

BIBLICAL CHRISTOLOGY – THE PERSON OF CHRIST (PART II)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

PRAYER

I. Introduction and Review

(John 1, Col. 1, Phil. 2, Heb. 1)

Last week we began to consider the Person of Christ, and we focused on Christ’s deity, the truth that the Son of God is fully God, co-equal, co-eternal, with God the Father and God the Spirit, looking at passages like John 1, Col. 1, Phil. 2, Heb. 1. This morning we turn our attention to the humanity of Christ. This one who is fully God, 2000 years ago, took on flesh and dwelt among us. When we discuss the person of Christ, we always want to keep in mind that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully Man in one person. Scripture teaches that: **“Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”¹**

Illus: Spurgeon: Marvel at this mystery! The Infinite became an infant!

II. The Humanity of Christ in Scripture

- We see the humanity of Christ clearly described in 1 John 4:2-3. You’ll see it there on your handout...
- **1 John 4:2-3** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

If you’re following along on your handout, we’re going to look at Jesus’ humanity in three broad categories. We’ll look first at the Virgin Birth, then at his weaknesses and limitations, and finally at his sinless humanity.

A. Virgin Birth.

(Isaiah 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25, 24-25; Luke 1:35, 3:23)

When we speak of the humanity of Christ it is appropriate to begin with a consideration of the virgin birth of Christ. Scripture clearly asserts that Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father.

- **Isaiah 7:14** “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 529.

conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

- **Matthew 1:18** “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.”
- **Luke 1:35** “And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”

The doctrinal importance of the virgin birth:

1. The virgin birth was the means God used to send his Son (John 3:16; Gal. 4:4) into the world as a man. Jesus experienced the full span of human life, including in his mother’s womb. But the miraculous nature of the virgin birth testifies to the fact that he was not *only* a man, but the unique God-man.
2. The virgin birth also seems to hold some significance for Jesus as the New Adam. It dramatizes the fact that unlike the rest of us, who inherit a sinful and guilty nature from our first father Adam, Jesus had no earthly father. He is a new representative of the human race, of all those who would be united to him by faith. The virgin birth seems important here, because it shows us that Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way in which every other human being has descended from Adam. And this helps us to understand why the legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ. This idea seems to be indicated in the statement of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:35 – because Jesus would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, therefore he would be called holy.

B. Jesus Endured Human Weaknesses and Limitations

- **Jesus Had a Human Body**
(Luke 2:7, 40, 52; 23:46, 24:42; Matt. 4:2, 11; John 4:6, 19:28; 21:9, 13)

The fact that Jesus had a human body just like our human bodies is seen in many passages of Scripture.

- **He was born** just as all human babies are born (Luke 2:7).
- **He grew** through childhood to adulthood just as other children grow: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).
- **Jesus became tired** just as we do, for we read that “Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well” in Samaria (John 4:6).
- **He became thirsty and hungry**, for when he was on the cross he said, “I thirst” (John 19:28). After he had fasted for forty days in the wilderness, we read that “he was **hungry**” (Matt. 4:2).
- **He was at times physically weak**, for during his temptation in the wilderness he fasted for forty days (the point at which a human being’s physical strength is almost entirely gone and beyond which irreparable physical harm will occur if the fast continues). At that time “angels came and ministered to him” (Matt. 4:11), apparently to care for him and provide nourishment until he regained enough strength to come out of the wilderness. When Jesus

was on his way to be crucified, the soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross (Luke 23:26), most likely because Jesus was so weak following the beating he had received that he did not have strength enough to carry it himself.

- The culmination of Jesus' limitations in terms of his human body is seen when he died on the cross (Luke 23:46). His human body ceased to have life in it and ceased to function, just as ours does when we die.

Jesus also rose from the dead in a physical, human body, though one that was made perfect and was no longer subject to weakness, disease, or death. He demonstrates repeatedly to his disciples that he does have a real physical body: he says, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). He is showing them and teaching them that he has "flesh and bones" and is not merely a "spirit" without a body. Another evidence of this fact is that "they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them" (Luke 24:42. v. 30; John 20:17, 20, 27; 21:9, 13).

