

HUMANITY OF CHRIST

“the man Christ Jesus”

Key question

In what sense is Christ’s humanity a challenge to our lives?

Key text

I Timothy 1:5

“There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Key Definition

Humanity of Christ

Jesus was fully human being subject to temptation yet without sin.

Introduction

The humanity of Jesus is important because:

1. He needed to fulfill the role of an OT priest.
2. He needed to be able to sympathize with and intercede for us. Heb.4:15
3. He needed to show us the meaning of perfect humanity.
4. He needed to model the Christian life.
5. He needed to affirm the goodness of humanity.
6. If he is to be our substitute, he must be one with us.
7. As our comforter and high priest he shares our suffering because of his humanity.

A. **The Biblical evidence for the humanity of Jesus is not hard to find in Scripture.**

1. **He was identified as a man.**

- **I Tim.1:5** “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
- **I Tim.3:16** “manifested in the flesh”
- **Jn.1:14** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”
- **I Jn.4:2-3** “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God”

2. **He identified himself as a man.**

- **Matt.4:4** “Man shall not live by bread alone.”
- **Jn.8:40** “Now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth . . .”

3. **His birth** - he was born of a woman.

- **Lk.2:52** “he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man”
Heb.5:8 “although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered;”
- **Matt.4:2** “he was hungry”
- **Jn.19:34** When the spear was thrust into his side, and water and blood mingled came out, this was a sign that he had already died.
- **I Jn.1:1** “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.”

4. **He experienced human emotions.**

- **Jn.13:23** “whom Jesus loved”
- **Lk.7:9** He marvels at the faith of the centurion.
- **Jn.11:35** “Jesus wept”

5. **He had special knowledge**

- **Lk.6:8, 9:47** He knew the thoughts of both his friends and his enemies.
- Most observers recognize that while Jesus confessed ignorance of some things, he never made an erroneous statement.

6. **He lived under the Law** as a member of the Old Covenant.

7. **The Genealogies of Jesus**

- a. The genealogies of Jesus appear in Matt.1:1-16 and Lk.3:23-38. They differ in that they begin and end at different places.
- b. Luke’s genealogy begins with Adam and traces the real or biological family tree through Mary. Matthew’s begins with Abraham and probably traces the legal genealogy through Joseph.
- c. When each gets to David they digress.
 1. Luke going through Nathan to Eli, father of Joseph. The absence of the article before Joseph (Lk.3:23) links Jesus directly with Eli and seemingly puts Joseph out of this genealogical line. In Jer.22:30 a curse is placed on Jehoiachin (Coniah) in that his children would never reign on the throne of David. Joseph was a descendant of Coniah suggesting that any son of Joseph could not be king. If this is so then we might expect that Mary, not Joseph was the intended termination of Luke’s genealogy.
 2. Matthew going through Solomon, identifying Jacob as the father of Joseph.
- d. It was understood by church fathers that Matthew gives the line of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, whereas Luke gives the lineage of Mary, his mother. This interpretation goes back to the fifth Christian century, if not earlier.

B. There are three early heresies regarding the humanity of Jesus.

1. **Docetism** - (to seem to appear) God could not really have become human because all matter is evil (Greek philosophy).
2. **Apollinarianism** - Jesus had a human body but not a human soul. This was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381.
3. **Neo Orthodoxy** - The humanity of Jesus is irrelevant in that it is the present encounter with the Christ not the historical Jesus that is important.

C. Jesus' identity as the second Adam may find meaning in his freedom from original sin.

1. The first Adam was a prototype of all mankind so that in his sin we all were contaminated as we were born of Adam's seed.
2. Jesus as the second Adam was the prototype of a new generation of people who would be free from Adam's defilement by virtue of being born of an incorruptible seed through new birth into Christ.
3. In this model Christ had to be born of a virgin woman and thus not corrupted by the seed of the man after Adam.

