

KNOW THE TRUTH

Lesson 7 - The Person and Work of Christ (1 of 2)

Outline is drawn from pages 173-204 of *Know the Truth - A Handbook of Christian Belief* by Bruce Milne.

KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 13 - THE HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST

- I. His Religious Life
 - A. "Reference to Jesus' religious life may appear strange, since he himself is the object of our worship. However, the terms of incarnation clearly involved Jesus in religious activity." (p. 174)
 1. Jesus engaged in public **worship** (Luke 4:16)
 2. "He clearly studied, meditated upon and **expounded** Scripture (Matt. 4:4f.; 19:4; Luke 2:46; 24:27)."
 3. "Quite apart from his inner, continuous communion with the Father, Jesus frequently engaged in audible **prayer** (Luke 3:21) and sometimes continued in prayer through a whole night (Luke 6:12)."
 4. "John's Gospel in particular bears witness to Jesus' life of utter submission to, and total **dependence** upon, the Father who had sent him (John 4:34; 6:38; 12:49; etc.)."
 5. "Although his relationship to the Father clearly differed from ours (Luke 10:21f.; John 20:17), it is still appropriate to call Jesus 'the **pioneer** of our faith' (Heb. 12:2, RSV)." (p. 174)
- II. His Limited Knowledge
 - A. A difficult concept to articulate
 1. "The Scriptures present a careful **balance** here; a unique and unclouded awareness of the Father and his will (Luke 2:49) co-exists with a search for further understanding (Luke 2:46)." (p. 175)
- III. His Dependence Upon, and Submission to, the Father
 - A. "The limitation in Jesus' knowledge we have just noted can perhaps best be understood in relation to another clear feature of his authentic humanness, his **dependence** upon, and **submission** to, the Father."
- IV. Temptation
 - A. "Jesus' humanity is further confirmed by his being **tempted** to sin (Matt. 4:1-11; 27:42; Mark 1:24; 8:33; Luke 11:15-20)." (p. 175)
- V. Post Resurrection
 - A. "The period between Jesus' resurrection and ascension belongs more obviously to the evidences for his deity. His dealings with Mary (John. 20:11f.), Thomas (John 20:24f.) and Peter (John 21:15f.), however, express the deepest human **sensitivity** and sympathy, as if the suffering of the cross had bound Jesus even closer to his human companions." (p. 176)

KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 14 - THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

"Here we arrive at the staggering truth which lies at the heart of the Christian religion, that Jesus Christ while truly human was also true God. This is one of Christianity's supreme distinctives." (p. 177)

- I. Direct Statements of Deity
 - A. Eight Key texts

1. "To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 9:5, ESV)
 2. "But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom." (Hebrews 1:8, ESV)
 3. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." (John 1:1–2, ESV)
 4. "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (John 1:18, ESV)
 5. "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ," (Titus 2:13, ESV)
 6. "Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28, ESV)
 7. "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:" (2 Peter 1:1, ESV)
 8. "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20, ESV)
- B. "The NT contains numerous other verses which possibly, though not definitely, **imply** the deity of Christ (e.g. Matt. 1:23; John 17:3; Acts 20:28; Col. 2:2; 2 Thess. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jas 1:1)." (p. 178)

II. Jesus' Identity with Yahweh

"The NT attributes to Jesus many of the perfections of Yahweh (or Jehovah), the Creator/Redeemer God of the OT. There are seven main points of identity." (p. 178)

- A. God's **name**
- B. God's **glory**
- C. God's **worship**
- D. God's **creation**
- E. God's **salvation**
- F. God's **judgement**
- G. God's **witness**
- H. **Trinitarian** references

III. Other Gospel Evidence

A. The resurrection

"The resurrection is **central** to the entire biblical revelation and there are innumerable references to it throughout the NT. To deny it is to empty faith of all content and value (1 Cor. 15:14). Because of this the resurrection has undergone a barrage of sustained criticism over the centuries." (p. 181)

1. Criticism of the Gospel
2. Theological criticism
3. Historical evidence
 - a) "Three strands of **evidence** stubbornly refuse to go away, i.e. any sceptical interpretation of them is much harder to sustain than the NT explanation that Jesus was raised from death...
 - (1) These are that the tomb was **empty**...
 - (2) that Jesus was seen **alive**...
 - (3) and that the disciples were **transformed**." (p. 182)
4. Explaining the resurrection belief
5. The resurrection and Jesus' deity

