

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to examine Christology. Last time we established that Jesus Christ was fully human and that he overcame every temptation in his humanity, strengthened by the same Holy Spirit power that is available to all believers, which is a serious challenge to us all to not sin. Dr. Spencer, what do you want to discuss today?

Dr. Spencer: I want to look at *why* it is theologically important that Jesus be fully human. As we noted in Session 113, the apostle wrote in 1 John 4:2-3 that “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”¹ So, to deny the full humanity of Jesus is to give place to the spirit of the antichrist.

Marc Roby: Well, that certainly emphasizes the importance of the topic.

Dr. Spencer: It does, yes. And in examining this topic, I am going to again follow fairly closely the presentation in Wayne Grudem’s book *Systematic Theology*. He notes that there are “several reasons why Jesus had to be fully man if he was going to be the Messiah and earn our salvation.”²

Marc Roby: Now, before you proceed, perhaps we should remind our listeners that the Hebrew word Messiah simply means anointed and refers to the Savior promised in the Old Testament. The Greek word Χριστός (Christos), which also means anointed, is the source of our English word Christ. Jesus is the anointed one.

Dr. Spencer: Well, we haven’t said that in quite a while and not everyone knows it, so it is a timely reminder.

But getting back to why the Messiah, or the Christ, had to be fully man in order to earn our salvation, the first reason Grudem lists is that he had to be man in order to be our representative before God as he fully obeyed God’s laws.

Remember that Adam was God’s appointed representative for the entire human race, which theologians call our federal head, as we discussed at some length in Session 76. Therefore, because he was our representative, when he fell he brought the whole race into what the Westminster Shorter Catechism calls “an estate of sin and misery.”³

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² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, pg 540

³ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 17: Into what estate did the fall bring mankind? Answer: The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Marc Roby: And so Jesus Christ had to be fully man in order to be a new representative, or federal head, to redeem his people from the estate of sin and misery.

Dr. Spencer: That's exactly right. The apostle Paul explains this in his letter to the Romans and also mentions it in his first letter to the church in Corinth. In Romans 5:18-19 we read, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

Marc Roby: And when Paul speaks about "the obedience of the one man" he is clearly referring to Jesus Christ.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that is absolutely clear if you read the whole passage. I don't want to repeat what we said in Session 76 so anyone who is interested can go look at that, but every human being is either represented by Adam or by Jesus Christ. All human beings are initially represented by Adam by virtue of being his descendants. As a result, we inherit his sinful nature and the guilt of his sin. In addition, of course, we heap up more guilt for our own sins and, if we die in Adam, meaning that we are still represented by him, we will go to eternal hell.

Marc Roby: Praise God that through Jesus Christ he has provided another option!

Dr. Spencer: And it is a most blessed and gracious option. As Paul tells us in Romans 10:9, "if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." In other words, if we repent of our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are united to him by faith and he becomes our representative instead of Adam. The biblical language is that we are then "*in Christ*".

Marc Roby: And if we are in Christ, he is in us! Jesus told us in John 14:20 that "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." What an awesome and incomprehensible truth that is. God is in us! I don't understand it, but I rejoice that it is true.

Dr. Spencer: It is impossible to overstate the magnitude of that blessing. In 1 Corinthians 15:22 Paul tells us, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." But we must remember the first rule of hermeneutics and interpret this verse in the light of the entire Bible; "all" does not mean each and every person without exception. It means all of a particular class. The very next verse, 1 Corinthians 15:23, says "But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him." In other words, Christ will be raised from the dead first, which is what we commemorate on Easter Sunday, but when he comes again, "those who belong to him" will also be raised from the dead, which is referring to the resurrection of our bodies. And the fact that Paul uses the limiting clause "those who belong to him" tells us clearly that he isn't referring to every single human being.

Marc Roby: Well, this might be a good time for to summarize what we've said so far. We've noted that every human being is represented by either Adam or Jesus Christ, which we had discussed at much greater length in Session 76. Everyone is initially united to Adam by virtue of

being a human being, and those who place their faith in Jesus Christ are then united to him by that faith and he then becomes their representative.

Dr. Spencer: Which explains why Jesus had to be a man. It is God's will that we be represented by a man and Adam and Jesus Christ are the only two options available. There is no third way. And, if we are represented by Christ, he took our sins upon himself and paid the penalty for them on the cross and in return we are given his perfect righteousness, which make us fit for heaven.

Marc Roby: I'd say that that is the most amazing and one-sided transaction imaginable. We give up our filthy sins, guilt and shame, which deserve hell, and receive Christ's perfect righteousness, which deserves heaven.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, theologians call this the double transaction or double imputation. Paul wrote about it in 2 Corinthians 5:21 when he said that "God made him" which refers to Jesus Christ, "who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Marc Roby: That is truly marvelous. Why else did Jesus have to be fully man?

Dr. Spencer: The second reason Grudem gives is that Jesus needed to be man to be a substitute sacrifice for us. After all, God cannot die. In speaking about Christ, the writer of Hebrews says, in Hebrews 2:14, that "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil". And in Verse 17 of that chapter we read, "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."

