

## What's the Message – Lesson 94

Today we study Jesus as both True God and True Man.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Our prayer today is that God would open your hearts to one of the great mysteries of Christianity, that Jesus is both True God and at the same time is True Man. Although You, O Lord, and Your Word are beyond the limits of mankind's complete understanding, help us to see that this great mystery was accomplished in Jesus and was necessary for our salvation. Amen.

In our first two lessons in this series we have presented two separate statements: the first that Jesus is and will always be True God. We presented evidence from the Old Testament prophecies and statements from Jesus and His followers to support this claim. Then in our second lesson we looked at the evidence showing Jesus was not only really a man, but was man as he was created to be, in the fullness of the image of God. Each lesson, standing alone, is reasonable in terms of human logic.

But to put them together and claim that Jesus at the same time is both God and man goes beyond human logic and understanding. Teacher, I can understand someone or something being either one or the other, but how can one person be both?

And this challenge is nothing new. Christianity has always been challenged by followers of other religions as being illogical and unreasonable. And in many ways, that is true. Back in the very earliest days of the Church there were two groups in particular that represented the question you have posed. They were known as the Docetists and the Gnostics, and this later group was in strong opposition to St. Paul (as we will see more of later in this course).

The Docetists taught that Jesus could not be a man, He only seemed to be a man. They held that Jesus was in fact a pure spirit-being, uncontaminated by this material world. In this regard they were in agreement with part of the Gnostic teaching of that period. Gnostics taught a sharp dualism; namely, that spiritual things are good, but the material elements of this world are evil. Therefore, since the material

world was corrupt and corrupting, Jesus only appeared to be human, like a phantom.

What we have here are two groups denying the basic doctrine that Jesus was truly a man. Then there were others who argued on the opposite side of the proposition. They denied that Jesus was truly God. The best known of those holding this position today are the Muslims. The Qu'ran teaches that Jesus was sent by God, but was only a man. And Islam teaches that Jesus was only a prophet (just not as great a prophet as Muhammad). As for Jesus dying on the cross, the Qu'ran states that it only appeared that way, and Islam teaches that Jesus did not really die on the cross.

So your question, Dale, is not only relevant, it is very much a matter of debate and controversy today, just as it has been since the earliest days of the Church.

It is comforting to see that I am not the only one who has ever asked the question, but the question still stands. How can it be that Jesus is both True God and True Man at the same time? And there is a second part to this question: why was it necessary that this be so?

Let's see what the Bible has to say about this. We have previously quoted the gospel of St. John, chapter 1, verse 14: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . .* Then there is this from John chapter 10, verse 30: *I and the Father are one.* St. Paul states it just as clearly and firmly in his letter to the Colossians. Dale, what do you read there in chapter two, verses eight and nine?

*See that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

And while you are in the letter to the Colossians, go to chapter one and start with verse 15.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation . . . And He is the head of the body, the Church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.*

These verses emphasize the deity of Jesus, but also include His purpose as a man. The last verse you read leads us into the second portion of your question, namely, why was it necessary for Jesus to be both God and Man at the same time? Now, please turn to the letter to the Hebrews, chapter two, verse 17 where it speaks about the purpose of Jesus.

*For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

It cannot be said any plainer than this: Jesus had to be God in order to keep the law of God perfectly and to fulfill its demands. Jesus had to be a real man in order to be ruled by this law and to shed His blood, for as we read in Hebrews chapter nine, verses 22 to 28: *The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness . . . So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.*

Next time we will have a special message about the necessity of Christmas.