In this same human body (though a resurrection body that was made perfect), Jesus also ascended into heaven. He said before he left, "I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (John 16:28; 17:11). The way in which Jesus ascended up to heaven was calculated to demonstrate the continuity between his existence in a physical body here on earth and his continuing existence in that body in heaven. Just a few verses after Jesus had told them, "A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39), we read in Luke's gospel that Jesus "led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50–51). Similarly, we read in Acts, "As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

All of these verses taken together show that, as far as Jesus' human body is concerned, it was like ours in every respect before his resurrection, and after his resurrection it was still a human body with "flesh and bones," but made perfect, the kind of body that we will have when Christ returns and we are raised from the dead as well. Jesus continues to exist in that human body in heaven, as the ascension is designed to teach.

[STOP FOR QUESTIONS]

- **Jesus Had A Human Mind**
(Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8; Mark 13:32)

The fact that Jesus "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52) says that he went through a learning process just as all other children do—he learned how to eat, how to talk, how to read and write, and how to be obedient to his parents (see Heb. 5:8). This ordinary learning process was part of the genuine humanity of Christ.

We also see that Jesus had a human mind like ours when he speaks of the day on which he will return to earth: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32).

- **Jesus Had a Human Soul and Human Emotions**
(John 12:21, 27; 11:35; Heb. 5:7; Matt. 8:10)

We see several indications that Jesus had a human soul (or spirit). Just before his crucifixion, Jesus

said, “Now is my soul troubled” (John 12:27). John writes just a little later, “When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit” (John 13:21). In both verses the word troubled represents the Greek term *tarasso* a word that is often used of people when they are anxious or suddenly very surprised by danger.

Moreover, before Jesus’ crucifixion, as he realized the suffering he would face, he said, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Matt. 26:38). So great was the sorrow he felt that it seemed as though, if it were to become any stronger, it would take his very life.

Jesus had a full range of human emotions.

- He “marveled” at the faith of the centurion (Matt. 8:10). He wept with sorrow at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35).
- And he prayed with a heart full of emotion, for “in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear” (Heb. 5:7).
- Moreover, the author tells us, “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb. 5:8–9). Yet if Jesus never sinned, how could he “learn obedience”? Apparently as Jesus grew toward maturity he, like all other human children, was able to take on more and more responsibility. The older he became the more demands his father and mother could place on him in terms of obedience, and the more difficult the tasks that his heavenly Father could assign to him to carry out in the strength of his human nature. With each increasingly difficult task, even when it involved some suffering (as Heb. 5:8 specifies), Jesus’ human moral ability, his ability to obey under more and more difficult circumstances, increased. We might say that his “moral backbone” was strengthened by more and more difficult exercise. Yet in all this he never once sinned.

The complete absence of sin in the life of Jesus is all the more remarkable because of the severe temptations he faced, not only in the wilderness, but throughout his life. The author of Hebrews affirms that Jesus “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). The fact that he faced temptation means that **he had a genuine human nature that could be tempted**, for Scripture clearly tells us that “God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13).

- **Jesus Was Understood by others to be a Human Being**
(Matthew 13:53-58)
- **Matthew 13:53–58** “And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.” And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”

C. Jesus was Fully Human and Also Sinless

(2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15-16; 1 Peter 1:19; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 4:30; 7:52; 13:35)

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we

might become the righteousness of God.

- **Hebrews 4:14–16** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The Scriptures make crystal clear that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life...

[STOP FOR QUESTIONS]

Application: Worship Jesus Christ as the God-Man!

- **Athanasius (AD 373):** “Such and so many are the Saviour’s achievements that follow from His Incarnation, that to try to number them is like gazing at the open sea and trying to count the waves. For, indeed everything about it is marvelous, and wherever a man turns his gaze he sees the Godhead of the Word and is smitten with awe.”²

Why Was Jesus’ Full Humanity Necessary? So that we might:

