

## ***Fully God and Fully Man (Past, Present, and Future)***

Christmas is the time of year when followers of Jesus think about the incarnation. The “incarnation” refers to the unique Son of God taking on a flesh and blood body and becoming one of us. Without giving up his divinity, he took on humanity. As the church has stated it down through the centuries, Jesus was “fully God and fully man.” He was one person in two natures. From eternity past, Jesus had one divine nature; but after the first Christmas, he now had two natures - both human and divine - in one person.

This afternoon/evening/morning I want you to think carefully with me about one specific aspect of the incarnation. I want us to think about the **duration** of the incarnation. How long does the incarnation last? How long is Jesus Christ fully God **and** fully man?

You may not have thought about this aspect of the incarnation before, but the New Testament actually has much to say about it. The New Testament speaks about the humanity of Jesus as something that **was** true in the past, something that **is** true in the present, and something that **will be** true in the future. I am going to give a brief (and spectacularly inadequate) summary of the past, present, and future humanity of Jesus. I hope this isn't merely a theological exercise; I hope these truths about Jesus' incarnation fill you with wonder and with faith!

**Jesus' past humanity.** While on earth, the gospels describe Jesus as fully human - both before and after his resurrection. The passage from Luke 2 that was read earlier describes the birth of a normal human baby. Jesus grew in His mother's womb and entered this world as a newborn. There's every indication that he grew up like every other little boy; Luke 2:52 tells us that Jesus “grew in stature.” We can imagine Joseph and Mary shaking their heads and saying, “Jesus outgrew another pair of sandals.”

When we fast-forward and read about Jesus as an adult, we see that he became **weary** after a long journey; he was **hungry** after fasting; he was **thirsty** as He hung on the cross (John 19:28). Of course, the greatest indication that he had a fully-human body was that he died after being crucified for our sins.

The Gospels also describe how Jesus had the full range of human emotions. We read that at various times Jesus was **joyful** (John 15:11), **angry** (Mark 3:5), **troubled** and **sorrowful** (Matthew 26:37). On one occasion, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

We not only see Jesus' humanity **during his earthly life**. We also see Jesus' humanity **after his resurrection**. When Jesus appeared to his disciples, he was very intent on proving to them that his human body had been raised from the dead. Listen to Luke 24:39-43.

39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

To be sure, his resurrected body was different than his mortal body (which, by definition, was subject to death). It was a glorified **human** body. The scars in his hands and feet

were proof that the body that had hung on the cross was the body that stood before them, only resurrected and glorified.

40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.

The fact that he could eat a piece of fish was further proof that he wasn't merely a spirit but that he had a human body. I also find it intriguing that he could eat even though he didn't need to. That gives us a hint about how tangible our lives will be one day in the new heaven and earth.

The New Testament also speaks about **Jesus' present humanity**. From the perspective of the New Testament, Jesus is presently fully God and fully man, seated at the right hand of his Father in heaven. In 1 Timothy 2 Paul is explaining how God wants **all people** to know him; a relationship with God and eternal life isn't for a select few. In verse 5 Paul explains how God made that possible: he provided a "mediator" (a go-between).

5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

There aren't different gods for different parts of the world or for different races of people; Paul write that there is one God. Since God is holy and humanity is sinful, there has to be a mediator, a go-between. Paul said that there is **one** (and only one) mediator between the one God and men, "the **man** Christ Jesus." Present tense, Jesus is still a man. Because he is fully God and fully man, he can be the mediator between God and man. How did he become that mediator? The next verse tells us:

6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

A ransom is the price you pay to secure someone's freedom. We are the ones needing freedom; we are enslaved to sin and therefore alienated from God. And there wasn't a thing we could do about it. In his great love, Jesus become one of us and gave himself (on the cross) as the ransom payment for **all** - which includes you. If you accept by faith that payment for your sins, Jesus will be **your** mediator. It is a free gift he offers you.

If "the man Christ Jesus" is your mediator, you can rest assured that his earthly experience as a human uniquely qualifies him to understand and help you. That reality is stressed in the book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 4:15-16 we read this about Jesus:

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Because Jesus is still fully human, he retains an experiential knowledge of what we're going through down here on earth. And because he's also fully God, he has the power to help us. Because he is our high priest and mediator, through him we can go directly to God in prayer.

If you read through the gospels, you will find many examples of ways that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses:

- \* Some of you are grieving the loss of a relationship or the death of a loved one; Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died. He can comfort you in your grief.
- \* Some of you look to the future and you have a sense of dread at what might await you; the night before Jesus was crucified, he agonized in prayer with his heavenly Father. He can help you trust God as you face the future, even death.
- \* If you've ever been abandoned or betrayed, if you've been misunderstood, if you've been slandered, if your relationship with you family is strained, know that Jesus "gets" you.

He is not somebody who cannot sympathize with you because he is still **fully God and fully man**.

The New Testament also speaks about **Jesus' future humanity**. The New Testament often looks to the future and speaks about the day when Jesus will return to rescue his people and make all things new. When it describes Jesus - you guessed it - he is still human. In Luke 21:27 Jesus said this:

27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

The "Son of Man" is a reference to the figure described in Daniel 7. He would have the appearance of a man but would also have divine attributes. This "one like a son of man" would come on the clouds and would be given a kingdom which would never pass away. Jesus is saying that he is that Son of Man. When he returns in the future, he will be fully God and fully man.

And Philippians 3 tells us that when he returns for his people, he will transform our lowly bodies into glorious bodies like his:

20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

That statement only makes sense if Jesus still has a glorious **human** body; this indicates that he will still be human. The rescue mission that Jesus began at the first Christmas will now be complete because we will experience our salvation completely; it will extend even to our bodies.

You may be wondering, "Will Jesus be fully God and fully man forever?" I haven't found any scholars or theologians who would answer that question "no"; I've found many that

unequivocally answer “yes.” There is no hint in the New Testament that Jesus will ever divest himself of his humanity. My conviction is that Jesus will be fully God and fully man forever. J.I. Packer (who wrote “Knowing God”) very persuasively argued for this understanding in an article entitled, “Incarnate Forever.” Becoming one of us wasn’t a 33-year cameo appearance; it was an eternal commitment to us. Jesus is fully God and fully man forever.

It turns out that Jesus didn’t only **do** something for us. At the first Christmas Jesus **became** something for us! Without giving up his deity, Jesus became fully human for us forever.

Let that reality fill you with faith. Let it fill you with wonder. O come, let us adore him,  
Christ the Lord.