

# ***A Case for Christ-Lent 2010***

## **Jesus as Son of Man**

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**Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)**

*A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Son of Man*

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### **Background Notes**

**Key Scripture Texts:** Various

### **Introduction**

"Jesus: the man who fits no formula." That's what Eduard Schweizer titled a chapter in his book, *Jesus*.<sup>1</sup> We mean to say, of course, he fits no formula devised by human beings. More or less our last study ended with that thought, using the metaphor of the Procrustean bed. For some, the *challenge of Jesus* lies with his role as Son of God, since the opponents of his divinity cannot make sense out of God walking around in a human body, like some sort of "ghost in a machine."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, those who hold strongly to Jesus as Son of God may unintentionally paint a picture of him that looks like an air-brushed portrait of an otherworldly being.

From the outset, then, the church needed to grapple with both Jesus' humanity *and* his divinity, held in delicate balance, at least in formulating a doctrine which affirmed both. That was, of course, the burden of the first ecumenical council held at Nicaea (325 C.E.), where the Emperor Constantine called a synod of bishops to find a consensus on this all-important matter. From the council came the Nicene Creed which is a central confession of the Christian church in all three of its great expressions: Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. At the heart of the Creed were these beliefs which soundly proclaimed his divinity:

1. Jesus Christ is described as "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God," proclaiming his divinity. When all light sources were natural, the essence of light was considered to be identical, regardless of its form.
2. Jesus Christ is said to be "begotten, not made", asserting his co-eternality with God, and confirming it by stating his role in the Creation. Basically, they were saying that Jesus was God, and God's son, not a creation of God. This is considered one of the mysteries of the [catholic](#) church.
3. Finally, he is said to be "from the substance of the Father," in direct opposition to Arianism. [Eusebius of Caesarea](#) ascribes the term *homoousios*, or [consubstantial](#), *i.e.*, "of the **same** substance" (of the Father), to Constantine who, on this particular point, may have chosen to exercise his authority.

Further polishing of this creed, with some additional explanations, came in 381 at Constantinople.

Then, in 431, at the council of Ephesus a fresh inquiry into the relationship of Jesus' humanity and divinity was provoked by the teachings of Bishop Nestorius who stressed the humanity of Jesus by claiming that Mary's conception and birth of Jesus involved his role as Christ but not as Logos (God). The Logos lived in Jesus' soul, to be sure, he argued, but Mary is *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer) not *Theotokos* (God-bearer). The council rejected this view as flawed because it weakened the *unity* of Jesus as both God and Man.

By 451, the church had reached a synthesis at the fourth ecumenical council, known as Chalcedon. From that council comes the following summary text:

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<sup>1</sup> English Translation, John Knox Press, 1971, chapter ii, pp. 13ff.

<sup>2</sup> The philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949, *The Concept of Mind*) applied this phrase to the mind-body theory of Rene Descartes. The problem for Descartes was that he defined mind and body in such radically different ways from each other that it was utterly impossible to account for how they could interact with each other. In the same way, the skeptics allege, the humanity of Jesus is so different from his divinity that a union of the two, resulting in a real person, seems confusing.

Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; "like us in all things but sin." He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation. The distinction between natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (*prosopon*) and one *hypostasis*.

In some ways, the tedious language of this council may put off some readers. However, the heart of the council was to preserve both the deity and humanity of Jesus without one compromising the other. For us, the key statement is probably this one: "Like us in all things but sin." Or more technically, "consubstantial with us as to his humanity."

This week we consider Jesus as "Son of Man," a discussion of the humanity of Jesus, or, as J.A.T. Robinson once phrased it, "The Human Face of God." In carefully explaining the identity of Jesus, our most pressing concern becomes his humanity. The key question is, "Why was it important for Jesus to be fully human?" St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) expressed this question concisely in the Latin: *Cur Deus Homo*, that is, "Why God [became] human."

