

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

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Speaker: Mr. David Pulman

The Person of Christ: Is Jesus Man?

In March this year, my wife and I became grandparents for the fifth time. It was a moment of great excitement for all involved. Within hours visitors started arriving at the hospital to see the new baby, Megan Joy, and all were anxious to know if both mother and baby were well. As time goes by, Megan's large family into which she has been born will lovingly watch her progress and development from baby to adult.

When confronted with the question as to whether Jesus was a real person, it seems obvious to start from the beginning. We need to look and see what the Bible has to say. The Scriptures show us that from the moment that Mary became pregnant, to when Jesus died on the cross, thousands observed this Person. Nowhere do we have record of any criticism as to His manhood. In fact, the reverse was true; Jesus was thought to be just a man and not both God and man in one person. I would like to consider the manhood of Jesus under the following seven headings:

1. Mary is pregnant.
2. His birth.
3. His early years.
4. His occupation.
5. His public life.
6. His feelings and emotion; and lastly
7. His death.

Each of these headings show that at every stage of His life, Jesus was observed by family, friends and enemies and no one doubted that He was a real person.

1. Mary is pregnant.

In Matthew 1:18-25, we have two people, Joseph and Mary, who are engaged. However, before the marriage is fully completed according to Jewish custom, Mary "was found with child"; she is pregnant. Joseph is upset but such was his love for Mary that he wants to put her away privately so that she is not subject to public disgrace. It takes an angel with a message from God, in a dream, to calm Joseph's worries. The angel declares that this event was of God as foretold by the prophets. Joseph is reassured and continues with the marriage but has no physical relationship as husband to a wife until after the birth of Jesus. It is difficult to hide a pregnancy but in the end Joseph did not try to do so.

Also Mary, instead of trying to hide, went to tell her cousin Elizabeth. To be chosen as the one to give birth to the Son of God incarnate was a special event. The angel had said to Mary, "Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" This can be read more fully in Luke 1:26-56.

In Philippians 2:7 and 8 we have the apostle Paul writing about the coming into the world of the Lord Jesus, "coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man". The force of this phrase is that Jesus became a man in every way. He had not been this before. This leads us to the next point.

2. His birth.

We are all probably aware of the Christmas story. The inn is full and Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable, using a manger as a cot. This event does not go unnoticed. An angel announces the birth to shepherds who were working in the countryside outside the city of Bethlehem. The announcement is "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David (that is Bethlehem) a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". So unusual is the event that the shepherds go into the city to see what has happened. They find the baby in the manger as the angel had said. Now the angel's message contains remarkable news, the long promised Messiah has been born. It is not just any baby but a baby of great special significance. So much so that the shepherds spread the news and people wondered about those things they were told. This event can be read in detail in Luke 2:1-20.

It was the custom for all Jewish male children to be circumcised at eight days old. Jesus was not exempt from this requirement (read Luke 2:21): “and when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus”.

We need to return to Matthew 2:1-18 for the next major event. This was the occasion of the wise men who came looking for the King of the Jews. The wise men, King Herod, the chief priests and scribes did not consider the birth of the promised Messiah unusual but simply the fulfilling of what God had promised. However, the event was not greeted with joy by those in Jerusalem, so much so that Herod attempted to kill Jesus by killing all the young children from two years and under in and around Bethlehem. However, Joseph is warned by an angel of the Lord; “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him”. Therefore Joseph takes his family and escapes to Egypt.

3. His early years.

Eventually the angel of the Lord returns to Joseph and says, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life”. So Joseph and family return from Egypt and settle in Nazareth. Read Matthew 2:19-23 for the full detail. From then until the age of twelve it says “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (read Luke 2:40).

In Luke 2:41-52 we have an event recorded when Jesus was twelve years old. It was the family custom, along with many others, to go to Jerusalem for the Passover feast every year. On this occasion Jesus does not return with his parents at the end of the feast. His parents are unaware of this fact until the end of the first day of their journey home. “They sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not they turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him”. Three days have elapsed before they found Jesus in the temple. Jesus was in conversation with the wise doctors of learning. “All that heard [Jesus] were astonished at his understanding and answers”. After this episode Jesus returns to Nazareth with His parents. The rest of His early years are summarised in verse 52: “and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”.

4. His occupation.

In Matthew 13:55 we have the question raised, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” and in Mark 6:3, “Is not this the carpenter?” We see from the above scriptures that Joseph was a carpenter and that Jesus followed in the same family occupation. It is possible that Jesus became the “bread winner”, as we say, since we hear no more of Joseph after the early years of Jesus.

The people of Nazareth and possibly the surrounding area would know the local carpenter. Carpenters would be essential craftsmen providing services for a variety of people. Those who required furniture, for the construction of houses and other buildings, making and repairing equipment, and probably much more. Many people would meet Jesus in His work situation.

5. His public life.

The public life of Jesus commenced when he was about the age of thirty (see Luke 3:23). It was not long before Jesus gathered a band of disciples around Himself. The disciples were not confined to only the twelve apostles. From 1 Corinthians 15:6, we know that more than 500 were counted as disciples as they were witnesses to His resurrection. Scripture only records that disciples were witnesses to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Although there was this large number of disciples, it was probably a smaller band that spent a large part of three years in almost permanent company with Jesus. In Luke 10:1 we read of seventy being commissioned to go and preach.

