

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST



In the previous lesson we discovered that as man came from the Creator's hand he was perfect, both in outward form and in moral character. Adam was created with an unfallen nature; that is, he had no natural tendencies or leaning toward evil. Adam could retain his unfallen nature only by obedience to God's law, which he failed to do (Romans 5:12, 19). Because of Adam's failure our nature is also fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous, we need God's help. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour from sin we become "born again" (John 3:3); that is, we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Now we have a combination of the fallen human nature and the divine nature and through the power of choice we can yield to temptation to sin by following the desires of our fallen human nature or we can submit to God (James 4:7) and follow the prompting of the divine and form our characters for heaven (Romans 6:16).

Romans 5:12, 19 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: . . . For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

2 Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

James 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Romans 6:16 "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

What about the human nature of Jesus? How was He like us and how was He different? Was His human nature like that of unfallen or fallen Adam? We must understand the answers to these questions, because it will affect the outcome of our eternal destiny.

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LESSON 8: THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

1. Was Jesus born into this world with sinful flesh (fallen nature)?

Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

After Adam's sin everyone was born into this world with a fallen nature, including Jesus. Jesus' birth and ours differ in that He was born with divine and fallen human natures. He was born as a baby like we are when we are born again.

To "condemn sin in the flesh" means to live life without sin in sinful flesh, to manifest perfect obedience to the Law of God.

2. Even though Jesus Is God, what form did He willingly take upon Himself?

Philippians 2:5-7: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

[Further Study]

Romans 1:3 "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;"

John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

3. Does Jesus understand the temptations that we have to face? Does He understand our feelings of weakness to obey God?

Hebrews 4:15: "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."

If Jesus had an unfallen human nature, He could not have been tempted just like us, because we have natural propensities toward evil. But thank God He was like us, never once yielding to sinful desire. He did it by total dependence upon His heavenly Father (John 5:19, 30), so must we (John 15:5). Jesus used no power to live a holy life that is not freely offered to us.

John 5:19, 30 "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. . . I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

4. How does Jesus refer to and identify with us?

Hebrews 2:11: "For both he that sanctifieth (Christ) and they who are sanctified (us) are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

[Further Study]

Hebrews 10:10 "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

5. In order for Jesus to be our merciful and faithful high priest, what did He consent to?

Hebrews 2:14, 16-17: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

The holy angels have an unfallen nature. Because they are unfallen they need no saving. Jesus had to be made like the ones He came to save (fallen humans), else it would avail nothing.

6. Why is it important to believe that Jesus came in fallen human flesh?

1 John 4:2-3: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit (person who is breathing) that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; 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."

The word flesh in the original Greek means "human nature with its frailties and passions, fleshly or carnal." Each time the word flesh is used in the New Testament it is the same Greek word except two instances which refer to the flesh of animals.

Romans 14:21 "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

1 Corinthians 8:13 "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

7. What does the Bible call those who do not teach that Jesus has a nature like fallen humanity, and what should our attitude be toward them?

2 John 7, 10-11: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (against Christ)... If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed (success): for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

8. What did Jesus become for our benefit?

2 Corinthians 5:21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Jesus took our fallen human nature so that we could be partakers of His divine nature.

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John 3:14: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

[Further Study]

Numbers 21:4-9 "And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

If we will look to Jesus and trust Him, we will be healed from the snake bite of sin.

9. How do we partake of Christ's divine nature?

2 Peter 1:4: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

By claiming through faith the promises of God, we partake of His divine nature. To partake means to participate. There is something for us to do. We must cooperate with God in our own salvation by learning what His requirements are and then being obedient to the truth He reveals through the power of the Holy Spirit.

10. What happens to us when we are "in Christ"?

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

To be "in Christ" means to be united to or in union with Christ. Old things are passed away—the chains of sinful habit have been broken. Evil passions and propensities will be eliminated and we will have power to live the life of Christ, because we have been given the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5; Romans 12:2). The flesh, of itself, cannot sin, it needs the consent of the mind. Our sinful nature loves to sin and Satan will use it to tempt us to yield to evil, but if we have the mind of Christ we will submit to God instead (Romans 8:1-5).

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Philippians 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"

Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Romans 8:1-5 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

11. Since sin originates in the mind, what should we do when we have evil thoughts?

2 Corinthians 10:5: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"

[Further Study]

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

There was in Christ nothing that responded to Satan's deceptions. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did he yield to temptation, so may it be with us. When evil thoughts come to the mind they do not become sinful until they are dwelt upon or yielded to. If we would labor to repress sinful thoughts and feelings, giving them no expression in words or actions, Satan would be defeated.

"Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see 'God with us'.

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. 'In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.' Hebrews 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was 'in all points tempted like as we are.' Hebrews 4:15. He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. He says, 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.' Psalms 40:8. As He went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God's law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.

"By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey."

The Desire of Ages, page 24.