

Why did Christ Come in the Flesh?

There can be no doubt that all that Christ has done or will do are proofs of Divine Love towards our fallen humanity. It is safe to assume that man's necessities are all taken into account in the gospel. More than man needs would not be gospel; less than he needs would be an imperfect provision; neither is possible to an Infinite Provider.

That Christ as an intelligent person had a glorious existence with the Father before the creation of the world seems clearly the teaching of the Bible. Proofs of His preexistence have been given. In this article we regard it as proved. From this stand-point we proceed.

When He left the glory He had with the Father, He did not die. The glory of that life and the life itself should not be confounded. There are some who regard Christ, while on Earth, as a mere man with a fallen nature. Others regard Him, during the same period, as a mere man with an unfallen or perfect human nature. Of the two we believe the latter view is nearer the truth. But we believe the Bible teaches that He was more than human.

That He was a mere man, whether with a fallen or a perfect nature, seems inconsistent with the idea of His preexistence; and yet both the classes referred to above believe in His preexistence. If He was Divine, and ceased to be Divine when He came in the flesh, where is the security that we will not lose our Divinity when we are made like Him?

It seems clear that His Divinity was retained in humanity because He repeatedly spoke of Himself as having come down from heaven, and because He, though passing through trial and sorrow as a man, was yet possessed of the authority and exercised the prerogatives of a God. He was the object of unreproved worship

even when a babe, by the wise men who came to see the new-born King. Matt. 2:2-11. Even the angels delighted to do Him honor. "When He bringeth the first-begotten into the world, He saith, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:6.

He never reproved any one for acts of worship offered to Himself, but when Cornelius offered such service to Peter – the leading apostle – "he took him up, saying, stand up; I myself also am a man." Acts 10:26. The great apostle of the Gentiles scarcely restrained the idolatry of the people in sacrifice offered to himself and his fellows, giving as a reason why it should not be done: "We also are men, of like passions with yourselves." Acts 14:15. Had Christ not been more than man the same reason should have prevented Him from receiving worship. This is emphasized by the fact that even a heavenly being sent to John on the isle of Patmos would not permit that mortal man to worship him, "See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God." Rev. 19:10.

Christ spoke "as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." Matt. 7:29. The Fountain of truth was in Himself. The Creator could regulate and heal both moral and physical difficulties; so he forgave sins, and healed all manner of diseases. That He could do the latter He urged as proof that He had power to do the former. Matt. 9:6. Had he been only a man, strange indeed would have been the fact "That even the winds and the sea obey Him."

But the object of the present writing is not so much to give evidence of the blending of the Divine and human natures in Christ, as to present some thoughts as to the importance of such a combination. That such a union was a necessity, we regard, however, as the best evidence of its reality. This subject of the Incarnation and double nature of Christ, has received our attention to a greater or less extent, for quite a number of years, as is well

known by many of our readers. It cannot then truly be said that we are taking such ground for the purpose of opposing positions that are of later date. We freely confess that the subject appears more important now than ever before, and as the Scriptures are examined more and more, it seems necessary to modify even our own former ideas on this and kindred subjects. No fallible man should "drive his stakes so deep as not to be able to pull them up when necessary."

In harmony with the idea of the two natures in Christ, as we now see it, is the fact that Christ was both Priest and Sacrifice, and so offered Himself – "gave Himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. 2:6. This fact of the New Testament, is clearly illustrated, by the high priest under the law offering the beast – a lower nature – as a sacrifice for sin. The high priest, without a beast to offer, would have been an imperfect type of Christ. Paul reasons that as the high priest was ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, it is necessary that Christ should also have something to offer. Heb. 8:3. And in the tenth chapter he tells us what Christ took for the purpose of making an offering, or sacrifice. The sacrifices and offerings which were offered according to the law being types only, were insufficient, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Ver. 4. Instead of these beasts which the typical high priests offered, our High Priest had a body prepared for Him, and this body He offered. See verses 5 and 10.

This body He took, or assumed, so that it became a part of Himself. **[R145 : page 3]** This change in His condition is what the apostle had in mind when he said of Christ: "Who being in the form of God...took upon Him the form of a servant, and [so] 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. 2:6-8. It will be observed that the death was the last act of his humiliation and not the first.