### What "Son of Man" Means

Readers of the Old Testament will discover the phrase "son of man" used in various contexts. A survey of texts reveals the following results:

1. Numbers 23:19 places the word "a man" (Hebrew: 'îš) in direct apposition to "a son of man" (Hebrew: *ben 'ādām*). The context interprets the phrase as "human" in contrast to divine. (Similar usage in Job 16:21; 25:6; 35:8; Psalm 8:4; 80:17; 144:3; 146:3; Isaiah 51:12; 56:2; Jeremiah 50:40; 51:43).
2. A number of texts, particularly in *Ezekiel*, seem to use the phrase as a title for the prophet (see examples in Ezekiel 2:1, 3, 6, 8).<sup>3</sup> This is also true of Daniel 8:17. However, many scholars see the phrase as simply a circumlocution (substitute) for the personal pronoun ("you," in this case). So, for instance, in Ezekiel 2:1 when Yahweh speaks to the prophet: "Son of Man, stand on your feet..." this becomes "Hey, you, stand on your feet," but with a bit more finesse!

Still other interpreters of the phrase contend that it refers to the "ideal human;" or, at least, by comparison to other humans, the prophet was more representative of God's intention for what human beings should be like — persons in God's image. Early on in *Ezekiel*, God makes an appearance in the form of a human being, as in 1:8, 10 ("each had a human face") and 1:26 ("seat above...was a likeness with human appearance"). What we have, then, is God showing Himself in a perfect *human form*, and then the prophet being called "son of man (human)" as a representative of God in His image and likeness.

3. A more unusual reference appears in Daniel 7:13:

13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a **son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

N.T. Wright explains its usage in relationship to how the New Testament understands the role of Jesus:

The title 'Son of Man' which he apparently used as his favourite self-designation could have been heard as meaning simply 'I' or 'somebody like me', but it also carried the implication of the apocalyptic picture in Dn. 7, in which the suffering Israel is seen as the human figure at present in subjugation to the 'beasts' (i.e. the foreign nations) and who is then vindicated by God. There is good evidence that this figure, Israel's representative, was already by the time of Jesus regarded by some as messianic. Thus it is no surprise to find Jesus regarded as

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<sup>3</sup> All of the *Ezekiel* references follow: 2:1, 3, 6, 8; 3:1, 3f, 10, 17, 25; 4:1, 16; 5:1; 6:2; 7:2; 8:5f, 8, 12, 15, 17; 11:2, 4, 15; 12:2f, 9, 18, 22, 27; 13:2, 17; 14:3, 13; 15:2; 16:2; 17:2; 20:3f, 27, 46; 21:2, 6, 9, 12, 14, 19, 28; 22:2, 18, 24; 23:2, 36; 24:2, 16, 25; 25:2; 26:2; 27:2; 28:2, 12, 21; 29:2, 18; 30:2, 21; 31:2; 32:2, 18; 33:2, 7, 10, 12, 24, 30; 34:2; 35:2; 36:1, 17; 37:3, 9, 11, 16; 38:2, 14; 39:1, 17; 40:4; 43:7, 10, 18; 44:5; 47:6. This includes some 93 instances.

Messiah during his lifetime: the title did not, by itself, imply more than 'Israel's anointed representative, through whom God is redeeming his people', although Jesus was engaged in filling this title, too, with fresh meaning.<sup>4</sup>

4. "Son of Man" takes on this fresh meaning in the ministry of Jesus, himself Israel's anointed representative who would bring salvation to his people. The feature of "suffering Messiah" implies, of course, that he was a human being — though not *only* so — who would stand in the place of the whole nation. But from a wider angle, he stands in the place of the whole world, bearing, as a human being, the sin and suffering of the human race so that he might restore it to God's perfect intention.

The book of *Revelation* refers to Jesus was the same language as found in Daniel 7:13. See Revelation 1:13; 14:14.

