

The Man Christ Jesus

The Reality of His Incarnation

When the Son of God in infinite grace condescended to visit this world and to be *“found in fashion as a man”*, so thoroughly did He become *“in the likeness of men”* that never for one moment was a question raised, either by friend or foe, as to the reality of His manhood. When the glory of His Godhood shone through the form of human clay, His disciples might be sore amazed and cry out in fear and wonder, *“Who then is this?”* (Mark 4:41 lit.) but they could not entertain in their minds any doubt that their Master was a true man; for having heard and seen with their eyes and beheld and handled with their hands the Word of life, their every sense testified to the fact that He was manifested in flesh. And so thoroughly convinced were His enemies of the reality of His humanity that, as a result, they absolutely refused to believe that He could be any more than man.

The incarnate Son of God was rejected and at length crucified, not for claiming to be man, but for claiming

to be God. The truth of His humanity was not laid open to question until He had returned to heaven and the matter of His Person was under discussion amongst those who had never known Him in the flesh. This is a simple but weighty fact which those who believe in the humanity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ might well ponder, analyse and treasure. Only to philosophers and theologians of mystical outlook, to whom plain facts are less conclusive than abstruse reasonings, can the manhood of Christ be doubtful, not to say incredible. Yet, sad to relate, such are not uncommon in the earth and very soon after the ascension of Christ, heresies respecting His manhood began to infect the testimony.

Broadly speaking the attack on the truth was on two fronts. Firstly the Greek philosophical school of Gnosticism began to make its influence felt in Christian thought and inasmuch as this philosophy regards matter as inherently evil, it could never happily confess ***“that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”***. The words of 1John 4:3 may have such an influence in view, but also suggest that the many demoniacal powers active amongst the saints with a view to counterfeiting the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit in those early days would be unwilling to give clear and specific acknowledgement to the fact of the incarnation. On another front, from the most unlikely quarter, an attack was launched by staunch defenders of the deity of Christ. In propounding His deity some apologists made so little of Christ’s humanity as to take a position which was a virtual denial of it, and then stubbornly they refused to retract their error, but maintained it with increasing determination. What a warning to us all to take care that our convictions regarding the Person of Christ are balanced and broad and Scriptural, rather than bigoted and narrow and consequently distorted!

The words of John certainly state clearly the fundamental importance of the doctrine of the manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who will not

confess it, but intelligently and stubbornly denies it, is no weak or uninstructed Christian merely: John, the ‘son of thunder’, denounces him with a voice of thunder, he is antichrist.

The **Reality of the Manhood** of Christ is revealed in the testimony which He bore to Himself. In John 8:40 He designated Himself, ***“A MAN that hath told you the truth”***. Here quite simply and unequivocally the Saviour claims to be man. The testimony of His enemies is just as specific and even more remarkable, for as we have already stated they were so convinced of His manhood that they could not believe that He could be any other than man. When questioned as to why they took up stones to stone Him they replied, ***“For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being A MAN, makest thyself God”*** (John 10:33). See also, for example, Matthew 11:19; Luke 23:4,6,14; John 7:46; 9:16,24; 11:47,50; 19:5. The same witness is borne by His disciples. In a most striking and instructive passage Paul writes, ***“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”*** (1Cor. 15:21,22). The parallel which Paul draws between Adam and Christ is significant, for Adam is the typical or prototype man, man as God Himself made him, as well as the very father of the whole human race. And Christ is here stated to be man even as Adam is man: His humanity is the humanity of Adam himself. The same comparison is drawn in Romans 5:12-15. Other Scriptures are John 1:30; 4:29; 9:11; Acts 2:22; 1Corinthians 15:47.

But there are those termed “men” in Scripture who in reality were angels visiting earth in human form (e.g. Mark 16:5). Is Christ a man in that sense merely, i.e. in appearance? Was He a Divine Being manifest in a human body, or even in the semblance of a human body? Scripture testifies clearly to the **Entirety of His Manhood**; that is, not that He is man and nothing more, but that He is man in all that is essential to true

manhood. In 1Thessalonians 5:23 Paul prays that his readers be sanctified ***“wholly”***, and this he expands by adding, ***“your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless.”*** Thus he declares that man is a tripartite being, and that the three elements, spirit and soul and body constitute the whole or entire man. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of ***“My spirit”*** (Luke 23:46), ***“My soul”*** (Matt. 26:38), and ***“My body”*** (Luke 22:19), so demonstrating that He was a “whole” man. i.e. man in all that is essential to manhood. That He referred to His human spirit, His human soul and His human body is evident, for on each occasion He was referring to His death, something which His deity could not experience.

