

# Understanding Theology in 15 Minutes A Day for 40 Days

## Day18

### Why Should We Believe That Jesus Christ Is Human?

As we saw in chapter 17, orthodox Christianity has always proclaimed that Jesus Christ is fully and eternally God. It has also maintained that he became fully human as well. Small pockets of Christians have denied this, believing that he was truly God but not *truly* human; he only appeared to be a human, or only a part of him was human. This too was quickly considered heresy.

The true humanity of Jesus is just as important as his deity, for at least the following reason: As the sacrifice for the many sins of many humans had to be infinite in nature, so it had to be truly human. Only a human can die in the place of another human. That is why animal sacrifices could never accomplish this; they were only lessons about sin, not the payment for sin (**Hebrews 10:3–4**). God, who is of infinite value, *had* to become human in order to provide an adequate substitutionary sacrifice for sin (**Hebrews 2:17**).

#### Biblical Evidence for the Humanity of Jesus Christ

The New Testament epistle of **1 John** is important in this regard. The apostle John was addressing the destructive influence of some who denied Christ's actual humanity. For example, he says,

*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.*

**1 John 4:2–3**

In light of this pressing issue, note how John began his epistle:

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.*

## **1 John 1:1**

“The Word” (*logos*) was John’s way of referring to Jesus Christ (**compare John 1:1**). Obviously he did not waste any time getting started; he said, in essence, “I am an eyewitness! I have heard, seen, and touched Jesus. And I assure you he is not a phantom—he is utterly and fully human.”

John was simply referring to his firsthand experience of what the New Testament records: Jesus was born, though not conceived, in a typical way (**Luke 1–2**). He had a human family tree (**Matthew 1**). He developed as a human (**Luke 2:52**). He had normal human needs (e.g., sleep, food, water). And he died physically (**Matthew 27:50**), as all humans do.

The New Testament refers to him as a “man”; Jesus presented himself as such (**John 8:40**). Paul, who referred to him as a man to Greek philosophers in Athens (**Acts 17:31**), also developed a key point involving the first man—Adam—and another man, Jesus Christ, “the last Adam” (**1 Corinthians 15:45; see Romans 5:12–21**). This argument rests on Jesus’ being as human as Adam, and his getting right what Adam got wrong for the benefit of all who would trust in him.

Paul says, “There is one *God* and one mediator between God and mankind, the *man* Christ Jesus” (**1 Timothy 2:5**). There it is in one verse—Jesus is both divine and human. As we saw in **Acts chapter 17**, he made the same point elsewhere: “In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives [his deity] in bodily form [his humanity]” (**Colossians 2:9**).

Another evidence of Jesus’ true humanity is the term *Son of Man*. For example, Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (**Luke 19:10**). This term, rich in meaning, connotes even more than the fact that Jesus is human. The Old Testament background of many of the later uses of this term is **Daniel 7:13–14**:

*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days [God] and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of*

*every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

This is a reference to the Messiah, as even some Jewish interpreters acknowledge and as early Christians came to understand. So not only is the Messiah human, he also comes from heaven (**compare John 3:13; 6:62**). This, combined with the fact that he will be worshiped by all people (**Daniel 7:14**), implies his deity. “Son of Man” means not only that the Messiah is fully human but also that he is God at the same time.

### **What Christ’s Humanity Means for Us**

In addition to qualifying him to die in our place for our sin, there are other benefits from the humanity of Jesus. One of the most amazing is that he is sympathetic to what it means to be human, and more specifically, to know human *weakness*.

*Since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, 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 empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

#### **Hebrews 4:14–15**

That is why, as the following verse says, we can “*approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*” (**v. 16**). Jesus has experienced humanity, so he can relate to us and, through his Father, provide what we need. This is truly a precious promise.

Another benefit for us is that being a human, Jesus shows what God intended us to be as his image-bearers. Jesus’ humanity is a perfect humanity, untouched by sin. So in him, we see what we as Christians will be when all our sin and fallenness has been removed once and for all, that is, the kind of humanity we will experience for all eternity.

These days, not many people deny the humanity of Jesus. As a matter of fact, most people would prefer to think he was *only* human. That is because the humanity of Jesus is not threatening to anyone. On the other hand, his deity seems threatening, because if Jesus is truly God, we must *submit* to him, *honor* him, and *obey* him, and this is not what sinful people want

to do. Nevertheless, both the full humanity *and* deity of Jesus are inseparable from Christianity and our hope of salvation through him.

### **INTERESTING FACT**

All occurrences of the term *Son of Man* (more than eighty) are in the Gospels, except one, and all are said by Jesus except one. This was his *favorite* way of referring to himself; he demonstrated that he gladly and frequently identified himself with lowly humans, the ones he created and came to save.