5. In the inter-testamental literature, the *Book of Enoch* has significance in the development of the "Son of Man" idea from Old to New Testament.<sup>5</sup> Relevant texts include *1 Enoch* 46:1-4; 48:2-10. The term "Son of Man" is used 18 times in the book of *Enoch*. The majority of these references follow the usage found in *Daniel* and the in the Gospel passages which speak of Jesus as God's anointed representative.
6. Throughout the Gospels, in seventy-eight distinct verses, the title appears:

Matthew	28
Mark	13
Luke	25
John	12

- a. These occurrences pertain to Jesus, where the phrase is used primarily as a self-designation. While having Messianic overtones, the term also carries the idea of Jesus' humanity, especially at it as to do with his suffering and death. For example:

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again (Mark 8:31).

And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" (Mark 9:12).

for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31).

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20).

13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:13-15).

- b. In addition to those cases of his humanity, we also find the phrase applied to the coming of Jesus in power and glory to judge and to reign in his kingdom:

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory (Mark 13:26).

And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers (Matthew 13:41).

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<sup>4</sup> "Jesus," *New Dictionary of Theology*. David F. Wright, Sinclair B. Ferguson, J.I. Packer (eds), pp. 348-351.

<sup>5</sup> Helpful, in this regard, is the collection of essays, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, edited by Gabriele Boccaccini, Eerdmans, 2007. Some chapters are especially pertinent to our study: Sabino Chiala, "The Son of Man: The Evolution of an Expression"; Helge S. Kvanvig, "Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch."

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51).

27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man (John 5:27).

- c. Then there is a curious exchange between Jesus and his accusers at his trial in which "Son of Man" and "Son of God" language seems to be used in substantially the same way:

67 "If you are **the Christ**, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, 68 and if I ask you, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the **Son of Man** shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." 70 So they all said, "Are you the **Son of God**, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." 71 Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips" (Luke 22:67-71).

Following closely the usage of Daniel 7, this passage associates the Son of Man with "the right hand of the power of God." In the same context is the word "Christ," that is, "Messiah." Jesus' accusers make the linkage between this sort of terminology and the claim that Jesus is "Son of God."

To summarize our findings: "Son of Man" does retain a substantial portion of its meaning referring to the "humanity of Jesus," although with additional nuances that he is *God's human being*, or the *human being from God*. We might also say that Jesus is Representative Humanity, but also the Humanity which Represents God. Consider again how Luke constructed his genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:23-38): The statement, "He was the Son..." (3:23), begins the ancestral tree which then ascends through many generations until Luke is led to write, "the son of Adam (Man), the son of God" (3:38). Since this is an *ascending genealogy*, its purpose is to show the identity of Jesus precisely at the point where the genealogy ends: at the beginning! In this case, Jesus' dual natures, one human and one divine, are announced sequentially at the top of the family tree. His humanity appears in the phrase "son of Adam" which parallels (in Hebrew) the idea "son of man."

### The Ordinary Human Development of Jesus

F.F. Bruce tells the story of a certain meeting in which the preacher criticized one of his colleagues for claiming that Jesus in his boyhood went to school. "The very idea that He should have had to learn His letters from a human teacher was judged an intolerable aspersion on His perfect knowledge."<sup>6</sup> Such a view is, of course, an aspersion on the true humanity of Jesus which Luke ardently affirms in this famous text:

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:51-52).

Ironically, this passage follows the account of Jesus in the Temple with the teachers of Torah, astonishing them with "his understanding and his answers," and also "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (2:46-47). Luke sees no contradiction between the precocity of Jesus and his normal childhood development. He was twelve years old at the time (2:42), on the threshold of passage to his *bar-mitzvah*, a true coming of age milestone at the age of thirteen. What we learn in this passage is that Jesus submitted to his parents as would be expected from an observant Jewish son. Furthermore, his four-fold development as a human being is laid out for us with care. The clause, "Jesus increased..." (Greek: *proskoptō*), introduces the features of his growth. The verb is in the imperfect tense, suggesting gradual development. Standard meanings of this word include: "to move forward a work, to advance, to promote, to further." Concrete meanings come from the smith who forges a piece of metal, lengthening it by hammering it. Paul uses it of his own development as a Jew in Galatians 1:14. If we use the Temple incident as a starting point, we might say that Jesus showed clear signs of making a solid *start* in his understanding while yet twelve, but that from the point *forward* he showed evidence of greater *progress*. He progressed:

1. In wisdom (intellectual)
2. In stature (physical)

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<sup>6</sup> F.F. Bruce, "The Humanity of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship*, 24(1973), p. 10.

