

Major Bible Themes

BY

LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER

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CHAPTER VII

GOD THE SON: HIS INCARNATION

John states (John 1:1) that Christ who was one with God and was God from all eternity, became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14). Paul likewise states that Christ, who was in the form of God, took upon Him the likeness of men (Phil. 2:6, 7); and "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16); and He who was the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3), took upon Himself the seed of Abraham and was in all things made like unto His brethren (Heb. 2:16, 17). Luke, in greater detail, presents the historical fact of His incarnation, both as to the conception and birth (Luke 1:26-38).

When considering the result of the incarnation, two important truths should be recognized: (1) Christ became at the same time and in the absolute sense very God and very man, and (2) in becoming flesh, He, though laying aside His glory, in no sense laid aside His Deity.

The Bible presents many contrasts, but none more striking than that one Person should be at the same time very God and very man. Illustrations from the Scriptures of these contrasts are many: He was weary, yet He called the weary to Himself for rest. He was hungry, yet He was "the bread

of life." He was thirsty, yet He was "the water of life." He was in an agony, yet He healed all manner of disease and soothed every pain. He "grew, and waxed strong in spirit," yet He was from all eternity. He was tempted, yet He, as God, could not be tempted. He became self-limited in knowledge, yet He was the wisdom of God. He said (with reference to His humiliation, being made for a little time lower than the angels), "My Father is greater than I," yet He also said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and, "I and my Father are one." He prayed, yet He answered prayer. He wept at the tomb, yet He called the dead to arise. He asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" yet He "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet it was the very God to whom He cried who was at that moment "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." He died, yet He is eternal life. He was God's ideal man, and man's ideal God.

From this it may be seen that the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes functioned His earth-life within the sphere of that which was perfectly human and sometimes within the sphere of that which was perfectly divine. His divine Being was never limited in any degree by the fact of His humanity, nor did He minister to His human need from His divine resources. He could turn stones into bread to feed His human hunger, but this He never did.

The student should observe (1) the fact of Christ's humanity, and (2) the Biblical reasons for His incarnation. *

I. THE FACT OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

1. The humanity of Christ was purposed from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). The significance of the Lamb-type is in the sacrificial, blood-shedding, physical body.
2. Every type and prophecy of the Old Testament concerning Christ was an anticipation of the incarnate Son of God.
3. The fact of the humanity of Christ is seen in His annunciation and birth (Luke 1:31-35).
4. His life here on earth revealed His humanity, (1) by His human names: "The Son of man," "The man Christ Jesus," "Jesus," "The Son of David," and the like. (2) By His human parentage: He is mentioned as "the fruit of the loins," "her firstborn," "of this man's seed," "seed of David," "seed of Abraham," "made of a woman," "sprang from Judah." (3) By the fact that He possessed a human body, soul, and spirit (1 John 4:2, 9; Matt. 26:38; John 13:21). And (4) by His self-imposed human limitations.
5. The humanity of Christ is seen in His death and resurrection. It was a human body that suffered death on the cross and it was the same body which came forth from the tomb in resurrection glory.
6. The fact of the humanity of Christ is seen in that He ascended to Heaven and is now, in His human glorified body, ministering for His own.
7. When He comes again it will be the "same Jesus" coming as He went in the same body, though glorified, in which He became incarnate.

II. THE BIBLICAL REASONS FOR THE INCARNATION *

1. He came to reveal God to men (John 1:18; 14:9; Matt. 11:27; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16). By the incarnation, the incomprehensible God is translated into terms of human understanding.
2. He came to reveal man. He is God's ideal man and as such is an example to believers (1 Pet. 2:21); but He is never an example to the unsaved since God is not now seeking to reform the unsaved, but rather to save them.
3. He came to provide a sacrifice for sin. For this reason He is seen thanking God for His human body and this in relation to true sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:1-10).
4. He came in the flesh that He might destroy the works of the Devil (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:13-15; John 12:31; 16:11).
5. He came into the world that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God (Heb. 2:16, 17; 8:1; 9:11, 12; 9:24).
6. He came in the flesh that He might fulfill the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:31-33; Rom. 15:8; Acts 2:30, 31, 36). In His glorified human body He will appear and reign as "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords," and will sit on the throne of His father David.
7. As incarnate, He becomes Head over all things to the Church, which is the New Creation, the new humanity.

In the incarnation, the Son of God took upon Himself not only a human body, but also a human soul and spirit. Thus becoming both the material and immaterial sides of human existence, He became entire man, and so closely and permanently related to the human family that He is rightly called "The Last Adam," and "the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:21) is now an abiding fact.

He who is the eternal Son, Jehovah-God, was also the Son of Mary, the Boy of Nazareth, the Teacher and Healer of Judea, the Guest at Bethany, the Lamb of Calvary. He will yet be the King of Glory, as He is now the Saviour of men, the High Priest, the Coming Bridegroom and Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. Is it reasonable to believe that God in the Person of His Son for self-manifestation and for redemption should for a little time take upon Himself the form of flesh?
2. Name several passages which state both the Deity and the humanity of Christ.
3. In considering the Incarnation, what two truths should be recognized?
4. Indicate some of the strong contrasts between the divine and human natures of Christ which are presented in the Records of His life here on earth.
5. Did He ever minister to His human limitation from His divine sufficiency?

6. What relation do the blood-shedding types of the Old Testament bear to the humanity of Christ?
7. Suggest some proofs of His humanity from His birth and life here on the earth.
8. What proofs of His humanity are presented in the death and resurrection, the ascension, and the second coming of Christ?
9. How did He reveal both God and man through His humanity?
10. Was a human body essential in the sacrifice for sin?
11. Was a human body evidently essential in the work of destroying the works of the devil?
12. In fulfilling the high-priest type, was His incarnation essential?
13. As fulfiller of the Davidic covenant, was it necessary for Christ to be born into the human family?
14. Since He is Head over the New Creation which is composed of the redeemed from earth, is it essential that He shall be Himself incarnate?