

## WHY GOD IN FLESH – HUMBLER IN HUMAN LIKENESS

### Introduction

1. Christmas time can be a confusing time. Many are not too sure what to make of it. What is Christmas all about? How do we respond to the coming of Christ to earth – to the incarnation of God?
2. (John MacArthur) - ***We are confronted again with the very difficult task of separating the reality of Christmas from the clutter that surrounds that reality. There is so much confusion... This was graphically illustrated to me the other night as our family was driving along together and we decided to drive through a certain neighborhood in the valley where they have a lot of lights and displays on the lawn and the kids always enjoy that. So, we were driving up and down the street and the place was just lit up and there were lights everywhere. And we came to all kinds of houses with all kinds of representations of Christmas-- everything imaginable: Snoopy on a surfboard on the roof, Santa Claus and everything. But we came to one house that just sort of put it all together. Everything you can conceive of about Christmas was there. There was the nativity scene. There was a Hanukkah bush, the star of David, Frosty the Snowman, Santa Claus, the reindeer, Rudolph, the workshop, elves, you name it, lights, Christmas trees, presents, plastic toys on the lawn, the whole shot. And really, it was just a graphic picture of the chaos of Christmas, all confused so that no one could make any sense out of any of it. Christmas has really become a hopeless muddle of confusion. The humility and the poverty of the stable are somehow confused with the wealth and indulgence and selfishness of gift giving. The quietness of Bethlehem is mingled with the din of shopping malls and freeway traffic. The soberness of the incarnation is somehow mixed with the drunkenness of this season. Blinking colored lights somehow have some connection to the star of Bethlehem. The room in the inn, so obscure, so dirty with such meager fare, somehow embraces the thought of a warm house, a fireplace and opulent feasting. Cheap plastic toys for little kids with which to play out their follies are mixed with the true value of the gifts given by wise men. Salesmen somehow get mixed up with shepherds. Angels are confused with***

*flying reindeer, one of which even has a red nose. The pain of childbirth is mixed with the parties. The filth of the stable is confounded with the whiteness of fresh snow. And then there's Mary, Joseph, Perry Como and Bing Crosby. And so it goes.*

3. That is the challenge before us. Somewhere in all of this is the truth that Jesus, who was and is God, the second person of the Trinity, became fully man and dwelt among men and ultimately died and rose from the dead to secure for those who would believe, eternal life!
4. Last week we considered the virgin birth. Today our consideration is the incarnation – the coming in flesh of God!
5. Listen to the following passages: **Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:14-16**. Now turn if you will to Philippians 2:5-11.
6. To say that Jesus “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, **being born in the likeness of men**”, what does that mean? I would suggest to you that Jesus, God the Son, became what He was not – a human being. Everything about Him was fully human. He was like every other human, except without sin. In His humanity He dealt with physical and emotional and spiritual issues as every human does. But in all cases He depended upon the Heavenly Father – not at all like most humans I know. But I will suggest to you that we, too, can, and in fact must learn to depend on our Heavenly Father. Hopefully our journey through the truth of the incarnation will help us to accomplish that. Jesus was born...

**I. IN HUMAN LIKENESS - PHYSICALLY** (And because He was in the flesh, He was subject to the weakness and demise of the flesh).

- A. The weaknesses of the flesh – He depended on His **Father's power and provision**.
  1. The writer of Hebrews makes the point to remind us that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. He was a partaker of flesh and blood. Because He was in the flesh, He knew by experience the challenges of the flesh.
  2. Jesus knew what it was like to suffer hunger and thirst. He knew fatigue and He experienced sleeplessness. He had long days and short nights. You can read about it in the Gospel accounts.
  3. He lived in a family. He worked as a carpenter. He dealt with difficult people. He was just as human as you and me. And in all of the weaknesses

of His humanity, He depended on the power of the Father and the provision of the Father to meet those needs.

