

Essentials of Christianity (pt 16)
6/20/2010

Introduction _____

Good morning to you all. It's a true blessing to be serving you again from this pulpit. I was blessed to know you were in very capable hands with Pastor Mark in my absence.

For the last two weeks Mark took you back to the Luke study that we were in before we ventured off into our current topical study on the essentials of the Christian faith.

I'm glad he did that because the direction he went compliments what we're going to be covering very nicely.

Seeking out and saving that which is lost is the thread that is woven throughout the sections of Luke 15; and over the next couple of weeks we're going to be taking an in depth look at our **Savior** Jesus Christ, as we move into the theme of Christology.

Before we jump into that, let me first tie up some loose ends on the doctrine of the Trinity.

In our last session together we focused on many of the attributes of the deity of Christ--Jesus Christ as God.

Besides the references we looked at that directly related to the deity of Jesus, there are also numerous other verses which exhibit other proofs of His deity.

We're going to take a look at just one of these, which I believe is one of the clearest demonstrations of His deity.

Let's look at the adoration He receives in glory.

I would hope we all know what God says of Himself in Isaiah 42:8.

^{NAU} Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.

And because this is the case, we know that no part of creation would ever be given worship and praise like God.

God allows us to give honor to whom honor is due, but not worship.

But of the Son we read,

^{NAU} John 5:23 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

And so, here is the last thing I want us to look at related to the deity of the Son: the adoration the Son receives in **Revelation 5-- turn to: read**

^{NAU} Revelation 5:1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.

⁴ Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

⁵ and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

⁶ *And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.*

⁷ *And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.*

⁸ *When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*

¹⁰ *"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."*

¹¹ *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,*

¹² *saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."*

¹³ *And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."*

¹⁴ *And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.*

Christology

The Doctrine of Christ

And now Christology. This means the **doctrine of Christ**.

Christology is the study of the person, nature and work of Jesus Christ.

Some of this we've already covered in our overview of theology and the Trinity. The rest of our coverage of Christology will focus primarily on the **humanity of Christ**.

We've discussed His deity, now we must focus in on the other essential truth about our Savior: His humanness-- the fact that Jesus was fully man as well as fully God.

What does that mean? What are the full ramifications?

The importance of this subject cannot be overstated, and it is just as essential to understand Jesus' humanity as it is His deity.

In support of this, and to begin this segment of our study, let's turn to 1John, and then let me direct your attention to the screen.

The doctrine of the humanity of Christ is equally important as the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Jesus had to be a man if He was to represent fallen humanity. First John was written to dispel the doctrinal error that denies the true humanity of Christ. If Jesus was not a real man, then the death on the cross was an illusion; He had to be a real man to die for humanity.¹

¹ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

1John demonstrates how Jesus' humanity is on equal footing with His deity. John tells us that to deny either is to place oneself in the position of extreme opposition to God.

Let's look at these two sections of 1John. They serve as an apologetic for Christ's deity and humanity.

Understanding a little bit about the historical background of John's letter will help us understand why he addresses what he does.

We've talked about **gnosticism**...

The Gnostics professed to be Christians but claimed to have additional knowledge, superior to what the apostles taught. They claimed that a person could not be completely fulfilled until he had been initiated into their deeper "truths." Some of them taught that matter was evil, and that therefore the Man Jesus could not be God. They made a distinction between Jesus and the Christ. The Christ" (they said) was a divine emanation which came upon Jesus at His baptism and left before His death, perhaps in the Garden of Gethsemane. According to them, Jesus did die, but the Christ did not die. They insisted, as one commentator put it, that "the heavenly Christ was too holy and spiritual to be soiled by permanent contact with human flesh."

In short, they denied the Incarnation, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Jesus Christ is both God and Man. John realized that these people were not true Christians, and so he warned his readers against them by showing that the Gnostics did not have the marks of true children of God.

In fact, it is commonly understood that there was actually one particular individual that John was opposing; a gnostic teacher named Cerinthus; whose particular brand of Gnosticism was coined as Cerinthianism. This tradition of identifying Cerinthus as the opponent of 1 John depends on some earlier writers (Irenaeus, Polycarp) one of which preserved a description of an encounter between the apostle and

Cerinthus in a public bathhouse, which John hurriedly left so that he would not have to bathe in the same place with such an enemy of the truth.²

Now let's look at the passages.

^{NAU} 1 John 2:18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

²⁴ As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

There's so much in this we'll not be covering. Verse 22 is our punch line. **read...**

The word "Christ" means "anointed one," Messiah. Essentially what this is referring to is a denial of Jesus' divinity. To deny Him as the Christ is to deny Him as God.

² Kenneth L Barker and John R Kohlenberger III, *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary: Vol. 2: New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

Now jump over to chapter 4 where his humanity is defended.

^{NAU} 1 John 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

² *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;*

³ *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*

KJV 1 John 4:3 *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.*

⁴ *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

⁵ *They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.*

⁶ *We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

John tells us that the spirit behind this denial of Jesus coming in the flesh is an antichrist spirit.

Given that this type of comparison is being made we can see how essential this doctrine is.

Only the spirit of error would deny the humanity of Christ.

So there you have the warning.

In preparing for today's study, I wrestled with what direction to go at this point. There are so many things to discuss about this topic, but I knew I'd have to condense things a lot, yet without neglecting to cover the most essential material.

So hopefully everything will be clear enough.

Let's turn to two more texts-- **John 1 and 1 Timothy 3**. Let's look at two texts related to the **incarnation**.

