

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

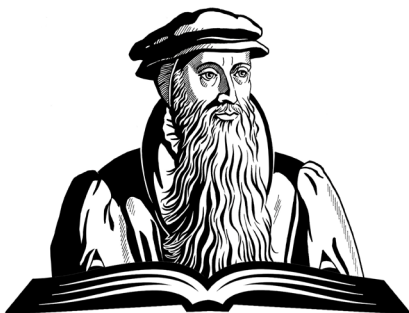
by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

Module 4:

CHRISTOLOGY— THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Lecture 3

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST



The John Knox Institute
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by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

Module 4 ~ Christology

Lectures by Dr. Stephen Myers:

1. Introduction to Christology
2. The Divinity of Christ
- 3. The Humanity of Christ**

Lectures by Robert D. McCurley, ThM:

4. The Hypostatic Union
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SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

by Dr. Stephen Myers

Module 4 ~ Lecture 3

The Humanity of Christ

In our time together, we've been considering this great question, this most important question in all of life: Whom do you say that Jesus is? If we take the Scriptures as our foundation, whom do we say that Jesus is? And in our last time together, we saw something critically important: Jesus is God. Jesus is fully God, fully divine. So if we ask the question, Whom do you say that Jesus is? A critically important part of the answer has to be that Jesus is God. But there's more to the answer. Yes, Jesus is fully God, but he's also something else. In 1 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 5, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are saved by "the man Christ Jesus." Again, in Romans, chapter 5, and verse 15, we are told that the grace of God comes "by one man, Jesus Christ." Central to Christianity, is the fact that Jesus Christ is fully God; but equally central to Christianity is the fact that Jesus Christ is fully man, that the Word became flesh, as John, chapter 1, verse 14 tells us. This is what we refer to as the humanity of Christ. Christ is fully human. He's fully a man. He is as much human as you or I are, in fact, he's even more human, and more perfectly human than you or I are. But we'll come to that.

When we looked at Jesus's divinity, we saw a host of places in Scripture, where Jesus is treated as or spoken of as fully God. When we come to consider the humanity of Christ, we find the same situation, yet in regard to Jesus's humanity. There are scores of places in Scripture where we are unmistakably confronted with the humanity of Jesus, unavoidably confronted with the shocking fact that Jesus is fully and perfectly human. Often, you might hear people refer to "the incarnation". And that word refers to this fact, that Jesus came in the flesh, perfect in his humanity. *Carne* comes from the Latin for "in the flesh. Jesus came in the flesh. He took to himself the fulness of human nature. He was incarnate. In other words, Jesus is fully a man.

Perhaps the most elementary evidence that he was fully man is that he was born. And we read in Galatians, chapter 4, verse 4, Jesus was "made of a woman," or "born of a woman." Both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke begin by telling us about this very birth. In Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 35, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, who was a virgin, and told her, in Luke chapter 1, verse 31: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." Mary, of course, is shocked by this. As a virgin, she should not be pregnant, so Mary asks how this is to be, and Gabriel says to her, in verse 35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Now here, we confront a mystery. We confront, really, a miracle. In the Old Testament, in Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14, God had decreed through Isaiah that a virgin would give birth to a child, as testimony that God would keep all of his promises. And here is that prophesied birth. A virgin, who should be physically incapable of being pregnant,

is pregnant, and she'll give birth to a son.

On the one hand, this very much points to Jesus's divinity, which we discussed last time. He is conceived by the Holy Ghost. He will be the Holy One. In many ways, this points to Jesus's divinity. But it also, just as clearly, points to his humanity. In verse 31, Gabriel says that Mary will "conceive in thy womb." In verse 35, he says that Jesus will be "born of thee." Mary is Jesus's mother, in the same way, and to the same extent that your mother or my mother are our mothers. Think about that. When Jesus came into this world, he came with the genetic information of Mary. Jesus would have looked like Mary. We can't know the details, of course, but perhaps his hair was exactly the same color as hers, or perhaps when he smiled, his smile looked just like his mother's. He was from her womb. Again, as we read in Galatians 4, verse 4, he was "made of a woman." He was born as no other man ever has been born—he was born of a virgin. But he was born, of a virgin. He is fully man.

