

# The Word Became Flesh

## A Look at the Incarnation of Our Savior, Jesus the Christ

Peter Evensen | January 2018

### God and Man: One Person, Two Natures

The Bible shows us that Jesus is true God:

**1 John 5:20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

**Titus 2:13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

**Romans 9:5** To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

The Bible also shows us that Jesus is true Man:

**John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...

**1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

**Hebrews 2:14, 17** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things... Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest...

Jesus Himself claimed to be a true human being whenever He called Himself “the Son of Man.”

Jesus’ human nature was like our human nature, except He did not have any sin:

**Hebrews 2:17** Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

**Isaiah 53:9** ...he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**1 Peter 2:22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

**Hebrews 7:26** For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

Jesus took upon Himself all the universal human weaknesses, such as the real need for food, drink, rest, sleep, etc. We read examples of these things in the Gospels.

We have no record of Jesus taking on problems that are not common to all human beings, such as bodily diseases, disfigured body parts, etc. He did not need to take on these specific things to save us from our sin.

The passages above show us that Jesus has two natures: the divine nature and the human nature. These two natures are united in the one person of Jesus who was born in Bethlehem.

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<sup>1</sup> All Bible quotes (unless otherwise indicated, are from the English Standard Version (ESV)

## The Incarnation

The Word, which was God, became flesh and lived among us. In Jesus' incarnation, the divine nature was active and the human nature was passive. God became man, but man did not become God:

**Colossians 2:9** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily

**1 Timothy 3:16** Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh...

**Romans 1:3** concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

**Galatians 4:4** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

Jesus' divine nature is unchangeable. The Word becoming flesh did not result in a change in the divine nature. The personality of the divine nature took on and dwelled in the human nature.

The origin of each nature is different. Jesus' divine nature is from eternity. Jesus was eternally begotten of the Father before all worlds (John 1:14, 18; 3:16). The beginning of Jesus' human nature, however, happened in time (Galatians 4:4). It came about through a supernatural act in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:35, Matthew 1:20).

Colossians 2:9 (above) tells us that Jesus' divine nature dwelled in Jesus' body. Jesus' divine nature is not outside of Jesus' human nature.

During Christ Jesus' humiliation, His human nature was usually confined to space and time in order to accomplish His work of redeeming us. At Jesus' exaltation, His human nature was lifted out of the relations of time and space and is no longer limited:

**Matthew 28:18, 20** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

## The Sharing of Attributes

In the person of Jesus, the divine nature and the human nature are united. Because of this union, the Bible shows as that, in Jesus, the divine nature and human nature share attributes.

In the following passages, the person of Jesus has both divine and human attributes:

**Romans 9:5** To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

**1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

**Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

In the following passages, human characteristics are attributed to the divine nature:

**Acts 3:15** and you killed the Author of life...

**1 Corinthians 2:8** one of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

**Romans 8:32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

**Galatians 2:20** ...the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Acts 20:28** ...to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

In the following passages, divine characteristics are given to the human nature:

**John 6:62** Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?

**John 8:58** Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

**1 Corinthians 15:47** The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

## The Sharing of Majesty

The Bible also shows us that in Jesus, the divine nature and the human nature share the same majesty. This means that divine authority, power, and honor were given to the human nature, as the divine nature already possessed these things.

We see that Jesus has all power:

**John 5:19, 21** So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise...For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

**Matthew 28:18** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...

We see that Jesus knows all things:

**Matthew 9:2** ...And when Jesus saw their faith...

**Luke 5:22** When Jesus perceived their thoughts...

**John 2:24-25** But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

**John 4:16-19** – Jesus knew the private life of the Samaritan woman.

We see that Jesus is present everywhere:

**Matthew 18:20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

**Matthew 28:20** “...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Ephesians 1:23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Ephesians 4:10** He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

Because the two natures are united in the person of Jesus, the human nature of Christ is present everywhere with the divine nature (the Word). We do not often see this in His ministry, but there are a few examples:

**Matthew 14:25** ...he came to them, walking on the sea.

**Luke 4:30** But passing through their midst, he went away.

**John 8:59** So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

**John 3:13** No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. (NKJV)

All limits on Jesus' presence disappeared when He was exalted to the right hand of God. Jesus did not leave us at His ascension. At His ascension, Jesus' was taken from His disciples (and our) sight

(Acts 1:9). Jesus is still present with us, just as He promised.