D. Could Jesus sin?

1. The word "peccability" which means "prone to sin" is a term associated with a theological question related to Jesus' life. Could someone who was fully God actually succumb to temptation and sin?
2. While Jesus could have sinned, it was certain that he would not.
 - **Heb.4:15** "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."
 - **Heb.7:26** "a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners,"
 - **Heb.9:14** "without blemish"
 - **I Jn.3:5** "In him there is no sin"
 - **II Cor.5:21** "knew no sin"
 - **Jn.8:29** "I always do what is pleasing to him who sent me"
 - **Jn.15:10** "I have kept my father's commandments"
3. While this issue has been debated for many years in the church it is not fundamental to an orthodox view of Christ. The arguments can be summarized in the following chart.

The Peccability versus Impeccability of Christ

	Peccability	Impeccability
Definition	Christ could sin.	Christ could not sin.
Key Phrase	Able not to sin (<i>Potuit non peccare</i>)	Not able to sin (<i>Non potuit peccare</i>)
Hebrews 4:15	Christ was tempted in all things as we are, yet he did not commit sin (sin is seen in its result). Real temptation admits the possibility of succumbing to the temptation.	Christ was tempted in all things as we are, but he did not have a sin nature (sin is seen as nature, or state of existence).
Question of True Humanity or True Deity	If Jesus could not sin, how could he be truly human?	If Jesus could sin, how could he be truly divine?

<p>Points of Agreement</p>	<p>Christ's temptations were real (Heb. 4:15). Christ experienced struggle (Matt. 26:36-46). Christ did not sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; James 5:6; 1 Peter 2:22; 3:18; 1 John 3:5).</p>	
<p>Logical Arguments for</p>	<p>If Christ could be tempted, then he could have sinned. Peccability is a necessary deduction from temptability. Temptation implies the possibility of sin.</p>	<p>Temptability does not imply susceptibility. Just because an army can be attacked does not mean that it can be conquered. This also proceeds from the false assumption that what applies to us also applies necessarily to Christ.</p>
	<p>If Christ was not able to sin, then the temptation was not real and he cannot sympathize with his people.</p>	<p>Although Christ's temptations are not always exactly parallel to our own, he was tried through his human nature as we are. However, he had no sin nature and he was a divine person also.</p>
	<p>If Christ is impeccable, then his temptations were slight.</p>	<p>Christ's temptations were in every way like ours except that they did not originate in evil forbidden desires. He was tempted from without, not from within.</p>
	<p>If Christ could not sin, then he had no free will.</p>	<p>Christ manifested his free will by not sinning. Christ was free to do the will of the Father. Being of one will with the Father, he was not free to go against that will.</p>

E. What are the practical implications of Jesus' humanity?

1. We are now to understand what it means to be fully human.
 - a. As Jesus grew in knowledge and wisdom so we should expect growth to be a normal part of perfect humanity.
 - b. As Jesus needed to maintain a relationship with God the Father in order to abide with Him and have fellowship with Him so should we.
 - c. As Jesus responded with love as he suffered abusive environments and relationships so are we to respond.
 - d. We are to respect one another because we are image bearers.
 - e. Just as the Parthenon is an example of marred magnificence so are we to see the dignity of humanity hidden in the depravity.
 - f. He learned obedience through suffering and so must we learn from pain.
2. In order to fulfill the demand for a sacrifice, Jesus became a high priest who offered Himself for the sins of the people.
3. **Philosophically**, the incarnation challenged and displaced (in Western thought) the dualism (matter / mentality) that characterized the thinking of the day.
4. **Sociologically**, the incarnation dignified the human race with the result that human rights, and respect for all people made sense.
5. **Anthropologically**, the incarnation indicates that humans are wired to relate intimately with God.
6. **Theologically**, the incarnation indicates that God in Christ has taken the initiative to draw near to mankind so as to understand our plight (weaknesses) and show authentic love to us. Heb.4:15
7. **Culturally**, the incarnation indicates that the suffering and hardship of this life is not only understood by God but is the place where He chooses to meet us.