As fully man, Jesus thus partakes of all that constitutes humanity. He has a real human body. In 1 John, chapter 1, verse 1, John is very clear that the disciples were able to touch Jesus. He wasn't some apparition. He wasn't just appearing like a man. No, Jesus is a man. He had a real human body. In John 20, verse 27, even after Jesus's resurrection, the disciple Thomas is able to feel his body—able to feel even the wounds that Jesus had suffered on the cross. In 2 John, chapter 1, verse 7, John makes a startling statement. He writes: "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Jesus came in the flesh. He was fully human in every way. And to believe or teach otherwise is contrary to the gospel. Jesus is fully man.

As such, Jesus doesn't only have a human body, he also has a human mind. We see that in Matthew, chapter 24, verse 36. He has a human soul, as we see in Luke 23, verse 46. He has a human will, which we see in Luke 22, and verse 42. We will come back to some of those passages in our next lecture, when we think about how Jesus is both fully God and fully man. But for now, we can at least point to them as places in the Scripture where we see that Jesus possesses, Jesus is, all that is involved in being human. There is no part of humanity that Jesus lacks. There's no component of human nature that Jesus lacks. When the Word became flesh, he took to himself a full human nature—a human body, a human soul.

Now at this point, we have to be very clear. Jesus Christ was totally and perfectly free from sin. In Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15, we read that Jesus Christ is like us in every way, "yet without sin." Or, as Hebrews states it in chapter 7, verse 26: "[Jesus] is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, Paul writes plainly that Jesus "knew no sin." It's striking what we read in Matthew, chapter 27, verse 23. There, Jesus is before his accusers, his trial is being considered by Pilate, and Jesus's accusers scour Jerusalem to find one man—one man—who would bring one charge against Jesus. And they couldn't find one, not one. Even those enemies who always were lurking, always were seeking out a false word, always were watching for one slip, they couldn't produce one single thing that Jesus had done wrong. Jesus is perfectly free from the taint of sin. He was holy in Mary's womb—we saw that just a moment ago in Luke, chapter 1—and he remained free from sin his entire life.

Now here, a question can present itself. If all men are sinners, and Jesus was not a sinner, how can we say that he was fully man? We can say both things. We can say that Jesus is perfectly free from sin, and that he is fully man, because sin—fallenness—is not true human nature. It is the distortion of human nature. When Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden, they were fully human, perfectly human, but they were without sin prior to the fall. A body of flesh is necessary to

being a man. If you don't have a body of flesh, you're not a man. Sin is not necessary to being a man. Jesus is fully, perfectly a man, and part of the perfection of his humanity, is that he is without sin. In his full humanity, Jesus actually is what mankind was created to be—holy, undefiled. So we have to be very clear, on the one hand, that Jesus is completely like us—he is fully man. And at the same time, we have to be very clear that he is without sin. To quote Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15, again, he is like us in every way, “yet without sin.”

But his likeness to us in every other way that we find in Jesus is profound, and it's complete. He really is fully man. In the Scripture, we see, for example, that Jesus experienced normal growth and development. In Luke, chapter 2, and verse 52, Luke is writing about Jesus, and he writes that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Jesus grew up. He was a toddler, and then he was an adolescent, and then he was a teenager. And all the while, he was growing taller, he was growing stronger. He was gaining a reputation, doubtless a reputation as the kind son of the carpenter. And in Luke, chapter 2, verses 42 to 52, the passage leading up to the verse that I just read, we read about Jesus at age twelve. And at the relatively young age of twelve, Jesus already had such a profound understanding of the Scriptures, that he was able to astonish the religious leaders in Jerusalem with his knowledge. After that passage in Luke, chapter 2, we're not really told much about Jesus until he was much older, and entering into his public ministry, that period of about three years prior to his crucifixion and resurrection. And when we meet this adult Jesus, we see that he still is in every way, fully man.