It is necessary to discriminate between Him and the body which He assumed. If as seems clearly taught, the body was the sin offering, or that which He as our High Priest sacrificed, then surely the sacrifice did not consist in taking the body. He took the body to sacrifice it, and His death closed that work. The body clearly refers to the humanity of Christ, and it was sacrificed by its life being taken away.

We fully believe the purpose of Christ taking our nature, or coming in the flesh was manifold, and we will consider different phases of the subject and their relation to one another.

The first we notice is that of a Ransom. This means to recover by paying an equivalent, or to buy back what was lost. He tasted death for every man. Heb. 2:9. "He gave His life a ransom for [the] many" – "a ransom for all." Matt. 20:28 and 1 Tim. 2:6. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself likewise took part of the same" – [For what purpose?] – that through death He might destroy him that had the power [keys] of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Heb. 2:14-15.

The above is an important passage because it distinctly states that Christ took our nature for the purpose of delivering from death those under its power, by destroying that power. That it refers to natural death is clear because that is what flesh and blood are subject to. Had it been some other kind of death, it would not have been necessary to assume flesh and blood in order to suffer it, and so taste death for every man. This question involves the whole subject of our loss in Adam and gain in Christ, so far as pertains to all men regardless of their responsibility. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15:22. As all men were counted sinners and condemned to death on account of Adam, even so, in the same sense, and to the same extent, all men are counted

righteous and justified to life on account of Christ. Rom. 5:12,18,19. It is not possible for us to limit one side of this statement, only by the other side – and both are unlimited. Here is stated the "sin of the world, (Adam's sin was the world's sin because he was the world – the race of natural men being in him) – and Christ is the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This is the atonement for what men sometimes call "original sin," and all its results.

Adam was a perfect natural man, and God dealt with him accordingly. He gave him a law adapted to that life, and gave him, until after he sinned, access to a tree that could preserve that life. The curse or penalty of his sin was "Dying thou shalt die," (Gen. 2:17, margin) and all that was necessary, in order to the execution of that penalty, was to shut him away from the life-preserving tree. This was done, and the consequence is that the whole race of mankind are either dead or doomed to death, and passing down.

Now if to ransom means to buy back by paying an equivalent (and we think no unprejudiced English reader will deny it) then Christ must of necessity assume a perfect humanity and lay down that life as a voluntary sacrifice. If it be asked, how could Christ be tempted if he had a perfect humanity? We answer by asking how could Adam be tempted if he had a perfect humanity? A fallen humanity is not the result of temptation but the result of sin, and a perfect nature could not have fallen if such a nature could not have been tempted. All that we claim on this point is that Christ as a ransom was as perfect as what Adam lost.

It does not appear from the record that Adam was created perfect in the sense of being strong and incorruptible. The opposite of this is true, for he sinned at the very first temptation, and corruption was the result. That which is incorruptible cannot be corrupted. Jesus, when speaking of those who have passed from

corruption to incorruption, says of them "Neither can they die any more." Luke 20:36.

But if Adam sinned so easily, thus proving his weakness, why, if Christ was only as perfect as Adam, did not He sin? We answer: It seems clear to us that if Christ was only a fallen man He would have been as sure to sin as all other fallen men; and if Christ had been only a perfect man He could have sinned as well as Adam. We believe that the reason He did not sin, was not because of the innate strength of His humanity, but because of the all-sustaining indwelling Divinity.

Then why does He deserve credit? We answer, no credit is due to the humanity, or to the flesh, in the work of saving man. It is all of God, and the strength of all overcomers, whether it was Jesus or any of His followers, is due to the indwelling Divine Spirit. This brings us to consider another necessary use of the double nature of Christ.

The coming of the Divine One; into the flesh was necessary in order to ingraft, so to speak, Divinity into humanity. Some see one of these reasons and not the other. Like the two natures they are blended but not to be confounded.

Christ as a Redeemer, paid the ransom, but the object for which men are redeemed is that they may be regenerated. And Christ is not only a Redeemer but also a Second Adam – i.e. the head of a new and spiritual race.

First the natural and afterward the spiritual, is applicable to the relation between the two Adams, as well as to other features of the plan. Because the type was an earth man, does not set aside the truth that the antitype is a spiritual man – "the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. 15:47.