4. When He told the disciples to watch and pray because “the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak”, He knew what He was talking about – not only because of His wisdom and observation, not to mention His deity, but also because of His experience. He is able to, in the words of the writer of the Hebrews, “sympathize with our weaknesses.”
5. We are weak in the flesh. We, too, must depend on the Father who is able to help and is ready to provide what we need, and we are a needy people.

B. The demise of the flesh (death) – He depended on His **Father’s presence**.

1. A bit more than three decades after His birth, Jesus was executed. The Bible reminds us that it is appointed unto man once to die. For death is the certain result of sin. If you sin, you will die. All have sinned. All die. But unlike us, Jesus never sinned. Yet He died.
2. His death was not for Himself, but for those who would be His. Let me take you to Golgotha. As He hung there between earth and heaven in great physical agony, He spoke “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” And He died. He died like He lived, depending on the Father’s presence. Prior to His death, speaking to the disciples as they headed to the Garden, He said, “Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me” (John 16:32).
3. Please do not misunderstand. Jesus came not as the way shower, but as the way maker. He was the way. Without Him there is no salvation. The main reason for coming was to save His people from their sins. He came to be a substitute. He came to atone for our sins. That is the main point of His coming. But He also came and lived and died as a human being that He might represent us as our great high priest, that He might demonstrate that we too may live our lives in dependence on the Father’s presence. Have you thought about this recently? Because Jesus came, we have access to the Father. The writer of Hebrews says, “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.” Need anything? In life and in death, we have the Father’s

**power** and His **provision** and His very **presence**. That is what Jesus had and we have the same thing!

## II. IN HUMAN LIKENESS - EMOTIONALLY

A. The weaknesses of the flesh – He depended upon the **Father's passion and patience**.

1. Consider the people Jesus had to deal with. Sometimes Jesus' disciples were as dull as a rock. "Just show us the Father and it will be enough..." Philip's ball was lost in the theological weeds. And what about Peter? As someone has said, he put both feet in his mouth and then wondered why he couldn't walk!
2. There were those arrogant and snobbish religious leaders. There were demanding crowds and abusive siblings and confused disciples and diseased beggars and neglected children and troubled couples and wild demoniacs. It was enough to give anyone emotional overload.
3. But Jesus had patience with and a passion for people that He received from the Father. He endured and He listened and He taught and He rebuked and He healed and He helped and He loved. He stood outside Jerusalem and wept over the city, longing to take them in – sinners who would soon cry out for His crucifixion. How did He do it? It came from the Father. (**John 8:26-30**).
4. Anybody bugging you right now? Are you overwhelmed and about ready to throw in the towel? He "made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man..." And as a man, in the weakness of human flesh, He depended on the Father's **passion** and **patience** to sustain Him through the emotional trials of life.

B. The demise of the flesh (death) – He depended on the **Father's peace**.

1. There is a great deal that is unsettling about the death of Christ. From our vantage point, it should never have happened. From God's vantage point, this was focus of eternity. This was the plan of the ages. It had to happen. But even though planned before the creation of the world, it nevertheless was an enormous emotional drain, as we can well imagine.
2. Jesus prayed in the Garden a few hours prior to His crucifixion, "May this cup pass from me." The emotional drain was so intense that He, as it were, sweat

drops of blood. What got Him through the valley of the shadow of death? It was the Father's peace.

3. Not my will but your will be done. In John 14 Jesus speaks of the crucifixion and the prince of this world – the devil, but He also speaks of peace, the Father's peace. He could tell His disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled" because His heart was not troubled (**John 14:27-31**).
4. When facing death, Jesus depended on the Father's peace. For some of you as your life has begun to unravel, on what are you depending? He came in the flesh. He was fully man that He might be our high priest, having experienced all that we have experienced, even death. Through it all He depended on the Father's peace.

