

The Mind of Christ

Jesus – God Incarnate

Introduction

INTRODUCTION:

- I. For centuries man has been debating the question, “What is God really like?”
 - A. Unfortunately, the opinions have been as different as they have been contradictory.
 1. Even if we gathered a panel of the greatest religious leaders in the world to answer that question, we would still have differing and contradictory opinions.
 2. However, suppose someone stands up and says, “I am God! I am the way, the truth and the life.”
 - a. Now we have something we can verify – now we can examine His claim to see if He is speaking the truth or lying.
 - B. In the course of human history, one such man did stand up and call Himself God.
 1. He was Jesus of Nazareth, a man who lived and died nearly two thousand years ago, but has since turned the world upside down with His bold claim.

- II. Therefore, as we begin this series of studies, we're going to explore every facet we can about the life and character of Jesus.
 - A. If you've seen the recent movie "The Passion of the Christ," you know the story of how His life ended.
 - 1. You understand the horrific pain and suffering Jesus endured for us as He was scourged and ultimately crucified on the cross for our sins.
 - 2. But what about His life and His teaching? What about all that went before? And what about the resurrection of Jesus?
 - a. As good as it was, unfortunately the movie speaks very little about those things because the focus of the film was on the final hours of the life of Jesus leading to the crucifixion.
 - B. Therefore, in this study we want to begin at the beginning and take a close look at the life of Jesus – His entire life, from His lowly birth to His glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven.
 - 1. But more than simply look at the historical events in the life of Christ, we want to focus our attention more on the significance behind those events.
 - 2. We want to explore the mind of Christ and learn what we can about the real character and heart of Jesus.
 - b. In other words, we want to look at the life of Christ from the inside-out.

3. And there is a very good reason for doing this.
 - a. In the apostle Paul's letter to the church at Philippi he tells those first century Christians that they must have the "mind of Christ."
 - (1). **Philippians 2:5** – *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."*
- C. And so let's begin our journey together by attempting to understand something about why God became flesh and dwelled among us.
 1. To do this, we first need to become acquainted with two powerful passages of Scripture – one written by John, the other by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi.

BODY:

- I. When we speak of God becoming man, we speak of God coming ***Incarnate***, or speak of the ***Incarnation*** of God. But what does the term ***Incarnation*** mean?
 - A. In the simplest terms, the term incarnation means a union between God and man in the person of Jesus Christ.
 1. From all we know, this union took place at the moment of conception when both the divine nature of God and the human nature met and were melded together in a manner that is simply beyond our ability to completely understand.

2. Jesus was both fully God and fully man – He was coequal, coeternal, and coexistent with the Father in heaven.
 3. But during this incarnation, God the Son was clothed with humanity! These are the very thoughts expressed by the apostle John in the opening remarks of his wonderful gospel. (John 1:1-5, 14)
 4. **John 1:1-5, 14** – *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. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.... 14 And the Word became 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.*
- II. The most beautiful and breathtaking explanation of the incarnation of God the Son in the man Jesus of Nazareth is found in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians.
- A. In this scene, we see the Creator willingly submitting Himself to the laws of the very universe that He had created.
 1. **Philippians 2:5-11** – *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it*

robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. In emptying Himself, the Son did not shed His deity – in becoming a man, He did not become something LESS than God.
 3. Rather, He voluntarily released His grasp on His divine prerogatives and set aside the independent use of His powers as deity.
- B. As a man, Jesus could do two things – He could be tested (tempted) by Satan, and he could die (experience death).
1. In the 4th chapter of the book of Hebrews, the writer of the Hebrew epistle speaks regarding the fact that Jesus, as a man, experienced temptation, and goes on to tell us how this fact affects our relationship with Him.

