

HE STOOPS TO CONQUER

David C F Wright, DD

The question is asked, "How could Jesus Christ be human and Divine at the same time?"

The Bible does not seek to answer this and it has been wisely said that if the Scriptures are silent about something Christians would do well to be likewise.

The Trinity constitutes Father, Word and Holy Spirit (1 John 5.7). God the Father is a Spirit; He is invisible. Colossians 1 verse 15 refers to the Son as the image of the invisible God. This is the Lord Jesus who is the Son of God in Sinless Perfection. He has the same mind, will, character and purpose as the Father. John 1 verse 14 reminds us that the Word became flesh. He became a man. He became a person. He was born of a humble peasant girl. He laid aside the glory of heaven to take a body. He existed before the foundation of the world (John 17 verse 24) as the Eternal Word (John 1) and in an existence of glory. The Christmas carol puts it:

Mild, He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die.

Jesus Christ is the visible form of the Trinity. He said of Himself, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also." (John 14 verse 9).

The Lord Jesus is God. The Father is God. The Holy Spirit is God and, like the Father, is invisible. The Spirit has been described as the active power of God seen at work in the world.

The Trinity is, therefore, firstly, God the Father, invisible but characterised by immeasurable love and unfailing justice. He is Sovereign Lord of the Universe, the Almighty God., the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and, in fact, of all those who love him. Secondly, the Eternal Word who became flesh having a mortal body which spirits do not have. As Son, He was obedient to His Father. He said, "I come to do Thy Will, O My God." (Hebrews 10 verse 9). He prayed, "Lord, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done." (Luke 22 verse 42). It is written of Him that He was obedient unto death even the death of the Cross (Philippians 2 verse 8). Obedient to whom? To God His Father. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father at the request of the Son (John 14 verses 15 - 17) and the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ (John 15 Verse 26).

The Trinity is not three individuals or three gods. God is One and care should be taken in explaining this tremendous but complex subject. God is not three persons in the sense of a person being 'someone who acts on his own will and is independent of all others' as defined by many dictionaries. The Trinity does not constitute three independent persons. That would certainly create disunity. In any event the Father and the Spirit are invisible and have never taken a material body. They have not become human, flesh and blood. Only the Eternal Word became a person, became a man.

The great characteristic of the Trinity is unity; there is no disagreement, conflict or debate among them. We are told to pray to the Father, through Jesus Christ Our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Maker intercession with us (Romans 8 verse 26) but the Lord Jesus maketh intercession for us (Hebrews 7 verse 25) and that is before the Father.

When God appeared to people in the Old Testament it was pre-incarnation appearances of the Eternal Word who, in God's time, became a man. Sometimes He appeared as the Angel of the Lord. Consider the following examples:

1. Genesis 16 verse 7. By the fountain with Hagar. The Lord appeared to a Gentile slave girl. Note His tenderness (verse 8); His promise (verse 10) and Hagar's response (verse 13).
2. Numbers 22. It is curious that Balaam's ass saw the Angel of the Lord before Balaam did.
3. Judges 13 verse 3. At the announcement of the birth of Samson. Note the description of the Divine messenger in verse 6.
4. Judges 2 verse 4. The Angel of the Lord spoke to all Israel at Bochim.
5. Daniel 6. The Angel of the Lord shut the lions' mouths.

The Old Testament uses the Word Jehovah for these appearances. As C H Brown has written Jehovah became Jesus. We read in John 1 verse 14 that He became flesh when born of a woman. He was then Jehovah or the Angel of the Lord with a glorified spiritual body not a human one (Judges 13 verse 6). We do not read of Jehovah or the Angel of the Lord being weary, asleep or sorrowful but when Christ became a man He was made and tempted in all points as we are but without committing sin (Hebrews 4 verse 15). The Eternal Word became a man. He left His Glory. He went to the Cross and died. But He was still God. When He rose from the dead He was raised in a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15 verses 43 - 44). A spiritual body is a glorified body. This would probably explain why Mary did not recognise Him in the garden (John 20 verse 14). Yet she knew His voice which adds wonderfully to such verses as John 10 verse 4. The two on the Emmaus road did not recognise Him. With Philippians 3 verse 21 in mind the Lord on the day of resurrection reverted to the glorified Body He had before the manger. In Mark 16 verse 12 we read that He appeared in another form to two walking in the country. In another form might imply something other than human. It is wrong to suggest that the Lord is still human. He is glorified now. He is absolute Deity. He has reverted to His exalted position at the right hand of God the Father. While He was here He was a man yet remained God. He is now known in Heaven as the Eternal Word, eternal as, of course, is the Father and the Spirit (1 John 5 verse 7).

While He was on Earth as a man He was known as Jesus. This was a common name in Palestine and refers to His humanity. Today people still refer to Him just as Jesus. He deserves His full title. He is Lord. He is the Christ. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Not just Jesus. Not just a man. He is, one day, to have a new name (Revelation 19 verse 12) and I believe it is at this new name that every knee shall bow (Philippians 2 verse 9).

The Eternal Word of God became a man. Deity took on humanity. The Word physically became a man. He was born a helpless baby, subject to the authority of a home, ate, drank, slept, did a job of work for about eighteen years, learnt a trade and died. He was a man morally. He had a sense of duty. He, of all people, knew right and wrong, took opportunities and accepted responsibility. He was loyal to the social and political conditions of the time. He loved God and man. He knew self-denial, self-control, courage, calmness, patience, humanity, endurance and goodness. He was emotional in the sense that He loved. He got angry. He had compassion. He had a sense of humour and zeal. He was a man intellectually. He grew in wisdom, went to school, asked questions. But His mind was not subject to error since He did not sin. He was a man socially. He was a member of a family, went to a wedding, accepted invitations to dinner and wanted companionship. Yet it has to be emphasised that Christ's humanity was perfect not faulty. He did not sin. As a man He could be solemn and joyful; aloof and sociable; dignified and humble; profound but simple; severe and tender; energetic and restful; in fact, a man. Dr Graham Scroggie wrote that the Lord Jesus had no strong points since He had no weak ones. And yet He that became a man was Divine and eternally so!

This does not answer the question I posed at the beginning but it does cause me to consider the great stoop that the Word made in becoming a man to die for men in order that they may be saved and share

His glory. He stooped to conquer. And those of us who own Him as Lord and Saviour rejoice that He has won our hearts' affection.

In Thee, most perfectly expressed
The Father's glories shine
Of the full Deity possessed
Eternally Divine.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.

(1497)

(This is the text of a recorded address given at the Gospel Hall, Shanklin in Autumn 1988)

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