The word incarnation is simply the point in history when the eternal Son of God took on human flesh.³

^{NAU} John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God.

^{NAU} John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

There's the incarnation.

^{NAU} 1 Timothy 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

One of the great mysteries of this amazing event is what type of being was Jesus when He walked the earth. Many strange views have come forth over the centuries about the nature of Jesus.

³ Ware

This is partly due to how one understands a passage in **Philippians 2. Let's turn there.**

^{NAU} Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The operative phrase is in **verse 7**

*⁷ **but emptied Himself**, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

KJV says,

*^{KJV} **Philippians 2:7** But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

The question that has baffled some theologians for centuries is, “of what did Christ empty Himself of?” Did He divest Himself of all divine prerogative during His earthly life?

Did he cease to be God during that time?

This humbling that took place is called by many theologians, “the kenosis,” which is a term derived from the Greek word for “emptying.”

Some liberal theologians have insisted that Jesus divested Himself of His deity. Or, that this means that He was not really God at all, but a super-powered man.

There are actually a number of aberrant views about the true nature of Christs’ incarnate state.

The scriptures indicate that **nothing** was lost when Christ took on human form. In fact, quite the contrary.

Consider this quote:

What really is the meaning of the kenosis then as we see this in Philippians 2:6-7? It can be summarized by saying this is a pouring out or an emptying that takes place by adding, a subtraction, if you will, by addition. How does that work? Look again at verse 7: "He emptied himself *taking*," The word "taking" that follows is so instructive. How did he subtract? He did not take anything out of himself. He poured himself out taking the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man. So this indicates that Christ actually poured out or emptied by adding to himself.

So as Christ takes on human form, he takes on the limitations of human life and lives as one of us in order to live life as we do so that when we read in Philippians 2 as we read a little bit further, "That he being found in appearances of man," verse 8, "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." ⁴

⁴Ware

Theologians call this **co-existing** of both the human and divine the **hypostatic union**. Sounds intimidating but it's really not that bad.

Hypostatic means properly, *substance*; Union being the combining of the two: "human and divine." Both existing simultaneously.

Yet clearly there were limitations that Jesus willfully submitted Himself to as a man.

Consider this:

Both natures are necessary for redemption. As a man, Christ could represent man and die as a man; as God the death of Christ could have infinite value "sufficient to provide redemption for the sins of the world."

The eternal priesthood of Christ is based on the hypostatic union. "By incarnation He became Man and hence could act as a human Priest. As God, His priesthood could be everlasting after the order of Melchizedek, and He properly could be a Mediator between God and man."⁵

What are some of the distinctives about the humanity of the Jesus that the scriptures present to us.

Let's look at some as we prepare for communion.

HE WAS VIRGIN BORN

⁵ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

When we speak of the humanity of Christ it is appropriate to begin with a consideration of the virgin birth of Christ. Scripture clearly asserts that Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father.

^{NAU} Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

^{NAU} Luke 1:35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The doctrinal importance of the virgin birth is seen in at least two areas.

1. It shows that salvation ultimately must come from the Lord. Just as God had promised that the "seed" of the woman (Gen 3:15) would ultimately destroy the serpent, so God brought it about by his own power, not through mere human effort. The virgin birth of Christ is an unmistakable reminder that salvation can never come through human effort, but must be the work of God himself.

2. The virgin birth also makes possible Christ's true humanity without inherited sin. Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way in which every other human being has descended from Adam. And this helps us to understand why the legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ.

Luke 1:35 connects this conception by the Holy Spirit with the holiness or moral purity of Christ, and reflection on that fact allows us to understand that through the absence of a human father, Jesus was not fully descended from Adam, and that this break in the line of descent was the method God used to bring it about that Jesus was fully human yet did not share inherited sin from Adam.

HE HAD A TRUE BODY OF FLESH AND BLOOD

The body of Jesus “was like the bodies of other men except for those qualities which have resulted from human sin and failure.” Luke 1–2 describes Mary’s pregnancy and her giving birth to the child Jesus. He was not a phantom as the Docetists taught (explain).

HE HAD A NORMAL DEVELOPMENT

Luke 2:52 describes Jesus’ development in four areas: mental, physical, spiritual, and social. He continued to develop in His knowledge of things; He grew in His physical body; He developed in His spiritual awareness (there was no interaction with sin, of course, since He was sinless from birth until death); He developed in His social relationships.

HE HAD A HUMAN SOUL AND SPIRIT

Jesus was a complete human being, having a body, soul, and spirit. Prior to the cross, Jesus was troubled in His soul at the anticipation of the cross (John 12:27). There was a self-consciousness that He was to bear the sins of the world, and Jesus was overwhelmed at the prospect. At the prospect of His impending crucifixion Jesus was troubled in His human spirit (John 13:21); when He ultimately died He gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

HE HAD THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HUMAN BEING

When Jesus had fasted in the wilderness He became hungry (Matt. 4:2); when He and the disciples walked through Samaria He became tired and stopped at the well to rest (John 4:6); He was thirsty from the day’s journey in the heat (John 4:7). Jesus also experienced human emotions: He wept

at the scene of Lazarus' death; He felt compassion for the people because they were without capable leaders (Matt. 9:36); He experienced grief and wept over the city of Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41).⁶

So how can we wrap this up?

First of all, we have a man in glory that understands our plight, yet He's powerful enough to do something about it.

Let's prepare our hearts with some passages from Hebrews.

Hebrews 2 & 9 & 10

⁶ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan Publishing, 1994).

⁷ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