At this juncture we might well consider this important point – the relationship between the manhood and the godhood of Christ. Firstly we have to notice that His manhood was not EXCHANGED FOR His godhood. He did not cease to be God when He became man. Indeed if He is not God now, He never was God, for the necessary characteristic of Deity is essential and eternal Being. God is the I AM; His name is JEHOVAH, the Ever-Living One. He is not only the First, He must necessarily be the Last. Yet the Son claimed even while here as man to be the ***“I AM”*** (John 8:58; 18:6); He who came was JEHOVAH (Mark 1:3, compare v1); and the One who died and rose again is the First and the Last (Rev. 1:17,18). He was, He is, He ever must be God.

But neither is His manhood COMPOUNDED WITH His godhood. This again would be contrary to the nature of Deity, for another essential of Divine Being is immutability or changelessness (Heb. 1:12; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). It is not possible for Deity to be changed, modified or corrupted by mixture with a finite, creature nature such as humanity (Rom. 1:23).

Yet we have also to appreciate that His manhood is not SEPARABLE FROM His godhood. Christ Jesus is not two Persons, but one Person. The unity of His two natures is often seen in one incident, e.g. the One who

stilled the storm with the irresistible might of Deity was One who must be wakened from the slumber of exhausted humanity (Mark 4:38); while the One who as the **“Resurrection and the Life”** recalled Lazarus from the dead was the One who had wept sweetest tears of human sympathy at his tomb (John 11:25,35). Often too, this union of two natures in one Person is seen when the attributes of one nature are predicated of the Person who is named according to the other nature. Divine attributes and actions are predicated of a Person who bears a human name (e.g. Mark 2:10; John 6:62; Rev. 5:12), and conversely human attributes are predicated of One who bears a divine name (Matt. 1:23; Rom. 5:10; 9:5; Col. 1:13,14). This unity also appears in Scriptures such as Zech. 13:7; Luke 1:31,32; Rom. 1:3,4; Heb. 4:14; 1John 1:7; Rev. 22:16. The two natures of Christ are distinct and are neither fused nor confused, yet are they united in One wondrous, incomprehensible Person, the Divine Word of God become flesh (Matt. 22:41-46; John 1:1-14).

Another point of great importance is the **Purity of the Manhood** of Christ. Although He came **“in the likeness of sinful flesh”**, His flesh was sinless. Angels and men and demons all bear harmonious witness to the holiness of His humanity, covering every aspect of His nature, and every phase of His experience. At His incarnation, Heaven in the person of the angel Gabriel declared to Mary the virgin that **“that HOLY THING which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”** (Luke 1:35). David said, **“In sin did my mother conceive me”** (Psa. 51:5), but inasmuch as this One was conceived **“of the Holy Spirit”**, He was without INHERENT SIN, for that the Babe’s holiness was absolute and not merely relative, is seen in that He is **“called the Son of God”**. During His life **“Jesus of Nazareth”** was saluted by demons, **“I know Thee who Thou art, the HOLY ONE of God”** (Mark 1:24), thus declaring that the Holy Babe had grown into a Holy Man, free from CONTRACTED SIN. The words of the Old Testament prophet, quoted by the New Testament apostle, of the resurrection of the crucified

Messiah are, **“Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine HOLY ONE to see corruption”** (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:27); saints of all ages thus uniting to testify that not even IMPUTED SIN lay any longer upon the One who was **“made sin for us”**. In birth, in life, in death and in resurrection that blessed Man was God’s Holy One. And what greater proof of this could be given than that Jesus now sits, without one trace of moral inconsistency, upon the very throne of God?

Scripture also teaches the **Perpetuity of Christ’s Manhood**: having participated in human nature He will never relinquish it. Though glorified in heaven He is still man, for the one mediator between God and men presently is **“the man Christ Jesus”** (1Tim. 2:5). When He returns to earth, He will come as man (Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:11). As man He will judge the whole human race, both the living and the dead (Acts 17:31; John 5:22,27), and since it is as David’s Seed that He will sit upon David’s throne and rule for ever (Luke 1:32,33), evidently His manhood is everlasting. So also His priesthood, an essential qualification for which is His true manhood, is likewise **“for ever”** (Heb. 2:17,18; 5:5-10).

Finally we must note something of the **Necessity for Christ’s Manhood**. This is both official and essential: official because Scripture foretold that Messiah would be man (e.g. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 11:1-9; 32:1,2; Jer. 23:5,6; Zech. 6:12), and essential because the very nature of His work demands His manhood. It is fundamental to every aspect of His mediatorial work both for God and for men (see 1Tim. 2:5 and Job 9:33). Hebrews chapter 2 teaches that His future work of ruling men for God (vs. 5-8), His past work of redeeming men to God (vs. 9-16), and His present work of representing men before God (vs. 17,18) are all in virtue of His manhood, and are impossible but for it. And not only as Sacrifice, Priest and King is His manhood essential but as Prophet also (Deut. 18:18; Acts 3:22 ff.). Only in terms of a human life and a human death has God been revealed to men.