While Jesus wasn't sinful, not fallen, he did have human limitations. After a long day of preaching and travelling, he would get tired. We read of one such instance in Mark, chapter 4, verse 38. Jesus got thirsty, as we read in John, chapter 19, verse 28. Jesus was localized. He was in a place, and you had to come to the spot where he was to see him and to hear him—you had to have a line of vision. This basic facts are laced through the account of Zacchaeus, in Luke, chapter 19, verses 1 through 4, for example. Jesus had human emotions—the full range, in fact, of sinless human emotions. Jesus was joyful; he laughed, and enjoyed time and fellowship with his disciples. We see that in John, chapter 15, verse 11. Jesus loved others, as we see in John, chapter 11, verse 5. He had a particular love, a special love, for his mother, which we see evidenced in John, chapter 19, verses 26 and 27. When Jesus saw the vulnerable, he had compassion on them, as he does in John, chapter 8, verse 7. He pitied those who were in aching need, as we see in Mark, chapter 10, verses 50 to 52. The ravages of sin in a fallen world frustrated him. We see it doing so, in John, chapter 11, verse 33. When Jesus's friends died, he wept. He does so in John, chapter 11, verse 35. Jesus knew anguish so deep, that only his own holy integrity, and the ministry of the Spirit, and the ministry of angels kept him from collapse, as we find in Gethsemane, in Luke, chapter 22, verse 44. Jesus knew what it was to tremble at the prospect of doing God's will in hard providences. He faces that trembling in Matthew, chapter 26, verses 36 through 46. He knew the horror, the desolation, of coming under the just wrath of God. We see it in Matthew, chapter 27, verse 46. If there is a sinless human emotion, Jesus felt it.

In all of these things, Jesus was, once again, fully human. He was just like every other man, and any other man in that way. In Isaiah, chapter 53, verse 2, we're told that the “suffering servant,”—and that suffering servant is Jesus—we are told that [Jesus] hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Now that verse doesn't mean that Jesus was ugly, it means that there was nothing visibly different about him. He didn't stand out. You could walk past him on the streets of Nazareth, and he would just blend right in with everyone else. He was ordinary. We read in the Gospels, in places like Mark, chapter 6, verse 2, that people

were astonished at Jesus's teachings and his miracles because, to all appearances, he was ordinary. He didn't look like he should be able to do the things that he did. The people of Jesus's home town, the people who would have known him his entire life, to them, he was just the ordinary son of an ordinary carpenter. We see that reaction in Mark, chapter 6, verse 3.

Jesus was ordinary. He was born. He grew up, all the while experiencing human limitations, human emotions, just like any other man, yet without sin, and then he died. Now, Jesus's death was utterly unique, and we will come to that, but it also had a commonality with all human death. Jesus died. One unmistakable indication that Jesus is fully human is that he died. And he left on the cross a corpse that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had to take down, and bear the heavy weight of it to Joseph's newly hewn tomb. We read of this in John, chapter 19, verses 38 through 42. And that body, that corpse of Jesus, remained there in the tomb until Jesus rose in resurrection power and might. And in his resurrection, Jesus remains—he still is this very moment—fully man.

You see, humanity isn't something that the Son took to himself for his earthly ministry, only to lay it aside at the resurrection. No, the incarnation is ongoing. It never ends. We mentioned just a little while ago, out of John, chapter 20, that Thomas is able to feel Jesus's resurrected human body. The resurrected Jesus is able to eat with his disciples, in John, chapter 21, verses 12 to 14. Now, Jesus's resurrection body seems to be quite different than his body was prior to the resurrection. From what we find in John, chapter 20, verse 19, it appears that Jesus's resurrection body is able to disappear and reappear, for example. So Jesus's human body has new capacities in the resurrection, but it still is his human body. In Philippians, chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, the Apostle Paul writes this: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Did you hear that? As Christians, our hope, our concerns, our conversation, Paul says, is in heaven, because Jesus is there. And when he comes back, when Jesus returns at the end of the age, Jesus shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Jesus's body, even more, Jesus's humanity is what ours will be when we are glorified. Our humanity then will be like his is now.