All that a ransom secures is a recovery of what was lost – natural life – hence the ransom is the basis of restitution; and therefore if men ever receive more than they lost, it will be because Divinity is ingrafted into their restored humanity. It is God's plan for the race in general to save them by resurrection from the Adamic curse first, and afterward bring them to the knowledge of the truth, thus placing within their reach all that obedience to the truth can secure them; but He deals with us – Christians – as exceptions to the rule. As we are counted dead in Adam before we die, so we are counted alive in Christ beforehand, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. Being begotten by the Spirit, by the word of truth, through the exceeding great and precious promises, we become partakers of the Divine nature. 2 Pet. 1:4. This is [R145 : page 4] called Christ, in us the hope of glory.

The Christian, like his Lord when He was in the flesh, has two natures, and this gives us the basis of the warfare between the Old Man and the New Man; between the flesh and the Spirit. On account of this fact, Christ is our Head – our example in suffering, in patience and in loyalty. He is also our Leader, our Commander and Forerunner. We follow Him not only as a pattern of life, but also in the order of development from the natural to the spiritual.

He is also our Leader in sacrifice, for the flesh nature must be destroyed. As He was both Priest and Sacrifice, so are we. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. 8:13. Nothing seems more clearly taught in the New Testament than that the possession of, and being controlled by the Divine Spirit, is the only means of success in keeping the body under, and of bringing the members under obedience to our Lord.

The necessary condition of the higher life is the death of the lower one, by the crucifixion of its evil affections and desires. Thus it is we are to have fellowship with His sufferings and be made

conformable to His death. Phil. 3:10. "For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." Rom. 6:10,11.

This death and resurrection is that which is represented by baptism; that is, the real baptism involves the death to sin and mortality, and the resurrection to holiness and immortality, and water baptism is the appropriate symbol. Water baptism is not on that account less important, but rather more so, because of its depth of meaning. But if any see no further than the form or symbol, their faith will not lay hold on the reality, as expressed by the apostle: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father [Divinity], even so we also should walk in newness of life." Rom. 6:3,4.

The Divine Spirit, or new nature, imparted to us, is the priest by which our bodies are to be made a living sacrifice. The object of this sacrifice is that sin should not reign in our mortal bodies, but that these same members of these mortal bodies should yield themselves "as instruments of righteousness unto God." Should there be in any mind a doubt of the correctness of this application, let him carefully read the whole sixth chapter of Romans.

Precisely the same thought in regard to killing and making alive these bodies of ours, by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, is expressed by the apostle in the eighth chapter. "But ye are not in the flesh [the old nature], but in the Spirit [new nature], if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not this Spirit of Christ he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead [put to death by the Spirit] because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. [But the body is not to remain dead; only

its old sinful nature or life was to be [R146 : page 4] destroyed]. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in you." Rom. 8:9-11. It is the Spirit that mortifies or puts to death the deeds of the body, and the same Spirit that gives the new life.

Whoever will read the sixth, seventh and eighth chapters of Romans may see that the apostle is seeking to teach them and us a great lesson for this life, of death to sin and resurrection to holiness, and that the work can only be accomplished by the Spirit indwelling, and overcoming the old nature which dwells in these members. Was not this then the great practical object of the Incarnation, to ingraft the Divine Spirit into humanity and thus save humanity?

The same principle of death and life holds good throughout the plan, whether in symbol or reality. All may see that the old nature or corrupt life is not to be restored to those who have the Spirit of Christ in them. The life it imparts is a new and spiritual life. The body is to be raised, but by "a process of Divine Chemistry which we may not fully understand" will be changed "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Phil. 3:21.

One more reason for the double nature of Christ we would notice is this: That He might both be able to sympathize with and help us. "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:18. "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched by a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are and 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." Heb. 4:14-16.

Two persons in the same weak and helpless condition might sympathize with each other, and yet perish together; but one standing on a rock can help the other out. Mere humanity, fallen or unfallen, is unable to rise into spiritual life. In Christ, both natures being combined, we have the sympathy which experience gave Him and also the power to help. He first lifted His own humanity ("Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," and "He spake of the temple of His body." This is true of His own person and also of His body, the church), and from the standpoint of His perfect spiritual life He beckons us, and there He will meet us. What He is, we may well expect to be. "I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.

J. H. P.