- **Worship Jesus Christ, the Second Adam** (Rom. 5:18-19; 1 Cor. 15:45)
Jesus was our representative and obeyed for us where Adam had failed and disobeyed.
- **Worship Jesus Christ, our Substitutionary Sacrifice** (Heb. 2:14-17)
If Jesus had not been a man, he could not have died in our place and paid the penalty that was due to us.
- **Worship Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and Men** (1 Tim. 2:5)
Because we were alienated from God by sin, we needed someone to come between God and ourselves and bring us back to him. We needed a mediator who could represent us to God and who could represent God to us. There is only one person who has ever fulfilled that requirement.
- **Worship Jesus Christ, our Perfect Example** (Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pet 2:21; Heb. 12:2)
Jesus had to become a man like us in order to live as our example and pattern in life. Disciples are Christ-followers. Our goal should be to be like Christ all our days, up to the point of death, and to die with unfailing obedience to God, with strong trust in him, and with love and forgiveness to others.
- **Worship Jesus Christ, our Sympathetic High Priest** (Heb. 2:18; 4:15-16)
If Jesus had not been a man, he would not have been able to know by experience what we go through in our temptations and struggles in this life. But because he has lived as a man, he is able to sympathize more fully with us in our experiences.
- **Worship Jesus Christ, the First-Born from the dead** (Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:49)

² Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 8. 54. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 373/1993), 93.

Jesus had to be raised as a man in order to be the “first-born from the dead” (Col. 1:18), the pattern for the bodies that we would later have. We now have a physical body like Adam’s, but we will have one like Christ’s: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49).

▪ **Worship Jesus Christ, the God-Man forever** (Luke 24:39ff; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:13-17)

Jesus did not temporarily become man, instead his divine nature was permanently united to his human nature, and he lives forever not just as the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, but also as Jesus, the man who was born of Mary, and as Christ, the Messiah and Savior of his people. Jesus will remain fully God and fully man, yet one person, forever.

EXTRA STUFF – mainly for the teacher’s personal study/preparation

3. Combining Specific Biblical Texts on Christ’s Deity and Humanity.

When we examine the New Testament, as we did above in the sections on Jesus’ humanity and deity, there are several passages that seem difficult to fit together (How could Jesus be omnipotent and yet weak? How could he leave the world and yet be present everywhere? How could he learn things and yet be omniscient?). As the church struggled to understand these teachings, it finally came up with the Chalcedonian Definition, which spoke of two distinct natures in Christ that retain their own properties yet remain together in one person. This distinction, which helps us in our understanding of the biblical passages mentioned earlier, also seems to be demanded by those passages.

a. **One Nature Does Some Things That the Other Nature Does Not Do:** Evangelical theologians in previous generations have not hesitated to distinguish between things done by Christ’s human nature but not by his divine nature, or by his divine nature but not by his human nature. It seems that we have to do this if we are willing to affirm the Chalcedonian statement about “the property of each nature being preserved.” But few recent theologians have been willing to make such distinctions, perhaps because of a hesitancy to affirm something we cannot understand.

- **Jesus has returned to heaven *and* is present with us:** When we are talking about Jesus’ human nature, we can say that he ascended to heaven and is no longer in the world (John 16:28; 17:11; Acts 1:9–11). But with respect to his divine nature, we can say that Jesus is everywhere present: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20); “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:20); “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23). **So we can say that both things are true**

about the person of Christ—he has returned to heaven, and he is also present with us.

- **Jesus was temporal *and* eternal:** Similarly, we can say that Jesus was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23), if we are speaking with respect to his human nature, but we can say that he eternally existed (John 1:1–2; 8:58) if we are speaking of his divine nature.
- **Jesus was weak and all-powerful:** In his human nature, Jesus was weak and tired (Matt. 4:2; 8:24; Mark 15:21; John 4:6), but in his divine nature he was omnipotent (Matt. 8:26–27; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Particularly striking is the scene on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat, presumably because he was weary (Matt. 8:24). But he was able to arise from his sleep and calm the wind and sea with a word (Matt. 8:26–27)! Tired yet omnipotent! Here Jesus’ weak human nature completely hid his omnipotence until that omnipotence broke forth in a sovereign word from the Lord of heaven and earth.

If someone asks whether Jesus, when he was asleep in the boat, was also “continually carrying along all things by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3, author’s translation), and whether all things in the universe were being held together by him at that time (see Col. 1:17), the answer must be yes, for those activities have always been and will always be the particular responsibility of the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God. Those who find the doctrine of the incarnation “inconceivable” have sometimes asked whether Jesus, when he was a baby in the manger at Bethlehem, was also “upholding the universe.” To this question the answer must also be yes: Jesus was not just potentially God or someone in whom God uniquely worked, but was truly and fully God with all the attributes of God. He was “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Those who reject this as impossible simply have a different definition of what is “possible” than God has, as revealed in Scripture. To say that we cannot understand this is appropriate humility. But to say that it is not possible seems more like intellectual arrogance.

