

"The man Christ Jesus"

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THAT JESUS WAS a man, and that he is still "like unto the Son of man" (Rev. 1:13), is a characteristic important for us to consider, and essential for the benefit of the children of men. It does not work against or contradict his Divine origin as the Son of God. But both origins are brought together and work together in "the Word . . . made flesh" (Jno. 1:14), both for the glory of the Father and also for the salvation of men, according to the desire of the Father, "Who will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Mankind's rebellion in Adam has caused their estrangement from God and led to His sentence on man of a dying nature: "dying thou shalt die". Ever since this rebellion and sentence, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12; Ps. 53:1,3). Sin and death are the basic problems of man's nature. The original companionship between the first human pair and the Divine angels brought happiness of life in the Garden. But this was shattered by the events recorded in Genesis 3, the fall of Adam and the resulting reality of death. This is what makes "the things concerning . . . the name of Jesus Christ" important and necessary. Jesus was purposed, prophesied and sent to remedy this situation.

"A man"

The fact that Jesus was a man, had the nature of man, and was recognised by others as a man is clear from the following scriptures:

"Jesus of Nazareth, a *man* approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22);

"Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold *the man!*" (Jno. 19:5);

"For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by *one man*, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many" (Rom. 5:15);

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, *the man* Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5);

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself like-

wise took part of *the same* . . . Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be *made like* unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:14,17);

"For since by man [Adam] came death, by *man* [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21).

The Son of man

A phrase that Jesus repeatedly uses of himself during his ministry is "the Son of man". This contrasts with the phrase, "the Son of God", which Jesus uses only sparingly. Through his mother Mary he was truly Son of man, though no man was literally his father. Christ was not formed by the will of man, but of God (Jno. 1:13). He was the Son of man in the sense of being the promised seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham and the seed of David—all this by being born of the "highly favoured" Mary (Lk. 1:28).

In the Old Testament, the phrase "son of man" is frequently applied in vision to Ezekiel as a representative man through whom God speaks to the rebellious house of Israel (2:1-7), that they (or some of them) might listen to God through him. He was not to be like them in their rebelliousness, but for their sakes to be representative of them before God and to bring them back to Him: "But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee" (v. 8).

He was to be a watchman for them (3:17), and a messenger of righteousness, that "the righteous sin not, and . . . live" (v. 21). In this sense Ezekiel was made a type of Jesus, who, like Ezekiel, came to instruct the house of Israel in the fear of the Lord and to remove their sin—though he did the latter more effectively than Ezekiel: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost . . . even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt. 18:11; 20:28).

Jesus continues to use this phrase of himself in relation to his second coming and glory: "When the *Son of man* shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (25:31). So there are things he shares with mortal men even after

his glorification. The same, of course, is true of all those raised from the state of mortality to glory at his return.

The nature of man

The fact that Jesus was truly man, a son of Adam, implies that he had those things that belong to a constitution of flesh and blood:

- 1 Its lust, desire and pride of life (1 Jno. 2:16), to which, however, he never gave in. In other humans these are only imperfectly controlled by the will (Rom. 7:18,23), and are also rather easily influenced by external circumstances.
- 2 Its dying nature, which was placed first upon Adam. Although life is temporarily renewed in each fresh generation of his children, the body eventually decays and dies the death imposed by God.

The nature of man, including his sentence to death, was the inherent nature of Christ, that he might be a true representative, able to understand the temptations and plead the forgiveness of his people successfully (Heb. 2:14,17; Rom. 8:3). To such a physical nature was added, by his begettal, the impress of the Divine character to the full extent that this was possible in such a medium, making him the Son of God (Jno. 1:14). The Father subsequently developed this through the education of the Son (Ps. 40:6-8). We see, then, that the physical nature of Jesus was identical to our own, but that in spiritual capabilities or application he was uniquely gifted.

Jesus alike but also different

Scripture portrays both the likeness of Jesus to other men and the difference. The following is a selection of passages which illustrate this (the likenesses are highlighted in italic script and the differences in bold):

“Thou **hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity**; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above *thy fellows*” (Heb. 1:9, quoting from Ps. 45:7) (this passage, whilst acknowledging that all members of mankind are Christ’s fellows, makes the distinction that the Son loved righteousness and hated iniquity, something that none of his fellows has been able to match); “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, *he also himself likewise took part of the same*; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14);

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God **sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh**, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3); “. . . and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ *is come in the flesh* is not of God” (1 Jno. 4:3).

He had feelings common to man and he felt for other men and women:

“He is despised and rejected of men; *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3); “Jesus *wept*” (Jno. 11:35);

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be *made like unto his brethren*, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17);

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (4:15);

“. . . and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted, and the **branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself**. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance. Let Thy hand be upon *the man* of Thy right hand, upon *the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself*” (Ps. 80:15-17).

