

Fellowship Bible Church 12/11/2016

Without Humanity There is No Christmas

John 1:6-14

The Man and the Birds by *Paul Harvey*

The man to whom I'm going to introduce you was not a scrooge. He was a kind decent, mostly good man, generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn't believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas Time. It just didn't make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn't swallow the Jesus Story, about God coming to Earth as a man.

"I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, *"but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve."* He said he'd feel like a hypocrite. That he'd much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the midnight service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound... Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a thud... At first he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window. Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.

Quickly he put on a coat, galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs, and continued to flap around

helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them... He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms... Instead, they scattered in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn. And then, he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me... That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

"If only I could be a bird," he thought to himself, *"and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to safe, warm... to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see, and hear and understand."*

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells – O Come All Ye Faithful – listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas.

And he sank to his knees in the snow.

In our message last week we discussed the importance of Jesus' deity at Christmas. We considered Biblical evidence from the author John, Old Testament prophets, creation, others and Jesus Himself. Jesus affirmed His own deity by the message He proclaimed and the miracles He performed. Scripture affirms the deity of Jesus.

As in the story by Paul Harvey many people view His deity as something frightening. They are afraid of Him, and to a degree rightly so since He holds all things in His hands. They see Him in the Old Testament as cruel instead of compassionate. They do not see that all along the intentions of God have been to save people not sentence them. His plan was to rescue not seek revenge, but in order to do that He would have to become one of us. God would have to become man.

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Let me once again refer to the words of Paul Enns whom I quoted last week, *“His divine nature made Him fit for the work of Redeemer; His human body allowed Him to shed the blood necessary to redeem. No human being with a sin nature could meet the requirements to become the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.”*

Throughout history many have attempted to discredit the claims of Jesus. More effort has been given to disprove His deity than His humanity. After all, if He is not God then He has no power over their lives, His commands have no bearing on them, and His promises are empty gestures.

Whether a person believes or not does not alter the reality of His deity. We can no more wish away His deity than we could to wish away the sun, or wish to increase our height. In spite of the overwhelming evidence that man has landed on the moon, there are still those who believe it’s a hoax. In spite of the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is God, there are many who believe it isn’t true.

But I believe because the Bible says He is God then it’s true. The Bible also speaks the same about His humanity. I hope by the end of our time together that you will understand a little better the dual nature of Christ existing in one person and that both His deity and humanity are essential to Christmas.

This morning I want to look at the humanity of Jesus in a similar way we considered His deity.
The evidence for His humanity
The importance of His humanity

I. THE EVIDENCE FOR HIS HUMANITY

During the third, fourth, and fifth centuries several erroneous views of Christ surfaced.

One taught that Christ was essentially two separate people in one body. One was divine and the other was human. Nowhere in Scripture is it taught that

the human nature of Christ is a separate or independent person from His deity. Christ was not schizophrenic. He never referred to Himself as “we” but always in the singular form of “I”. And neither do we read that His human nature did one thing or that His divine nature did another. There is the paradox though as to how He as God could know everything, but yet as a man be limited in His knowledge to things like the day in which He would return to earth.

Another heresy taught that only the body was human while the mind or spirit was divine. This was rejected because church leaders realized that both the human mind or spirit and the human body need salvation, not just the body. Hebrews 2:17 says that Christ had to be fully human if He was to save us.

A third heresy taught that Christ did not fully remain human or divine at the same time. It taught that the human nature was absorbed by the divine nature, like mixing ink and water together where the result is a mixture of the two.

For Jesus to save us He needed to be fully God and fully man at the same time. These heresies fall short of that truth.

There is a theological term used that describes this union of the divine and human natures into one. It’s called the hypostatic union. That simply translates into the word “being.” It’s used in Philippians 2:6-7 when Paul writes *“Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*

The word “nature” (NIV) or “form” (KJV) refers to the inner essence or reality of Christ as God, so that in His incarnation He completely embraced perfect humanity. Though He was full deity He willingly set aside the use of His deity to become a man.

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Zuck and Walvoord in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* write “As God He had all the rights of deity, and yet during His incarnate state He surrendered His right to manifest Himself visibly as the God of all splendor and glory.” That’s what Satan attempted to do when He tempted Jesus, to use His deity to His own advantage. Instead, Jesus chose to embrace His humanity. So the hypostatic union is a fancy way of talking about the incarnation when God became man, having both a human and divine nature.

