

THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

Unit 1b The Person of Christ

Presented by the



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Welcome to Session 1B of Christian Narrative 2. Today our topic is the person of Christ. Our main teaching point for this lesson is that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. That is, as we discover who Jesus is in the pages of the New Testament, we discover that he presents himself both as man and God. And we want to today understand the relationship between these two natures. And so we're going to start by looking at Jesus Christ's humanity. It's important for us to say at the outset that Jesus Christ is fully human. Now, we're going to take a look at a number of texts throughout our time in this particular lesson because what we want to see is that both Christ's humanity as well as his divinity are really fleshed out in the pages of the New Testament.

So let's understand some things about Christ's humanity. First, we see Matthew 1:24-25 where we're told that Jesus was born of Mary. There it reads that "When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus." Now, we have to understand that Jesus had a unique birth in that he was born of Mary but not of Joseph. And I chose this particular passage to highlight that idea. This is what allows Jesus to be born not in the vein of Adam, but rather allows him to become the perfect sacrifice that we will need. And as we're talking about salvation in general, we'll talk about how that makes Jesus the perfect sacrifice a little bit later when we talk about the atonement. But suffice to say that Jesus was human. He was born. He came into this earth like every other human being comes into this earth: through the natural birth process. And when we recognize that, now we can begin to look throughout his life and ask the question, "Are there times in his life when he displays normal human traits?" And as you see the list here, what we're going to discover is that Jesus displayed human weaknesses and limitations. So if we look through this list, we're going to see that all of us have experienced these weaknesses and limitations. We've been tired. We've been hungry. We've been thirsty. We've been weak. And maybe we haven't all died yet, but there's this commonality here among these weaknesses and limitations.

So, John 4:6, "Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour." Okay. So Jesus is out. He's walking around and he's become weary from his journey. Matthew 4:2, "After fasting forty days and forty nights, [Jesus] was hungry." I have never fasted for 40 days or 40 nights. I have fasted shorter periods of time and have experienced hunger. I can only imagine the amount of hunger that Jesus was experiencing after those 40 days. John 19:28, "Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, 'I thirst.'" Okay. Here's Christ in the cross. He's thirsty. He has gone through a difficult moment and he's asking for something to drink. Luke 23:26, "And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus." Now, why did they do this? Well, Simon carries the cross because Jesus, weak from his ordeal, can no longer carry it. And so we see him tired, hungry, thirsty, weak. We also see in Mark 15:37 that "Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last," that Jesus died, that Jesus really experienced a full range of human weakness and limitation as he walked this earth. He was fully human.

Now, there are some other things that we can see about Christ's humanity as well. We can see that Jesus rationalized and reasoned. Luke 2:52, it says that "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." In other words, Jesus grew up into his own. He went through the normal stages of human development that we go through. He went from being an infant to being a toddler to being a young boy to being a young man to stepping into adulthood. He learned along the way. We see him increasing his understanding and his knowledge. We see him increasing in favor with God and man.

These things all take place because while Jesus is God, he is fully human. And as a full human being, he's going through all the things that you and I go through as human beings.

We also see that Jesus displayed human emotion, that he was impressed by the faith of others. Matthew 8:10, it says, "When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, 'Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.'" In other words, Jesus, when he meets this man, is so impressed with how he responds and he says, "This guy has more faith than anyone I've ever met." He's surprised. He's impressed. Matthew 26:38, he agonized and suffered. And so we read, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death." And so he asks his disciples, "Remain here, and watch with me." "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death." He's under an agony and suffering that he's experienced because he's human. One of the shortest Bible verses in all of Scripture, John 11:35, "Jesus wept." Jesus experienced human limitation. He experienced birth like you and I experienced birth. He experienced development like you and I experienced development. He displays rationality, reason, emotions. This helps us understand and state fully that Jesus Christ is fully human. And so, the breadth of the gospels really talk to us about the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Yet we also have to recognize that Jesus Christ is fully God. This was the point that we were making at the beginning: that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. And so much like we just did with his humanity, let's unpack Jesus Christ's divinity, if you will. First, let's understand that Christ himself claims these things. What we don't want to see is that this is what other people thought of Jesus or it's just what Jesus thought of himself, but really it's in the unique combination of those two things that both Jesus and those around him claimed that he was God. So Jesus, in John 8:57-59, claims to be "I Am" of the Old Testament. There it says, "So the Jews said to him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'" And notice here in the next verse, it says, "So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple." They understood what Jesus was saying. He was claiming to be Yahweh.