The phrases “all things” and “all points” in these verses are very definite expressions, making it clear that Jesus was like us.

His temptations

This likeness of Jesus to ourselves includes his ability to be tempted. But just as the actual temptations that we encounter vary among ourselves to quite a large degree, so too the circumstances of Jesus and the powers he was given meant that he encountered temptations that we do not, or that are rare among us. However, the three classifications of temptation listed by John as mentioned above—“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jno. 2:16)—apply to Jesus as much as to ourselves; they are part of our common nature.

This aspect of the nature of Christ is highlighted in the Gospel records. The first thing that happened after the confirmation of the Divine Sonship at his baptism and his anointing with power was not some further confirmation of that authority by the demonstration of his

power, but a series of personal trials when he was led away into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. This was the most urgent need, appropriate not merely because he had received power, but also because he had our nature and had come to turn around the effects of Adam's sin. Expressing them cursorily, the temptations were:

- 1 to misuse the power by putting his natural needs before his spiritual ones;
- 2 to presume on the mercy and love of God by demanding a demonstration of His care for His Son;
- 3 to satisfy a desire for the glory and power of the world.

Subsequently, similar temptations recurred during his ministry as he strove to bring the people closer to God. There was the occasion following the feeding of the five thousand when he realised that the people wanted to take him by force to make him king, and he avoided the situation by sending the disciples and the people away while he went into the mountain to spend all night in prayer (Jno. 6:15; Mt. 14:22,23).

There was also the occasion when Peter could not accept his Master's revelation about his death and tried to persuade him that he should not suffer many things and be killed by the Jews. When he turned to look at Peter, he rebuked him with words that are reminiscent of his conversation with Satan in the wilderness: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Mt. 16:22,23; Mk. 8:32,33; cf. Lk. 4:8).

Jesus's capability of being tempted like us follows from his having the same nature as ourselves. The reality of this temptation is clear in Gethsemane, when Jesus prays: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk. 22:42-44).

"Yet without sin"

In spite of the reality of his temptation, Jesus "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22); of him it is said: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). This is the all-impor-

tant feature in which Jesus was different from other men.

But his sinlessness was not a foregone conclusion. It was so difficult for him, being a man, that we, putting ourselves into his position, would say it was asking too much, it was impossible: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him That was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared . . ." (5:7).

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (9:28). Jesus's sinlessness in his life is needed by us all to receive salvation from our sins.

Power to save

The sufferings of Jesus's life and ministry, his sinlessness, and his resurrection in power, mean that he is able to save us: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He is the leader for us to follow. He is the one by whom God creates all His children, who like stars will form the glorious heavens of the new creation: "For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (2:10). Jesus was made complete and perfect for his place as leader through his sufferings, which he could only experience as a man.

Though rich, yet he became poor

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). One of the things Jesus gave up was his immediate right to the crown of Israel: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mt. 26:53). They would have saved Jesus from arrest and enabled him to become King of the Jews (Jno. 18:33,36). They would have enabled him to conquer "all the kingdoms of the world" (Mt. 4:8).

But the Scriptures declared the purpose of his coming to be so much more valuable to the world than that, and how could he have fulfilled the Scripture if he had claimed these powers at that time (26:54)? Instead, his rights as Son of God

were played down for our sakes. He laid down his life with its great qualities. In all this Christ showed faith in God that at the right time the promises about him would be fulfilled. He believed the prophecies, such as that quoted by Peter:

“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1 Pet. 2:6,7).

Giving up the riches made him precious to us.

Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7,8). It was because of this that “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (v. 9).

The compassion of Jesus, and his day-to-day giving of himself for the people, is something emphasised in the Gospels. From one Gospel alone we find the following examples:

“when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with *compassion* on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Mt. 9:36);

“Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with *compassion* toward them, and he healed their sick” (14:14);

“I have *compassion* on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way” (15:32);

“Jesus had *compassion* on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him” (20:34).

This was an important aspect of Christ’s humanity and his feeling for his fellows. However, we have to recognise that ordinary men and women are often short of mercy and compas-

sion. Compassion is not a universal feature of mankind. On the other hand, the Father of our Lord Jesus *is* full of compassion and plenteous in mercy, as the Old Testament frequently tells us. Jesus’s inheritance from his Father would have encouraged the same in him.

Appointed mediator and judge

When Christ returns, it will be because he is the Son of man and appreciates the difficulties of human temptation that he will be suited to perform the important function of judge. Thus we read: “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (Jno. 5:26,27).

Meanwhile he is suited also to continue his functions of intercessor and mediator:

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18);

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (4:15,16);

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (9:15).

Conclusion

Could there have been another as able to fulfil all God’s requirements as the Son of man? This is not a question that mere mortals can answer, except to say that there has been no other, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). But there has been one who is uniquely “Lord”, who did no sin, and has “given himself for us” (Eph. 4:5; 5:2).