3. In favor with God (spiritual)
4. In favor with other people (social)

Without belaboring each element, we can say that Jesus experienced the sort of human development expected of any similar Jewish male of his time. Nothing is said about his exhibiting any extraordinary abilities or performing remarkable works during this time of his life. Here was a complete humanity, undergoing growth and development, and requiring time to make it so. During the course of his improved wisdom, Jesus passed from ignorance to knowledge all along his intellectual journey. Many things he did not know and then came to know. Of other things we might say, "What he did not know, he knew that he did not know," a fact revealed by his famous statement later on in Mark 13:32, "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." The true humanity of Jesus can be found in those three words, "nor the Son." Jesus is telling his disciples, "The last day is known to my Father, but not to me." He knew the ask the right questions, even though, in this instance, he did not know the answer. Living with limited knowledge belonged to the genuineness of his humanity.

The writer to the Hebrews contributes additional insight to Jesus' experience as the human one:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The twin concepts of "learning" and "being made perfect" imply the development of Jesus.

### **Incarnation as Divine Emptying and Human Likeness**

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8).

The expression, "made himself nothing," derives from the Greek verb *kenōō*, "to empty out, drain," which leads to the theological concept of the *kenosis* or self-emptying by Jesus of his prerogatives as one equal with God. Though he had the "form of God" (*morphē theou*), he did not grasp (hang onto) the equality which his divinity implied. Paul explicitly says that Jesus had the *morphē* (form) of a servant, was born in the *homiōma* (likeness) of human beings, and the *schēma* (pattern) of a human being. By piling up these various synonyms, Paul creates a powerful impression of the true humanity of Jesus. But nothing achieves this effect more than the assertion that Jesus became obedient to death. Charles Wesley, in the familiar hymn, "And Can It Be?", reminds us of the all-encompassing mystery that in Jesus, "the Immortal dies." Jesus becomes a human being at precisely the point where we stand in the greatest need: we all die; and so, Jesus must die. In dying, he shares with us the deepest of our dilemmas and the heart of human tragedy. Yet, from the depths of death, he overcomes the very thing which dooms us all. As Paul wrote elsewhere:

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:21).

True humanity was required to die; true humanity was also required of the one who would rise from the dead. From true humanity a new humanity is born.

Sometimes scholars refer to what Paul describes in Philippians 2 as the *humiliation* of Christ, because by becoming a human being, Jesus surrendered the *independent exercise* of his divine attributes (qualities which made him God). He did not cease to be holy, just, merciful, truthful, and faithful. With respect to his omniscience ("all knowing"), omnipotence ("all power"), and omnipresence ("everywhere present"), Jesus likewise gave up the *independent use* of these as well, and exercised them only as the Father gave him permission to do so in the performance of his earthly mission. Similarly, Jesus

- Gave up "the glory" (John 17:5).
- Spoke whatever his Father showed him (John 5:20; 8:38), taught him (John 8:28), and gave him (John 5:36).
- Used the authority God gave him (John 10:18).

- Performed his mighty works because he was anointed by the Holy Spirit and power (Acts 10:38; Matthew 12:28).
- His commandments to the disciples depended on the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2).
- He offered himself on the cross as the sacrifice for sin by the power of the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).