- B. The ascension
- C. His self-**consciousness** and claims
 - 1. Messiah
 - 2. Son of Man
 - 3. Son of God
 - 4. Lord
 - 5. Indirect claims
 - a) Jesus' proclamation of the arrival of the kingdom of God
 - b) Jesus' call to follow him
 - c) Jesus' authority
 - d) Jesus' forgiveness of sins
 - 6. Miracles
 - 7. The virgin birth
 - 8. The corporate Christ
- IV. The Conclusion of this Testimony
 - A. "The evidence we have examined points **overwhelmingly** to Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God become incarnate for the redemption of sinners. He is the second person of the Trinity, God manifest in the flesh." (p. 193)

KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 15 - THE ONE PERSON

"The biblical evidence leads us to two fundamental statements concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ: he is truly human; he is true God. How these two realities combine in one authentic person, Jesus Christ, will always remain mysterious; that in itself, however, ought not to foreclose the attempt to examine the incarnation at greater depth." (p. 195)

- I. The Early Debates
 - A. Ebionism - Removes the **divinity**.
 - B. Docetism - Removes the **humanity**; Jesus only seemed human.
 - C. Gnosticism - The divine united himself with a human person for a time; **neither** true God not true human.
 - D. Arianism - The Son was created; there was a time when Christ was **not**.
 - E. Apollinarianism - Jesus the eternal Word took the place of the human should soul; God the Son took up residence in a human body so that to the effect that Christ did not posses a **true** human nature.
 - F. Nestorianism - Separates the two natures rendering questionable his authentic personal **unity**.
 - G. Eutychianism - Unites the two natures in such a way that a third **composite** nature is imagined - Christ is neither truly God or man, but mixed.
 - H. See LBC 2.3 and 8.2
- II. Other Important Concepts
 - A. The hypostatic **union**
 - 1. "This is shorthand for what the incarnation involved: the union in one person (Gk. hypostasis) of a full human nature and a full divine nature.
 - 2. At Chalcedon the church expressed the terms of this in careful balance: the two natures are united in this hypostatic (i.e. 'personal') union 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation'." (p. 198)
 - B. Anhypostasia and enhypostasia
 - C. Communion of the properties

D. The 'Calvinist extra'

1. "[Christ] **continued** to uphold all things (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) and remained head over the angels (Matt. 26:53)" in his incarnation.

E. Two-state Christology

1. "Here the person of Christ is approached in terms of a dynamic **movement** of the one person from a state of humiliation in his flesh culminating in his death on the cross, to a state of exaltation in his resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:22–36; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5–11)." (p. 199)

F. Kenosis

1. "This Christological theory develops the two-state Christology by arguing that in his career as a human being the eternal Word **divested** himself of many essential divine attributes (often specified as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence)...
2. It appealed for biblical support to Philippians 2:7 and the assertion that Christ 'emptied himself' (RV, Gk. ekenōsen)...
3. Certainly some form of condescension was involved for the eternal Word in accepting union with the human nature assumed in Mary's womb. It remains doubtful, however, whether kenosis is a particularly helpful way of expressing this. The biblical support is decidedly insecure, since Philippians 2:7 refers to surrendering not divine powers and attributes, but divine glory and dignity. 'He made himself insignificant' is the real sense." (p. 200)

III. Modern Interpretations

A. **Functional** verses ontological Christologies

1. "In the modern period a number of writers have sought to replace 'ontological Christology' (Christ's person interpreted in terms of his being and natures, usually = the Chalcedon formula) by 'functional Christology' (Christ's person interpreted in terms of his active role within God's purpose). This attempt is driven partly by a desire to escape the rather static-sounding language of the patristic formulations which, for many, seem a long way from the living, dynamic reality of the Jesus we meet in the Gospels with his full immersion in human life, and supremely his identity on the cross with ultimate human suffering." (p. 201)
2. A fairly obvious first response to this approach is to question the alternative which it poses. To use a human analogy, to act in a certain role is to become identified with the role in one's personal being. Thus, say, to design an automobile means one becomes by that act a designer." (p. 201)

B. The incarnation as 'myth'

IV. Further Comment