Marc Roby: I feel compelled to point out that that word "atonement" there is an interpretation, rather than a translation of the Greek word in this verse. It should say "propitiation", not "atonement".

Dr. Spencer: I agree, and other translations do a better job on this verse. We will get to that in a later session, but for now I want to stick to the question of why Jesus had to be a true man.

Marc Roby: Okay, what is the third reason Grudem lists?

Dr. Spencer: He notes that Jesus had to be both God and man in order to be the only mediator between God and man. We read in 1 Timothy 2:5 that "there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus".

Marc Roby: Now it's sad when you think about Adam and Eve before the fall. They didn't need a mediator. They had direct fellowship and communion with God. But they lost that privilege because of their sin.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that is terrible, but praise God for his mercy. He restores us to fellowship with him in Jesus Christ.

And the fourth reason Grudem gives that Jesus had to be real man is to fulfill God's original purpose for man to rule over the rest of creation. God's original purpose was expressed in Genesis 1:26 where we read that God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and

let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” But because man sinned, he doesn’t rule properly.

Marc Roby: Yes, and, as a result, Jesus had to come and clean up our mess so to speak.

Dr. Spencer: I guess that’s one way of putting it. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 the apostle Paul wrote that the end will come when Christ “hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” And to reign, of course, means to rule.

Marc Roby: And the amazing truth is that we will reign *with* him. We read in 2 Timothy 2:12 that “if we endure, we will also reign with him.”

Dr. Spencer: That’s an incredible promise. And that brings us to the fifth reason Grudem gives for Jesus being a man. He must be a true man in order to be our example for how to properly live. We are told in Romans 8:29 that “those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” And in 1 Peter 2:21 the apostle tell us, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

Marc Roby: I don’t think that many people like the idea of following in Jesus’ steps in terms of suffering.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, I don’t know anyone who likes suffering. But Jesus himself told us in Matthew 16:24 that “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” To understand this verse you need to know that the Romans usually made a condemned criminal carry his own cross to the place of crucifixion. So, to deny ourselves and take up our cross is a clear reference to dying.

Marc Roby: We need to remember that death is not the end of existence. The real meaning of death is separation, as we discussed in Session 104. In Colossians 3:5 Paul commands us to “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature”. Instead, in Ephesians 4:24, he tells us we are to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”.

Dr. Spencer: That’s an important point because most people, even many professing Christians, think of death as the cessation of existence. But, if that were true, then it would make no sense to say, as Paul does in Ephesians 2:1-2, that a person could be *dead* in his transgressions and sins, in which he used to *live*. As always, we need the biblical worldview to properly understand the Bible and the world we live in.

But, getting back to Grudem’s point. Jesus Christ is to be our example. We are not to do everything he did of course, some of the things he did and said were only proper for God to do or say. But the way he lived, in perfect obedience to the commands of God, is to be our example.

Marc Roby: Probably the most famous verses to make that point are in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews Chapter 11 is often called the hall of fame of faith and it lists a number of biblical examples of people who lived faithful lives. And then, in Hebrews 12:1-2, we are told,

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that is a great encouragement. We have many godly men and women throughout history and even at the present time to whom we can look as examples of living godly Christian lives. But our ultimate example is Jesus Christ himself. And the ultimate picture of his faithfulness was that he was willing to take our sins upon himself and endure the wrath of God on our behalf.

Marc Roby: That is obviously an example that none of us ever live up to.

Dr. Spencer: Well, that’s for sure. But let’s quickly finish listing Grudem’s reasons why Jesus had to be a man. The next one he gives is that Jesus had to be a man in order to be what the Bible calls the firstborn from the dead and the pattern for our resurrection bodies.

Marc Roby: You read Romans 8:29 a few minutes ago, which says that Christ is to be the “firstborn among many brothers”. But we also read in Colossians 1:18 that Christ “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 the supremacy.”

Dr. Spencer: And in speaking of our physical resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:42 the apostle Paul wrote that “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable”. And then, in Verse 49, he says that “just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man,” which refers to Adam, “so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.” Which, of course, refers to Jesus Christ.

Marc Roby: And in Philippians 3:20-21 Paul wrote that “our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

Dr. Spencer: That’s a great passage. And it brings us to the final reason Grudem gives for Jesus needing to be a man. And this one is a bit difficult to grasp. As God, Jesus knows everything, including exactly how we feel and what we think. He knows all of our temptations, fears and trials perfectly. And yet, in Hebrews 4:14-15 we are told that “since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

Marc Roby: And so, we are being told that by actually experiencing temptation himself, Jesus is better able to sympathize with us. I see the problem, it would appear that he learned something.

Dr. Spencer: I think this falls into the category of things that we can’t fully comprehend. But we are told in Hebrews 2:18 that because Christ “himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” So, we must accept it as true even if we can’t fully

understand it. I do think it is a marvelous example of God's love for his people. Jesus suffered in this life for a number of different reasons, but among them is that he is better able to sympathize with us when we are tempted.

Marc Roby: Yes, that is an amazing fact to meditate on. And a great place to end for today, so let me take this opportunity to remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org, and we will do our best to answer.