When we say that Jesus comes in "human likeness," or that he is like us in his humanity, this is not a metaphor. The *Philippians* passage above uses the Greek word "became" (*genomenos*) to communicate the idea that a real transformation took place when Jesus became human. Paul has another way of saying this in Romans 8:3,

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

According to this account, our "flesh" (*sarx*) was weak and unable to do perfectly what God's Torah required of us. By becoming a human being, Jesus came "in the likeness (*homiōma*) of the flesh which had been weakened by sin." We must not be misled by our English understanding of the word "likeness." Jesus did not merely *appear* to be a human being, he *became* a human being. Jesus did not have a *sinful nature*, yet he took on human flesh which had been damaged by sin. The reason for his humanity was to meet sin on the battlefield of humanity — our humanity — so that he might defeat it. Consider:

And the Word became **flesh** and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his **body of flesh** by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him (Colossians 1:21-22).

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the **flesh** is from God (1 John 4:2).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the **flesh**. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 John 1:7).

16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the **flesh**, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16).

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman**, born under the law (Galatians 4:4).

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a **body** have you prepared for me (Hebrews 10:5).

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells **bodily** (Colossians 2:9).

Even after his resurrection, Jesus showed his disciples that he was not as an immaterial being, but an embodied person whom they could touch:

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 (Luke 24:39).

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe" (John 20:27).

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life (1 John 1:1).

## Shared Humanity and Bringer of Salvation

10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." 14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the

same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:10-18).

1. In this passage Jesus is called "the founder of salvation" (2:10), one who is made "perfect through suffering." The term "founder" (*archēgos*, "prince, chief, originator, leader, author") is connected to "salvation" in such a way that, only if the founder shares something with those who are saved, can his work be considered complete. The word "perfect" is a verb, in this case, from *teleioō* which has to do with something reaching its goal or achieving its aim. Thus, we usually interpret this to mean "complete." For Jesus to be able to "save" humanity, he needed to share in the "suffering" of humanity. Sin and death needed to be defeated *from the inside*. Human beings caused the human race to fall into sin, and only a human being could legitimately rescue the human race from its predicament. According to 2:11, the one who achieves the purification of humanity from sin, and those who are purified by him, "all have one origin." The Greek underlying this common humanity is *ex henos*, "from one." What's at stake is the authenticity of salvation. While the decision to save fallen humanity rests with God (Father and Son), the implementation of salvation requires a full identification of the Savior with the saved. If Jesus was not truly human, we truly have a *ghost in the machine* plan of salvation! God shares in human suffering precisely because God the Son becomes a real human being. That is why we hear the declaration, "I will put my trust in him," for only an authentic, genuine, and fully human person can completely identify with the lostness of those he comes to save.
2. The phrases "share flesh and blood" and "partook of the same things" (2:14) further reinforce Jesus' humanity *for the purpose of dying on the cross in order to destroy the works of the devil*. By becoming a human being — fully — Jesus was able to undergo real human death, meeting the enemy of humanity in the center of the storm, and then, come out the other side, the victor over death — as a human being restored. Salvation required the death of the Savior, followed by his resurrection. If Jesus had only *appeared* to be human, his death would have been an illusion — so much smoke and mirrors. But because Jesus was human, he could really die. God is essentially immortal (Romans 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:17), *and thus cannot die*. The Son of God, by becoming the Son of Man, put himself in the precise form required to both meet death and yet defeat sin, carrying it away, and saving humanity from it.
3. The clearest affirmation of his humanity is in the words "He had to be made like his brothers in every way" (2:17). Let us count the ways! And the purpose? That Jesus might become 1) merciful; 2) faithful; 3) a high priest in service to God. Moreover, by becoming these things, he 4) makes atonement for the sins of the people; 5) helps those who are tempted.