### **III. IN HUMAN LIKENESS – SPIRITUALLY (with one notable exception)**

A. The weaknesses of the flesh (temptation) – He depended on the **Father's promises and pleasure.**

1. The scene is the wilderness – that forsaken scorched land of sand and stones and little else. Jesus wandered the rugged terrain for 40 days and nights. He was hungry and weary. And at His weakest point, the devil comes with his strongest temptations. And Jesus resists. How? He depended on the Father's promises and on the Father's pleasure.
2. Would the Father feed Jesus? Would the Father restore all of creation that rightly belonged to Jesus? Would the Father give Him the recognition due His name? Yes. In time. It was the pleasure that the Father had in His Son and the promises the Father had for His Son that brought the Lord Jesus through the times of temptation.
3. When times were particularly difficult – there was the Father's verbal pleasure – "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Listen to **John 17:1-5**. There was the promise of the Father.
4. What sustains you through the temptations of life? (Or do we just surrender to them)? Is it pleasure in obedience to the Father? Is it delight in honoring God? Are not His promises enough to sustain us through the difficulties? They were for Jesus. They ought also to be for us. If they are not, we are not depending on our Heavenly Father.

B. The demise of the flesh (death) – He depended on the **Father's purposes.**

1. Again and again Jesus spoke of His death. He explained to His bewildered disciples why He must die. (See Matthew 16:21). Always in front of Him was the purpose of the Father. After the humiliation of death came the exaltation of glory. That was the Father's purpose. That purpose and plan sustained Jesus through the dark hours of the crucifixion.
2. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul, (**Ephesians 1:6-9**). Redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins according to His grace – all of that according to the Father's good pleasure!
3. My friends, Jesus, though God of very God, became man. As man He was dependent on the Father. He depended on the Father throughout life as well as in death. His physical and emotional and spiritual needs were all met in the Father.
4. One of these days we are going to die (if the Lord delays His coming). Death may come in old age, essentially falling asleep in the flesh and waking up in the Spirit in the presence of God. (That would be the way of choice for me). It might come in the form of a ravaging disease that rips life away. It might be the result of a terrible accident or some horrible tragedy. But however it comes, this flesh was not designed to exist in its present state forever. It is appointed unto man once to die. That appointment is of the Father. He has His purposes in it. The correct response for us is to depend on Him, who always does what is right.

## **Conclusion**

1. Please hear what I am saying. Jesus was and is God, but He also became man. And as man He depended on the Father. He depended on the Father's power and provision. I am weak and needy. I don't have enough resources to make it on my own. I also must depend on the Father's provision.
2. Jesus, in the flesh, trusted in the Father's presence. I am sometimes alone and afraid. I too must depend on His presence. For He is with me. Jesus trusted the Father's passion and patience. As an impatient person with misplaced passions, I too must depend on the Father for His love in His way and in His perfect time. Jesus depended on the peace that comes from the Father. My life is often in an uproar. I think at times that I would give anything for peace. Peace is not

available at any price. It cannot be purchased but it is plentiful from the Father's heart – and it is mine from Him if I choose to receive it.

3. You get the point. He who was everything became nothing so that I could have everything that I need in order to please Him and praise Him and be fulfilled in Him. Jesus gave it all up to demonstrate to me that I could depend on the Father. You can too – if you know Him.
4. St. Augustine (400 years after Christ) wrote the following ... *The maker of man became man that He, ruler of the stars, might be nourished at the breast; that He the bread might be hungry; that He the fountain might thirst; that He the light might sleep; that He the way might be wearied in the journey; that He the truth might be accused by false witnesses; that He the judge of the living and dead might be brought to trial by a mortal judge; that He justice itself might be condemned by the unjust; that He, discipline personified might be scourged with a whip; that He the foundation might be suspended on a cross; that He courage incarnate might be weak; and He security itself might be wounded; and He life itself might die.*
5. That is in part, what Paul meant when he said of Jesus, “being born in the likeness of men; and being found in human form, he humbled himself...” As man He depended on the Father. Will you?