- **Jesus died *and* did not die:** In a similar way, we can understand that in his human nature, Jesus died (Luke 23:46; 1 Cor. 15:3). But with respect to his divine nature, he did not die, but was able to raise himself from the dead (John 2:19; 10:17–18; Heb. 7:16). Yet here we must give a note of caution: it is true that when Jesus died his physical body died and his human soul (or spirit) was separated from his body and passed into the presence of God the Father in heaven (Luke 23:43, 46). In this way he experienced a death that is like the one we as believers experience if we die before Christ returns. And it is not correct to say that Jesus’ divine nature died, or could die, if “die” means a cessation of activity, a cessation of consciousness, or a diminution of power. Nevertheless, by virtue of union with Jesus’ human nature, his divine nature somehow tasted something of what it was like to go through death. **The person of Christ experienced death.** Moreover, it seems difficult to understand how Jesus’ human nature alone could have borne the wrath of God against the sins of millions of people. It seems that Jesus’ divine nature had somehow to participate in the bearing of wrath against sin that was due to us (though Scripture nowhere explicitly affirms this). **Therefore, even though Jesus’ divine nature did not actually die, Jesus went through the experience of death as a whole person, and both human and divine natures somehow shared in that experience. Beyond that, Scripture does not enable us to say more.**
- **Jesus was tempted *and* not tempted:** The distinction between Jesus’ human and divine

natures also helps us understand Jesus' temptations. With respect to his human nature, he certainly was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). Yet with respect to his divine nature, he was not tempted, because God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13).

At this point it seems necessary to say that Jesus had two distinct wills, a human will and a divine will, and that the wills belong to the two distinct natures of Christ, not to the person. This distinction of two wills and two centers of consciousness helps us understand how Jesus could learn things and yet know all things. On the one hand, with respect to his human nature, he had limited knowledge (Mark 13:32; Luke 2:52). On the other hand, Jesus clearly knew all things (John 2:25; 16:30; 21:17). Now this is only understandable if Jesus learned things and had limited knowledge with respect to his human nature but was always omniscient with respect to his divine nature, and therefore he was able any time to "call to mind" whatever information would be needed for his ministry. In this way we can understand Jesus' statement concerning the time of his return: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). This ignorance of the time of his return was true of Jesus' human nature and human consciousness only, for in his divine nature he was certainly omniscient and certainly knew the time when he would return to the earth.

b. Anything Either Nature Does, the Person of Christ Does: In the previous section we mentioned a number of things that were done by one nature but not the other in the person of Christ. Now we must affirm that anything that is true of the human or the divine nature is true of the person of Christ. Thus Jesus can say, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). He does not say, "Before Abraham was, my divine nature existed," because he is free to talk about anything done by his divine nature alone or his human nature alone as something that he did.

Thus, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). Even though actually only his human body ceased living and ceased functioning, it was nonetheless Christ as a person who died for our sin. This is simply a means of affirming that whatever can be said of one nature or the other can be said of the person of Christ.

Therefore it is correct for Jesus to say, "I am leaving the world" (John 16:28), or "I am no more in the world" (John 17:11), but at the same time to say, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20).

Anything that is done by one nature or the other is done by the person of Christ.

c. Titles That Remind Us of One Nature Can Be Used of the Person Even When the Action Is Done By the Other Nature: The New Testament authors sometimes use titles that remind us of either the human nature or the divine nature in order to speak of the person of Christ, even though the action mentioned may be done only by the other nature than the one we might think of from the title. For example, Paul says that if the rulers of this world had understood the wisdom of God, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). Now when we see the phrase "the Lord of glory" it reminds us specifically of Jesus' divine nature. But Paul uses this title (probably intentionally to show the horrible evil of the crucifixion) to say that Jesus was "crucified." Even though Jesus' divine nature was not crucified, it was true of Jesus as a person that he was crucified, and Paul affirms that about him even though he uses the title "the Lord of glory."

Similarly, when Elizabeth calls Mary "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43), the name "my Lord" is a title that reminds us of Christ's divine nature. Yet Mary of course is not the mother of Jesus' divine nature, which has always existed. Mary is simply the mother of the human nature of Christ.