This idea that Jesus is closely identifying with human beings is of special importance to his role as our High Priest, serving the heavenly Temple before God's throne. Much is packed into this understanding. By becoming a human being, the Son of God acquires an *empathetic* orientation toward human beings. Among the great mysteries of our faith is that God experiences what seems to be a wholly new perception of human beings by becoming one of them. He is not apathetic. He is "moved by the feeling of our weakness" and may thereby more genuinely offer assistance to us when we are faced with temptation and sin, suffering and death. God can truly say to us, "I know what you are going through; I have been there also; I *am* there also!" In ancient Israel, the High Priest represented the needs of the people before God while, at the same time, he advocated the interests of God before the people. In this dual role, he touched both the divine and the human.

Jesus didn't merely *touch* the divine and the human, but *was* the divine and *became* the human. From Hebrews 5 we learn that the priest must "deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness" (5:2). The writer goes on to tell how Jesus "during the days of [his] life on earth" prayed to God with "loud cries and tears," and through this experience "learned obedience by suffering" (5:7-8). The offshoot of this was his future ability to "become the source of eternal salvation." The word for "source" is

*aitios* which means the one "responsible for," "the cause." The sort of salvation he offers is called "eternal," that is, "lasting" precisely because it comes a place of true authenticity.

### **Evidences for a Truly Human Jesus**

The Gospels offer us a portrait of Jesus the Nazarene, Jesus the man from Nazareth. Readers of the Gospels are left with the impression that Jesus was a human being, and the evidences for this fall into several categories which we will summarize in this section.

1. **He had a human birth** (Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:18-2:12; Luke 1:30-38; 2:1-20). His connection to real ancestors is affirmed in his genealogies and elsewhere (Matthew 1:1ff; Luke 3:23-38; Romans 1:3). In these his life is connected to Abraham, David, and Adam. Ethnically, we was Jewish, and Paul makes this point in Romans 9:5, as do the writers of the texts listed above.
2. **He had a human development.** This fact we have noted, based on Luke 2:52.
3. **He had the expected features of human nature.**
  - a. A body (Hebrews 10:5, 10; Matthew 26:12; John 2:21; Hebrews 2:14; Luke 24:39)
  - b. A soul and spirit (Matthew 26:38; John 12:27; 13:21; Mark 2:8; 8:12; Luke 23:46)
4. **He had human needs and requirements (without sin).**
  - a. Tired (John 4:6)
  - b. Hungry (Matthew 4:2; 21:18)
  - c. Thirsty (John 19:28)
  - d. Sleep (Matthew 8:24)
  - e. Temptation (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15)
  - f. Partial knowledge (Mark 11:13; 13:32; 5:30-34; John 11:34; compare, 1 Corinthians 13:9, 12)
  - g. Dependency on God, as evidenced in prayer (Mark 1:35; John 6:15; Hebrews 5:7)
5. **He is consistently referred to as a *man*.**
  - a. He speaks of himself in this way (John 8:40)
  - b. John the Baptist (John 1:30)
  - c. Peter (Acts 2:22)
  - d. Paul (Acts 13:38; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 47; Philippians 2:8)
  - e. His opponents (John 7:27; 9:28; 10:33)

Thoroughly woven in Paul's teaching about the place of Jesus in salvation history is his identity as "a man:"

<sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

In order for Christ Jesus to be the "mediator" (Greek: *mesitēs*), he needed to be truly human. Classical usage of this word includes the ideas of "arbitrator, umpire." In order for Jesus to function legitimately in this role "between God and men," he must necessarily share the interests and concerns of *both*, else his mediation would be considered illegitimate.

Moreover, when Jesus comes at the last day (the *eschaton*) to judge the world — to right the wrongs — he comes, Paul tells us, as "a man:"

because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

### **Jesus is Not a Demi-God**

The existence of half-god, half-human beings belonged to the mythology of the pagans. This was, of course, odious to the Jews who saw God as wholly Other and unmixed with human nature. Thus we read, "God is not a man..." (Numbers 23:19, and elsewhere). When the early Christian writers spoke of the person of Jesus they did not describe him as a demi-god, nor is there evidence that he manifested dual-personalities. At the same time, his character is marked by what theologians refer to as "two natures": one human and one divine. How

these two natures combined to form a single person, Jesus of Nazareth, was the subject of much discussion in the first four centuries, as we noted in our introduction to this week's study.