Jesus was, and he continues to be, and he ever shall be fully a man, perfect in his humanity, from his birth from a woman, through an ordinary life of growth and development, through all of the sinless limitations of humanity, through all of the panoply of sinless emotions to which we are subject, all the way to the last desolation at death, and the tomb, and even the resplendent glory of resurrection—through all of it, Jesus was fully and perfectly human, perfect in his humanity. Jesus didn't come to hover just above the hardships and the realities of life in a fallen world, himself unfallen. Jesus came into this world and was more perfectly human than you or I. And this fact, the fact of the perfect humanity of Jesus, it is absolutely essential to the salvation of God's people. The incarnation is essential, it is necessary for the salvation of God's people. In Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, we read this: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Do you follow the reasoning there? In order to save flesh and blood, the Son had to become flesh and blood. To save men and women, Jesus had to become a man. If Jesus's flesh and blood is not just like ours, he cannot save us. The incarnation was absolutely utterly necessary, because an unincarnate Son could not save his people from their sin. He couldn't die in their place. He couldn't bear their judgment. He had to become man. The same necessity appears

in Galatians, chapter 4, verses 4 and 5. There, Paul writes: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” By being born of a woman—and we’ve discussed all that’s involved in that already—by being born of a woman, the Son came under the law, the passage says. And that coming under the law was necessary if Jesus was to save those who are under the law. Again, in order to save humans, the Son had to be human. The incarnation was utterly necessary for the salvation of sinners.

In fact, the incarnation continues to be necessary for the work that Jesus does not. Later in the course, we’ll discuss the ongoing work of Christ in more detail. But one of the things that Jesus does for his people, that he does for you this very day, is that he intercedes for us. He pleads our cause before the throne of heaven. And in Hebrews, chapter 4, verses 14 through 16, we read this: “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 which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, 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.” We are able to hold fast our profession,” verse 14 says, meaning that we are able to stand in the faith, we’re able to come boldly before the throne of grace, finding there mercy and sustaining grace, verse 16 says. Why? Why do we know such comfort? Because our great high priest, Jesus Christ, is fully man. He knows the weaknesses and the limitations of humanity from the inside. Because Jesus is fully man, because of his perfect humanity, Jesus is able to save you and grant you peace to approach the throne of grace even today, because he’s one of us.

Before we close for this session, let me offer you one perhaps uncomfortable challenge that’s set before us, when we consider the perfect humanity of Jesus. As humans, we are expert at blaming our sin on our humanity. We’re jealous of our neighbor because that’s just how humans are. Or we look lustfully, because that’s just what humans do. We’re rebellious against parents, or we are impatient with children, because that’s just how humans are. Or maybe it’s because we’re tired, or lonesome. Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ, perfect in humanity and without sin, burns all of those lies to the ground. He who is perfect man walked through this life, with all of its fatigue, and isolation, and pain, and he never even skirted the edge of sin. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. And that means, among other things, that we need to call our sin what it is. It’s sin. It’s not the incapacity of our humanity. It’s sin. And so we need to repent of it, and confess to the one who knew no sin, and who now makes intercession for us at the throne of grace.

Last session, we learned about the perfect divinity of Jesus. Jesus is fully and perfectly God. There never was a moment in which the Son did not exist, or in which he was not the radiant glory of the living God. In this session, we’ve learned about the perfect humanity of Jesus. Jesus is fully and perfectly man. There is no part of our humanity, sin excepted, that the Son did not take to himself, and that is not still his own in the radiance of heaven. Who do we say that Jesus is? We say that he is fully God, and we say that he is fully man. Jesus is fully God and fully man. In our next session, we’ll try to think just a little bit about what exactly that means, and, as far as we’re able to understand, how it works.