The late Dr. John Walvoord, who taught many years at Dallas Seminary wrote a beautiful poem that was put to music by Don Wyrzten. It is the essence of the Christmas story and speaks both to the deity and the humanity of Jesus and to the purpose for which He came to earth. Unfortunately it is not in our hymnal. You may know it though. The title is simply Love Was When.

Love was when God became a Man,
Locked in time and space, without rank or place;
Love was God born of Jewish kin;
Just a carpenter with some fishermen.

Love was when Jesus walked in history,
Lovingly He brought a new life that's free,
Love was God nailed to bleed and die
To reach and love one such as I.

Love was when God became a Man,
Down where I could see Love that reached to me;
Love was God dying for my sin
And so trapped was I my whole world caved in.

Love was when Jesus met me, now it's real;
Lovingly He came, I can feel He's real!
Love was God, only He would try
To reach and love one such as I.

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Throughout history various church groups and

councils penned words of affirmation about their beliefs compiling them into a creed. Some churches or denominations recite these each week in their service as a declaration of what they believe about major doctrines. For example the Apostles Creed says this about Christ:

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven, He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Commenting about the Chalcedonian Creed, Louis Sperry Chafer writes “*The Chalcedonian Creed stated that the two ‘natures’ were united without mixture, without change, without division, and without separation. This means that the entire complex of the attributes of Deity and those of perfect humanity were maintained in Jesus Christ at all times since His incarnation. There is no mixture of divine and human attributes (sort of as a 50/50 or 80/20 or 5:1), no change in either complex (so that He became less God or more man), no dividing of them, and no separating them so as to have two persons. Orthodoxy says Jesus has two natures comprising one person or hypostasis forever.*”

I mentioned last week that when we gaze into the manger at that tiny infant lying wrapped in strips of cloth – that is God. He is the expression of God’s love to us in sending the means by which we could be saved. Understand that His birth does not save, but that now salvation would come through Him. It would now be possible for us to experience peace with God as the angels announced to the shepherds on the night of His birth. Gabriel told Joseph that the child’s name was to be Jesus “because He will save His people from their sins.”

That infant lying in the manger was both God and human at the same time. In that infant lay the hope of all mankind. He did not grow into deity or

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become deity later on. Jesus was just as much God at that moment and every moment as He was human. At His birth He became Emmanuel – God with us.

Now let's jump ahead to verse 14 for a moment. This verse confirms what we have been talking about. This verse attests to His dual nature. The Word who was God (verse 1) is also human. Here is His incarnation. Here is the identity of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."

There is and always only will be only one who was the Word who then became flesh. There will only ever be one virgin birth when God became man.

So when it says that the Word, Jesus, became flesh it does not mean that He ceased to be God. He did not give up His divine nature as some have come to interpret Philippians 2. He was fully and completely God, but yet fully and completely man. He became man taking on human nature while at the same time retaining His deity. They were not mutually exclusive where He had to choose between one and the other. He was both at the same time.

We considered last week that Jesus was God by the evidence presented in Scripture, now let's consider the evidence of His humanity.

A. The Evidence of John the Baptist

Our text tells us that it was the responsibility of John to be a witness of Jesus and verse 7 gives us the reason. "He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through Him (the light) all men might believe."

Now perhaps the most depressing verses in the entire Bible are found in this passage. Notice

verses 10-11.

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him."

The sober reality of these verses is very evident in The Message: He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice. He came to his own people, but they didn't want him."

Imagine how you would feel on Christmas morning if you had spent a considerable amount of time and effort coming up with the perfect gift for someone you love only for them to thumb their nose at it because they didn't want it. That's what the world has done to Jesus.

Some might conclude based on that passage that if John's job was to spread the news about the light that he didn't do a very good job. But John 3:19 gives us the answer as to why they didn't recognize Him or want Him. It says they loved darkness more than the light.

Our passage says that He even went to His own people and even they rejected Him. They chose not to know Him. They had every resource available to know Him and yet when He came they scorned Him. They had the Old Testament, the Temple, and Moses and they refused to believe Jesus was the Messiah. They had the prophetic proof surrounding His birth and instead of accepting spiritual truth, they held to their religious traditions.

According to verse 13 they chose to believe that spiritual life was a right by birth, or by their own will, or even by someone else. This passage makes it clear that's not the case at all. We'll see that in a moment when we consider the importance of His humanity at Christmas.

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We read in Luke 1:13-17 that John was sent ahead of Jesus in order to bring many people back to God, to prepare the way for the Lord. But they choose to ignore his message and live in darkness instead.

Imagine for a moment two very different dining experiences.