Jesus lived in various places and stayed with others on His travels. Nazareth was His home town but He also dwelt in Capernaum (see Matthew 4:13). If we search the Gospels, many more places will be found where Jesus either visited or stayed.

Then we have the many occasions when Jesus was invited to feasts, sitting with both His disciples and critics. There were times when multitudes were fed, 5,000 and 4,000 men besides women and children (read Matthew 14:21, and 15:38). Crowds of people often gathered to listen to Jesus, and sometimes miracles were performed.

Jesus did not hide Himself away but was accessible to all whether to the blind beggar at the road side, or to the touch of his garment by a poor unfortunate woman in the crowd, or to those He met at funerals when He raised the dead. Jesus was the most accessible of men, here to meet the need of poor mankind.

6. His feelings and emotions.

Did Jesus have the same kind of emotions or feelings that we have? The answer must be yes, but all in the context of holiness, righteousness and divine love. In Matthew 4:2, we read "and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred". Jesus needed to eat just like any other person.

In Mark 4:38, we read "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him". Jesus needed to sleep like any other. However He demonstrated in calming the storm that He was also God.

In John 2:16 and 17 we have Jesus showing zeal, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up". Jesus had driven out the merchants from the temple as it was His Father's house, a house of prayer.

In John 4:6 and 7 we have Jesus as the weary and thirsty traveller. "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink".

When we get to John 11:33, we find that Jesus is deeply moved in His spirit and troubled in Himself when He sees the effect of death on the sisters of Lazarus. In verse 35, we find Jesus shedding tears when at the grave of Lazarus. Who is not troubled when death has come in to claim someone we know? Jesus was just such a person.

In Matthew 26:38, we find Jesus sorrowful in soul as He contemplates the approach of the cross. Who but Jesus alone could understand the full horror of sin, death and judgment?

Lastly throughout the Gospels we find the love of Jesus being shown not only to His disciples and those who sought His help, but also to many who listened to His words of salvation and life even though they turned their back and walked away from Him.

7. His death.

There are those who think that the Lord Jesus did not really die; but what does Scripture say? Before the cross, the Lord said on a number of occasions that He would be killed. For example, in Matthew 16:21, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day".

In the garden of Gethsemane the Lord was concerned about His death, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). Calvary and all that it included was no light matter. For the Lord the cross was much more than death; it was the dealing with God's judgment for sin. The Lord was to become the only acceptable offering for sin. Hebrews 9:26 reads, "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself".

When Jesus was before Pilate and Pilate sought to provide some kind of justice, we find that Pilate's wife has a dream and as a result sends a message to her husband, "have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). This was no doubt a warning to Pilate to be careful about this "just man". We have Pilate's own conclusion also, repeated to the Jewish leaders, "I find no fault in this man" (read Luke 23:4 and 14).

The Roman military were experts in crucifixion. They invented this form of death, although God foretold this type of death in Psalm 22. Verse 14 reads, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it has melted within me" - a fitting description of someone being crucified. When the work of meeting the judgment of God was completed, then the Lord laid down His life, as only God could do (read John 19:30). However this does not take away from His sufferings as the perfect sinless Man, the One who was crucified, and as being the sacrifice for sin. In Hebrews 10:12, we read "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God".

During the crucifixion, one of the others being crucified said to his companion in crime, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom". It is interesting that this criminal spoke of and to Jesus as both man and God.

Would the Romans know if someone faked their death? We read in John 19:32, "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him". This was done to hasten their death. Then in verses 33 and 34, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water". There could be no mistake that Jesus was dead!

Then it is recorded that Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and placed it in a tomb (read John 19:38-42). The body was still there the next day when the Jews had authority from Pilate to seal the stone that blocked the entrance to the tomb and to set a guard (read Matthew 27:62-66).

Lastly the Lord Himself in resurrection testifies to His death by saying "I am he that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18).

To conclude.

During the life of the Lord Jesus here on earth there were thousands of people who observed Him. At no time do we have any indication that He was not a real person. The scriptures are careful to remind us that Jesus was completely without sin. There are four specific scriptures which remind us of this;

1. 2 Corinthians 5:21: "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin".
2. Hebrews 4:15: "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet sin".
3. 1 Peter 2:22 "who did no sin".
4. Lastly, 1 John 3:5, "in him is no sin".

Jesus spoke of Himself as "a man that has told you the truth" (read John 8:40). Do we today believe Jesus?

Without Jesus being a real person and also sinless, He could not have been an acceptable sacrifice to deal with sin and to make salvation available to whoever believes on Him and His finished work. As Paul states in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". Only one who was truly man, yet truly God at the same time, could be an acceptable mediator between God and men. Today, there is no other way to God except by the risen man Christ Jesus. This is why it is important to believe that Jesus was a real person in every way.

Let us pray.

Our God and Father we give thanks for Jesus Thy beloved Son, for the fact that Jesus was a real man, without sin, and that a full and free Salvation is available to whoever believes in Him and His finished work. Amen

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