Jesus' second coming is not really a physical return, but a reappearance of a presence that is currently hidden:

**Titus 2:13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

**2 Thessalonians 2:8** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

The Bible also shows us that Jesus has divine honor:

**John 5:22-23** For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

**Philippians 2:9-11** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When the Bible speaks of these divine attributes being given to Jesus, it refers to these divine characteristics being given to Jesus' human nature. Jesus' divine nature already had these things. Jesus' divine nature was already all powerful, all knowing, existing everywhere, and had divine honor in itself. Jesus' human nature, however, did not have these things in itself, but received them when the divine nature was joined with the human nature in Mary's womb.

Jesus' human nature being given these divine attributes is what Paul calls Jesus being in "the form of God":

**Philippians 2:5-8** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Paul is not here talking about the incarnation itself. He is not talking about the Word before the incarnation. In the beginning the Word was more than the form of God, the Word was God.

These verses (Philippians 2:5-8) are talking the Word *after* He became flesh. Jesus was the name given to the Word after the Word became flesh. The *man* Jesus was in the form of God; The Son of Man had divine powers. We see a glimpse of this form at Jesus' transfiguration. Although Jesus in the flesh was in the form of God, He did not always use His divine powers. Instead He took the form of a servant and humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross for our sins.

## **The Sharing of the Work of Redemption**

The Bible shows us that in Jesus, the divine nature and the human nature both share in the work of redemption:

**1 Corinthians 15:3-4** ...that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

**Galatians 1:4** (the Lord Jesus Christ), who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father

**1 John 3:8** The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

**Genesis 3:15** I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

**Luke 19:10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

**1 Timothy 2:5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

**Luke 2:11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

In these passages, the work of salvation is described to Jesus both as the Son of God and as the Son of Man. The participation of both natures is important. We sinners could only be saved by the vicarious suffering and death of the Savior, but the Godhead could not in itself suffer and die. In the same way, a mere man could not offer a perfect sacrifice that would be sufficient for the redemption of the whole world. Both the human nature and divine nature joined in the person of Jesus were needed to save us from sin and death.

## Summary

Paul writes to Timothy that the incarnation is a great mystery (1 Timothy 3:16). It is not something that we can fully understand; it is something we believe by faith. We trust what God's word tells us about Jesus.

We have briefly looked at number of Bible verses that show us that in Jesus, God, the Word, became flesh. These verses show us that Jesus is both God and man.

It is important to remember that because the divine nature and human nature are joined in the one person Jesus, we cannot really separate them. It is incorrect to say that the divine nature and human natures in Jesus work independently. As we have seen above, the Bible does not separate the two natures of Jesus. Instead the Bible describes the person of Jesus has having both divine and human attributes. He has divine majesty, and the whole person of Jesus has accomplished our salvation.

In Jesus Christ, God the Father has provided the perfect Savior and Substitute. Both the divine and human natures were involved in and necessary to accomplish our redemption. As God and man in one person, Jesus was the perfect lamb of God that took away the sins of the world. He lived the perfect, sinless life we have not lived. He died in our place to pay our sins and take them away. He rose again from the dead conquering death for us. Being God, His life and death have infinite merit can pay for our sins, and the sins of the whole world.

Because Jesus shared our human nature, He is now a perfectly sympathetic and merciful high priest who, being God, is able to help us (Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15) and is always with us, even to the end of time (Matthew 28:20).

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,  
that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.  
(Hebrews 4:16)