in the new covenant. It's a remembrance of the incarnation—the Word became flesh. He was broken for us, He was bruised for us, and He died for us, but He's coming back for us. Amen?