- a. **Hebrews 4:14-16** – *“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
 - b. We have a Savior who has been there – who walked where we walk, hurt where we hurt, cried where we cry, ached where we ache.
 - c. And so, when we come to Him in time of need, He does not scold us or shake His head in disgust – He is sympathetic, because as God and man, He somehow subjected Himself to all we experience in life without once ever surrendering to sin.
 - d. He withstood the full fury of Satan’s agonizing attacks – the full measure of the whole emotionally wrenching ordeal.
2. Not only did Jesus endure the forceful attacks of Satan, He also experienced one other thing as a man – death. This was experienced in two ways.
 - a. In **Matthew 26:39**, the Scriptures tell us that when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was taken captive, He fell down on His face and prayed, “O My

*Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;
nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”*

- (1). Some believe that Jesus was dreading the horrors of the crucifixion, but I think it is much deeper than that. I believe that He was dreading the spiritual death He would experience when He took upon Himself the guilt of our sins.
- (2). In **Matthew 27:46**, during His crucifixion, just moments before He died, Jesus cried out, *“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”*
- (3). We aren’t told exactly why Jesus said those words at that moment, but my guess is that was the very moment when Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world, bearing the guilt of every sin that had been committed from the beginning of time, and every sin that would be committed till the end of time.
- (4). It could have also been at this moment that Jesus experienced horror of what it will be like for you and me to die in our sins – because for one brief moment, He experienced the abject terror and horror of being

separated from God – and the humanity of Jesus cries out *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”*

(5). In **Isaiah 53:4-6** the prophet Isaiah spoke of this when he wrote that the Suffering Servant, Jesus, would be *“Smitten by God and afflicted,”* and that *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”* And finally, *“the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

(6). Therefore, in one brief moment of time, Jesus experienced separation from God – spiritual death – as *“the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

b. Finally, in **Matthew 27:50**, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus also experienced physical death – the separation of His spirit from His fleshly body. Matthew’s account of the crucifixion goes on to say, *“Jesus, when He had cried out with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit.”*

(1). Just as our spirit leaves our body when we die, so the spirit of Jesus was yielded up when He died.

(2). As God clothed in humanity, Jesus knew what it was like to feel the physical pain of death -- to gasp for His last breath, to feel His heart stop (in this instance, He felt His

heart rupture under the physical strain associated with crucifixion), and He died.

3. Therefore, we see that Jesus was both God and man. And as man, He could do things He couldn't do as God – be tempted (**tested**) and die.
- C. Over and over again, the Scriptures cite examples of where the humanity of Jesus is revealed back-to-back with His divine nature – His deity.
1. In **Matthew chapter 14**, we can see both the human and the divine nature of Jesus.
 - a. Jesus shows His humanity through His dependence on the Father in prayer. **Matthew 14:22-23a** – *Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.*
 - b. And yet, Jesus demonstrates His deity by walking on the water. **Matthew 14:23b-33** – *Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. 25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the*

sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

2. Another example is seen in **Luke chapter 8**.
 - a. The humanity of Jesus can be seen in the deep sleep He had succumbed to when He was tired – physically exhausted – and needing rest. **Luke 8:22-23a** – *Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. 23 But as they sailed He fell asleep.*
 - b. However, the deity of Jesus can be clearly seen in His ability to command the winds and the waves – in His power over the

forces of nature. **Luke 8:23b-25** – *And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. 24 And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"*

3. Although there are other examples, consider **John chapter 11**.
 - a. Jesus had often gone to the small town of Bethany, just a few miles outside of Jerusalem, to rest and refresh Himself among the family of Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus. But on this occasion, Lazarus had died. In the verses that follow, we see the humanity of Jesus literally pouring off the pages.
 - b. **John 11:32-36** – *Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They*

said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

(1). The Scriptures tell us Jesus *"groaned in the spirit and was troubled,"* and that *"Jesus wept."*

- c. But back-to-back with this display of His humanity, we see the deity of Christ revealed in it's most powerful form when He raised Lazarus from the dead. **John 11:41-44** – *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."*

- III. This is what we mean when we speak of the ***Incarnation*** of God – of God the Son willingly leaving the glory of heaven, taking upon Himself the form of a man, and coming to the earth to live among His creation as a man – and yet, doing all this without giving up any of His deity.