Jesus claimed the title Son of Man. From Luke 19:10, the good example, although there's many, it says, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Now, this comes from Daniel's visions in the Old Testament. There in Daniel 7:13-14, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." So Jesus claims that Son of Man title from Daniel and puts upon himself throughout the gospels.

Jesus also claims to be the Son of God. Matthew 11:25-30, we hear the prayer of Jesus. "At this time Jesus declared, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'" That passage there at the end is a passage most of us are very familiar with. But look what precedes it. It's a conversation between Jesus and the heavenly Father, where he calls God his heavenly Father and he claims the title Son of God within that context.

Jesus also claims to be the Alpha and Omega in Revelation 22:13. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Jesus claims these concepts of divinity on himself. And so we start by looking at these self-claims. But it doesn’t just end there. Jesus also, after claiming these particular roles, displays unique characteristics that belong solely to God. And so we see these three here: omnipotence, eternity, and omniscience. When we look at several of these passages, what we discover is that Jesus really had power that no one else could have. Matthew 8:26-27. He said to his disciples, “‘Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?’ Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, ‘What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him?’” I don’t know about you. I’ve never been able to calm the seas when I want them to be calm. Jesus displays this unique ability to have mastery over nature. Matthew 14:19, “Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.” Okay. Jesus performs a miracle over the food and continues to multiply the fish and the loaves.

Now, we also see that Jesus displays kind of an eternity of himself. We see this in John 8:58 when Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” Now, we looked at that one a moment ago in his claim of being “I am.” But here he’s also marking the idea that he is an eternal being and that even before he was born, he already existed. Revelation 22:13 also says that. That’s the alpha and omega passage we just looked at a moment ago. Again, Jesus describing that “When time began, I was. When time will end, I will still be. I am an eternal being.” We can look at John 1:1, which isn’t even listed up there, the idea of Jesus being the eternal word of God. And we could recognize that this is his eternal state. So Jesus is displaying this unique characteristic of eternity.

Now, we also see that Jesus displays an omniscience, an ability to know things that no one else would be able to know or understand or perceive things that no one has told him. And so we see in Mark 2:8, “Immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, ‘Why do you question these things in your heart?’” Okay. So we’ve all been somewhere where on our face we’ve got a great poker face, but in our hearts, we have doubt or we have questions. We have fears. We have frustrations. And some of us are really good at hiding those things, but here Jesus is able to cut through the poker face and ask people about the intentions of their heart. It’s as if he could see beyond just what was on the outside and look into the heart of every person around him. John 1:48, “Nathanael said to [Jesus], ‘How do you know me?’ and Jesus answered him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were sitting under the fig tree, I saw you.’” So here Jesus understood where Nathanael was before he even connected with Nathanael, before Nathanael even knew who Jesus was. Before Philip called him, Jesus saw Nathanael. We see John 6:64, “‘But there are some of you who do not believe.’ (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)” Okay. So Jesus understood from the very beginning the intentions of the heart.

And there are other passages that we can look at as well, but what I want us to see very clearly is that not only does Jesus claim the titles of being God or claim divine titles on himself, but he displays unique characteristics that only belong to God. And this is because Jesus is fully God. Now, others speak of Jesus as well. They talk of his divinity. He’s called God and we see him called Lord. We look at John 1:18. “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” John 20:28, where Thomas says, “My Lord and my God!” Romans 9:5, “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” Titus 2:13,

“We wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Hebrews 1:8, “But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.’” 2 Peter 1:1, “Simon 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.”