Nevertheless, Elizabeth can call her “the mother of my Lord” because she is using the title “Lord” to refer to the person of Christ. A similar expression occurs in Luke 2:11: “For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

In this way, we can understand Mark 13:32, where Jesus says no one knows the time of his return, “not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son but only the Father.” Though the term “the Son” specifically reminds us of Jesus’ heavenly, eternal sonship with God the Father, it is really used here not to speak specifically of his divine nature, but to speak generally of him as a person, and to affirm something that is in fact true of his human nature only.⁴⁵ And it is true that in one important sense (that is, with respect to his human nature) Jesus did not know the time when he would return.

d. Brief Summary Sentence: Sometimes in the study of systematic theology, the following sentence has been used to summarize the incarnation: “Remaining what he was, he became what he was not.” In other words, while Jesus continued “remaining” what he was (that is, fully divine) he also became what he previously had not been (that is, fully human as well). Jesus did not give up any of his deity when he became man, but he did take on humanity that was not his before.

e. “Communication” of Attributes: Once we have decided that Jesus was fully man and fully God, and that his human nature remained fully human and his divine nature remained fully divine, we can still ask whether there were some qualities or abilities that were given (or “communicated”) from one nature to the other. It seems there were.

(1) From the Divine Nature to the Human Nature

Although Jesus’ human nature did not change its essential character, because it was united with the divine nature in the one person of Christ, Jesus’ human nature gained (a) a worthiness to be worshiped and (b) an inability to sin, both of which did not belong to human beings otherwise.

(2) From the Human Nature to the Divine Nature

Jesus’ human nature gave him (a) an ability to experience suffering and death; (b) an ability to understand by experience what we are experiencing; and (c) an ability to be our substitute sacrifice, which Jesus as God alone could not have done.

4. Could Jesus Have Sinned?

The question is sometimes raised, “Was it possible for Christ to have sinned?” Some people argue for the impeccability of Christ, in which the word impeccable means “not able to sin.” Others object that if Jesus were not able to sin, his temptations could not have been real, for how can a temptation be real if the person being tempted is not able to sin anyway?

In order to answer this question we must distinguish what Scripture clearly affirms, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what is more in the nature of possible inference on our part. (1) Scripture clearly affirms that Christ never actually sinned (see above). There should be no question in our minds at all on this fact. (2) It also clearly affirms that Jesus was tempted, and that these were real temptations (Luke 4:2). If we believe Scripture, then we must insist that Christ “in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). If our speculation on the question of whether Christ could have sinned ever leads us to say that he was not truly tempted, then we have reached a wrong conclusion, one that contradicts the clear statements of Scripture.

⁴⁵ Similar usage is perhaps seen in John 3:13 and Acts 20:28 (in this latter verse some manuscripts read “with his own blood”).

(3) We also must affirm with Scripture that “God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13). Every temptation he faced, he faced to the end, and triumphed over it. The temptations were real, even though he did not give in to them. In fact, they were most real because he did not give in to them.

What then do we say about the fact that “God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13)? It seems that this is one of a number of things that we must affirm to be true of Jesus’ divine nature but not of his human nature. His divine nature could not be tempted with evil, but his human nature could be tempted and was clearly tempted. How these two natures united in one person in facing temptations, Scripture does not clearly explain to us. But this distinction between what is true of one nature and what is true of another nature is an example of a number of similar statements that Scripture requires us to make (see more on this distinction, below, when we discuss how Jesus could be God and man in one person).

“The real difficulty, the supreme mystery with which the gospel confronts us, does not lie in the Good Friday message of atonement, nor in the Easter message of resurrection, but in the Christmas message of Incarnation. The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man— that the second person of the Godhead became the ‘second man’ (1 Cor. 15:47), determining human destiny, the second representative head of the race, and that He took humanity without loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly and fully divine as He was human. Here are two mysteries for the price of one— the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus. It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie. ‘The Word became flesh’ (John 1:14); God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this: the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation. This is the real stumbling block in Christianity. It is here that Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and many of those who feel the difficulties concerning the virgin birth, the miracles, the atonement, and the resurrection have come to grief. It is from misbelief, or at least inadequate belief, about the Incarnation that difficulties at other points in the gospel story usually spring. But once the Incarnation is grasped as a reality, these other difficulties dissolve.” –J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1973), 53.