- A. Just as Jesus could experience things as a man He could not experience as God, likewise, as God, He is able to do what no man could possibly do.
1. For one, He was able to authentically forgive sins – something no mere man could do.
 - a. In **Mark 2:7**, When Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic, some critics of Jesus reasoned in the hearts, *“Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*
 - b. In the verses that follow – **Mark 2:9-12** – to show these men that they were absolutely correct in saying God alone can forgive sins, Jesus said, *“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise, take up your bed and walk?” But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’ -- He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go your way to your house.’ And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying ‘We never saw anything like this!’”*

2. Because He was both God and man, Jesus is also able to be a mediator between ourselves and God -- in that He could faithfully represent both sides -- something no mere man could do.
 - a. It was a commonly understood fact that *“a mediator does not mediate for one only. . .”* (**Galatians 3:20a**) A mediator must be capable of representing both sides equally. The only One who could truly do this in the fullest sense of being a mediator, is Jesus -- because He was both God and man.
 - b. This is why, in **1 Timothy 2:5**, the apostle Paul wrote to the young evangelist Timothy saying, *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”*
3. And finally, because Jesus was both God and man, He was the only one who could be the propitiation for our sins.
 - a. In **1st John chapter 2**, John wrote, *“My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* (**1 John 2:1-2**)
 - b. The word **“propitiation”** literally means **“satisfaction”** -- it is used to speak of the need to satisfy the demands of justice.

- (1). In the 17th and 18th Centuries, it was not uncommon for someone who felt their honor had been defamed, to challenge the offending party to a duel.
- (2). The only way a man's honor could be restored would be for the **offending** party to be killed in the duel -- only then would the **offended** party have their "satisfaction."
 - (a). In other words, when the **offending** party was killed in the duel, that act would "satisfy" (or become a "*propitiation*" for) the one whose honor had been offended.
- c. Our sins have offended the honor and glory of God -- and by all right, we should have been forced to forfeit our lives.
 - (1). There is only one problem. The forfeiture of our lives would not have "*satisfied*" God's offended honor and glory.
 - (2). How could the death of sinful man restore the offended honor of the most high and holy God?
 - (3). That could only be accomplished by the death of someone who had never sinned.
- d. Therefore Jesus stepped forward to voluntarily take our place – to die in our place – so that God's offended honor and glory

could be “*satisfied*” in the death of **His** sinless Son, Jesus the Christ.

- (1). God the Father allowed His own Son to be sacrificed for our sins, and God the Son willingly allowed Himself to be sacrificed and to die in our place so that He could become the “*propitiation*” (the “*satisfaction*”) for our sins.
- (2). No man could possibly have satisfied God’s offended honor and glory. Only Jesus could do that because He was God wrapped in humanity – He was God incarnate!

CONCLUSION:

- I. When we look at Jesus, we need to keep in mind that we are looking at God the Son.
 - A. In Jesus, we see all the qualities and characteristics of deity – Jesus came for the express purpose of revealing God’s true character and nature to sinful mankind.
 1. This is why Jesus was able to say, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father.*” **(John 14:9)**
 2. This is also why Jesus was able to say, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?*” **(John 14:10)**
 - B. Therefore, this series of lessons is not simply going to take us into the Mind of Christ, but into the Mind and Heart of the Father as well.

1. It will help us better appreciate the indescribable love God has for us as His creation -- and how He is truly *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* **(2 Peter 3:9)**
 2. And it will help us see God as He really is -- like the Shepherd who will go out into the wilderness to seek and save even one sheep who is lost; and like the father of the prodigal son, who welcomes us back with open arms if we will only come to our senses and come back home.
- II. There is no greater way that God could have demonstrated His love for you and me than in giving His Son to die on the cross for us.
- A. Neither is there any greater way that God the Son (Jesus Christ) could have demonstrated His love for us than to willingly leave heaven, take on the form of a man, live as a man, and ultimately die as a man in the most cruel form imaginable by being crucified on a Roman cross.
 1. If your heart hasn't already been moved to a deeper appreciation and love for God and for Christ, I'm confident that by the time we conclude this study together, you will come to fully appreciate what God and Christ did for you, and you will be moved to surrender your life to Christ in complete obedience to His will.
 - B. The invitation to come to Christ is available to all at any time – and it's available to you right now.