So we see throughout not only the gospels but the New Testament as well, Jesus is referred to on a regular basis as God himself. Those two are connected. Not only do we take some of the concepts of the trinity, which we talk about in another course, but we also take the idea that Jesus is fully God from a number of these passages. Now, we also see that Jesus is called Lord. So we look at Luke 1:43. “And why is this granted to me that I might be the mother of my Lord who should come?” That’s Mary speaking. We see 1 Corinthians 8:6. “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” 1 Corinthians 12:3, “Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says ‘Jesus is accursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit.” Revelation 19:16, “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

So throughout his life, Jesus claimed divine titles, displayed divine attributes, and was called by divine names by others. Really, Jesus is fully God. And so we see that the testimony of Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is both fully man and fully God. So the question then for us is this: How does the humanity and divinity of Jesus relate to one another? We need to look at the union of these two things. And we start by considering for a moment three improper views of how the humanity and divinity of Jesus relate. We’re going to talk about Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism. That’s a mouthful. That’s a lot of vowels in that last one.

So let’s take a look at first Apollinarianism. This particular view says that Jesus Christ was only partly human and partly divine. Apollinaris was a bishop of Laodicea around AD 361. But ultimately, this view and his view was rejected by the leaders of the church of the Council of Alexandria in 362 and also in Constantinople in 381. So when we go back into church history, we can see that the church fathers have dealt with this view and ultimately said it’s not that Jesus Christ was partly human and partly divine. No, he was fully human and fully divine. So this ultimately wouldn’t stand. Nestorianism comes from the teaching of Nestorius who was bishop of Constantinople in 428. He probably did not teach this himself, although he was removed from his office and his teachings were condemned nonetheless. But here, this view basically states that Jesus Christ had two separate persons in himself: a divine person and a human person. So these folks would argue, yes, Jesus was fully God and fully man, but he was two people really stuck in one body. And ultimately, this is not true. And finally, we have Eutychianism, and this was that Jesus Christ was neither human nor divine, but rather was something completely new and different that in the combination of these two natures, there’s this third reality, this new reality that comes from those two being combined. Now, Eutyches lived in the late 300s, early 400s. He was the leader of a monastery at Constantinople. But ultimately, each one of these views is improper because it doesn’t do adequate justice to the full divine nature of Jesus, the full human nature of Jesus, and their combination in the single individual Jesus Christ.

So from these improper views, we then move to the proper view. The proper view, sometimes called the hypostatic union, is that the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ exists in one being. Now, this comes primarily from the Chalcedonian definition that we take from AD 451. I’m going to put the

Chalcedonian creed up for us in just a moment, and we'll look at it and we'll understand what's being discussed here. So here we have the Chalcedonian definition or the Chalcedonian creed. It's a bit long here, but overall, not too bad. Let me read it for you and then we'll talk about some of its individual parts.

“We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.”

It's a mouthful, to be sure, but really trying to tackle the hypostatic union, the combination of the divine nature of God and the human nature of Jesus all kind of coming together in Jesus Christ. So this group of Christians met in Chalcedon in 451. And this particular position stands really even until today in both the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christianity because it was so robust, it was so profound, and it really answers the question of how the humanity and divinity of Jesus are united. So in this first section, what we see is that Jesus is truly God and truly man, of reasonable soul and body. These two are fully connected. The divinity and humanity of Jesus are united in a very real way. Yet we also want to say, and we don't want to diminish that Jesus wasn't a floating specter or just kind of this ethereal being. He had a real body. He was truly, in every way, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten. And I love this: “in all things like unto us, yet without sin.” Right? He walked the earth like you and I walk the earth, and he grew like you and I grew, yet he was without sin.

And so finally, we also see that “to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved.” Right? We see against Nestorianism in that phrase indivisibly one person, that idea, yet we also see contra, against Eutychianism in that his natures are being preserved. So there's not something new that's being taken out, so that his human and divine natures combine to make something new, and therefore, they don't exist anymore. So we see in this Chalcedonian creed really the truth that was needed to be communicated and held onto by the church in general that would kind of tackle Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism, that tackled all of these things and ultimately brought us to the proper view of how Jesus has two natures that relate to each other and exist in one being, right? That the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ exist in one being, and we call this the hypostatic union.

So we come back to our main teaching point today that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. And as we talk about who Jesus Christ is in the next lessons, let's recognize that he's so unique in that he is fully human, he experiences the things that we experience, yet he's fully God and he has the power that you

and I don't. And so we're going to discover, as we continue to talk through these lessons, why Christ is the only one who can bring salvation to all of humanity.