The one is of an elegant setting. The table is ornately decorated with the finest crystal. Rare cut flowers serve as a center piece. Solid silver utensils are set around dinnerware of the best china. A waiter stands nearby to meet your every request. The presentation of the food is exquisite; every detail has been carefully planned and prepared. Each course is brought out that touches the sense of sight, smell and taste in unique and different ways. Lightly breaded salmon sits on a bed of wild rice. You can smell the aroma of blended lemon with fresh herbs and seasoning that garnishes the entre. It is the best of everything, but it's not just for one meal, it's every day, every meal. You leave each meal completely satisfied.

On the other hand consider an alternate dining experience. All of what I described is at your fingertips. Invitations have been sent by various means to encourage you to join others, yet you choose instead to go down to the city dump to forage through the bags of trash heaped everywhere for something to eat. You rummage for scraps of moldy bread or scrape off the maggots from a few rancid chicken bones. You sip putrid water from an old tennis shoe pulled from the manure pile. The filth and nauseating stench of rotting debris hangs thick in the air. You would rather eat with the rats than with the rich. You leave just as hungry as when you came. There is nothing at all pleasant in that place. You choose this over the splendor and opulence of the other. It's a stark contrast.

John told them about the light, but they chose darkness instead.

B. The Evidence of the Apostle John

Again, verse 14 says Jesus became flesh. The humanity of Jesus became a test of the orthodoxy of the early church.

I John 4:2-3a "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God."

John wrote something similar in his second epistle. "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist." (II John 7)

There are a lot of people who either want to deny the evidence of Jesus' existence all together or they want to downplay His nature as being just a good man or a good teacher. They want to acknowledge that He was human, but they don't want to acknowledge that He was a perfect human, God in the flesh. Some consider that He willingly lied to people in order to mislead them. Others believe that His claims came from someone who was crazy.

John tells us that God became flesh and lived among us. Not believing makes you an antichrist.

C. The Evidence of Jesus' Humanity

There is the physical evidence

He was born – Luke 2:7

He was hungry – Matthew 4:2

He grew – Luke 2:40, 52

He was thirsty – John 19:28

He was tired – John 4:6

He was tempted – Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:1-11

He grew weak – Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26

He died – Luke 23:46

He had a real body after the resurrection – Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 27

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There is emotional evidence:

He showed love and compassion – Matthew 9:36

He wept – John 11:35

He marveled – Matthew 18:10

His soul was sorrowful – Matthew 26:38

He was deeply troubled – John 12:27

John Calvin said *“He put on our feelings as well as our flesh.”*

This One who lies helpless in the manger is both fully God and fully man. We have evidence from many different sources. I John 1:1 clearly says *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”*

Oswald Chambers wrote *“The how of His birth becomes believable when the who of His birth is taken into consideration.”* It is possible with God.

He did not merely mimic these life experiences. Just like you and me He felt them and faced them. In every way He was human, with one exception – He was sinless.

So why was it necessary for Him to embrace humanity by becoming flesh and blood as we are?

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS HUMANITY

If this passage expresses one of the gloomiest verses in all of Scripture, it also contains one of the greatest verses.

v. 12 *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*

While many choose to live in darkness, there are those who choose to believe in His name in order to become the children of God. That is not possible if

Jesus was not God and was not man.

David Mathis, executive editor of *Desiring God* said *“He became man in full so that He might save us in full.”*

At the end of a synopsis of Aunt Mary’s life written for her Memorial service it reads *“It was her constant prayer that all would come to a saving knowledge of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*

That is God’s heart that all be saved and in order for that to happen, the eternal God, Jesus had to become the incarnate Word, born of a virgin, born among men.

That right or authority to become the child of God is never by human achievement but only by His grace through faith, yet, as one author notes, *“the imparting of the gift is dependent on man’s reception of it, as the words ‘received’ and ‘believed’ make clear.”*

It is not the name alone that saves, but what that name signifies. It is to believe that it was Jesus who came to save us from our sins as was told Joseph. This verse presupposes a recognition on my part that I am a sinner. It is not enough just to believe, I must also receive. The offended God became a man in order to die for those who offended Him so that the guilt of those who believe and receive could be removed thereby granting us the privilege of being called His children.

Sin is our biggest problem and Jesus incarnated Himself in order to save us from our sins through His death, burial, and resurrection. In the incarnation a holy God became sinless man to become the perfect sacrifice that would pay our debt for sin. If He was only God He could not die for sin. If He was only man, His death would have accomplished nothing for us. This Christmas let’s remember both His deity and His humanity are necessary and if you haven’t yet, believe and receive Him that you might become a child of God.