F. What is the proper understanding of the significance of Mary the mother of Jesus?

1. General observations

- a. In the pre-ministry narratives of Jesus there are two people that receive special attention – John the Baptist and Mary.
- b. Mary does not receive any attention in the New Testament epistles or Acts.
 1. The New Testament is remarkable for its overt de-emphasis of Mary, as seen for example by four occasions when Jesus seemed to downplay Mary's maternal connection to him. The Gospels do not show Jesus creating for Mary a place of special honor or attention, nor to be of continuing importance to his followers.
 2. The New Testament epistles are full of the doctrinal significance of specific events of Jesus' life and death, but there is no apparent doctrinal significance attached to Mary's person or actions, with the one exception of the virgin birth.
- c. During the first centuries the Fathers and other Christian writers "rarely speak of Mary apart from Christ", but as the centuries passed, especially from the second half of the fourth century on, those same groups began to pay more attention to Mary (although the quantity of Marian literature produced in that period was still modest). It was after the Councils of Ephesus (431 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD) that there was a sharp increase in the level of Marian doctrine and devotion.
- d. **Theotokos** (mother of God) was a concept that was not rejected by the Reformers. All Christians agreed that:
 - Mary was a virgin before she gave birth to Jesus.
 - Mary is a type of womanhood that transcends culture.
 - Mary is a type of the church.
 - Mary is a sign of hope in the midst of despair.

2. The Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary

- a. The Roman church expanded Theotokos to support other doctrines that became fundamental to the true faith and salvation during the Middle Ages.
- b. Mary's **immaculate conception** – the notion adopted in 1852 as dogma that Mary was without original sin.
 1. Lk.1:28 "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Both theologically and philologically, it is claimed that the phrase "full of grace" indicates "a transformation of the subject, a perfection of grace."
 2. Protestant responses:
 - Lk.1:47 "spirit rejoices in God my Savior" Mary saw Jesus as her savior (from sin).
 - Rom.3:23 "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."
 - Mary died, giving evidence of being under sin's curse.
- c. Mary's **perpetual virginity** – Mary had no other children and remained a virgin all her life.
 1. This view is also held by the Eastern Orthodox church.
 2. The Protoevangelium of James (2nd cent.) first mentions this teaching.
 3. References to Jesus' "brothers" are to be understood as "half brothers" (Greek - ADELPHOI) Matt. 12:46; Mk.6:3; Jn.75; Acts 1:14; I Cor.9:5 but it must be noted that there were other Greek words that would have been more appropriate if this was the meaning.
- d. Mary's **bodily assumption** into heaven – Mary's body was not allowed to suffer decay.

1. The fact that her bones were not preserved by the ancient church, as with other saints, suggests that she was taken by God.
 2. There is no Scripture offered to support this doctrine.
 3. This became dogma in 1950.
- e. Mary's active intercession as **mediatrix** continues for all humanity –
1. As **coredemptrix** with Christ she cooperates with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed.
 2. But II Cor.5:19 tells us that there is “only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.”

Pastoral advice

What is the practical significance of the humanity of Jesus?

1. The fact that God could become a human tells us a lot about what and who we can and should be. Jesus is an example of what it means to be fully human.
2. In bringing the gospel message to a “new age” culture we have in Christ Jesus the model of what every “new age” heart longs to be. We need to understand how Jesus' life and teaching touch the felt needs of the non-Christian world in such a way that they will see him as “the treasure in a field.”

Questions that you should be able to answer.

- 1. Specific facts you should know.**
 - a. What is the strongest Biblical witness to the humanity of Jesus?
 - b. Where and how does Jesus claim to be human?
 - c. How did the early church explain the differences between the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke?
- 2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.**
 - a. What are the arguments for and against the proposition that Jesus could have sinned?
 - b. To what extent can we say that Jesus was tempted to sin as we are tempted?
 - c. Did Jesus ever have a desire to not follow the will of the Father?
 - d. How does the life of Christ demonstrate the true dignity of humanity?
 - e. In what ways can the humanity of Christ be used as an introduction to the gospel of the Kingdom in talking with non-Christians?