From the outset, we are dealing with what might justly be called a *singularity*, something which has no peer but is, as the philosophers might say, *sui generis*, "of its own kind." Therefore, the best explanation we can construct is some sort of analogy. Further, it is easier to say what the union of the two natures *is not* than to say what it *is*. Some theologians have gone so far as to suggest that the whole discussion of the two natures needs to be revamped, and that we need fresh language to communicate what Scripture tells us about the divine and human features of Jesus. For certain, those features are attributed to *one Christ* "in whom the two natures are so united that what each does has the value of both." Jesus is "a single and undivided personality."<sup>7</sup>

We are dealing with a genuine *person* when we read about Jesus in the New Testament. The creeds make consistent reference to what is known as the *hypostatic union* — that is, the *personal* union of God and humanity in Jesus. Technically, theology calls the two natures by the term *ousia* (being, substance), while calling the single person the *hypostasis*. The common ancient analogy was heat and fire, neither of which loses its own properties because it is joined with the other.<sup>8</sup>

## Jesus and History

Our discussions thus far bring us around to the clear understanding that Jesus belonged to *human history*. Over the course of two centuries, much debate has centered on the likelihood that we can find out anything about the Jesus of history. Through a series of "quests" for the historical Jesus, students of the Bible have grappled with either the Jesus of faith or the Jesus of history. Some people question whether we can have both, while others deny that we can have either. For our part, Jesus belongs both to history and to faith. When we talk about the humanity of Jesus, it is in light of his connection to real history. The people who encountered Jesus did so under the ordinary circumstances in which they would meet any other human being. In Jesus' case, he comes "out of Nazareth" (John 1:46), from Galilee (John 7:41), and from somewhere prophets did not usually come (Mark 6:3). So clearly did his contemporaries place him into their history as a human being, that they resented his claims to be anything more than that:

We know where this man comes from, but when the Messiah appears no one is to know where he comes from (John 7:27).

Spoken by his critics, these words exhibit the edginess about a mere human being whose origin they know actually being the Messiah.

Is not this the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? (Mark 6:3).

Jesus had a local origin to which he belonged, a background from which he cannot be detached. As Emil Brunner expressed it:

The Son of God in whom we are to be able to believe must be such a one that it is possible to mistake him for an ordinary man. To break through the ordinary limitations of humanity would be to break through the possibility of faith.<sup>9</sup>

Recall Hebrews 5 and the twin concepts: "called of God" and "taken from among men." Coming "from above" does not preclude solidarity with "from below." Knowing where Jesus came from, physically, in no way detracts from his origin from "the Father" (John 7:27-29).<sup>10</sup>

## Human Suffering: The Servant of Yahweh

Once, while talking with a skeptic who largely disbelieved the whole Christian story, I heard him say with resentment, "If there is a God, why doesn't he take responsibility for all the suffering in the world?" These

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<sup>7</sup> A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1907, pp. 684ff.

<sup>8</sup> William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889, pp. 327f.

<sup>9</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, Luttworth Press, 1934, p. 341.

<sup>10</sup> John A.T. Robinson's fascinating study, *The Human Face of God* (Westminster Press, 1973), makes these points in his chapter "Man of God."

remarks came after an extended exchange over the well-known problem of evil and the search for a "theodicy"<sup>11</sup> which might offer a solution to the problem. My response needed to avoid the glibness too often projected by well-meaning Christians who try to defend God. After a moment of reflection, I answered simply, "He has," and then proceeded to talk about the meaning of Christ's own suffering, and how it embodied the suffering of God Himself on behalf and in place of His whole creation. Jesus is the suffering of God, and the taking of responsibility for the evil which has damaged His good creation. We respond to the skeptic's questions, not by trying to get God off the hook or "out of the dock," but by fully allowing that the Gospel we preach already contains the sharing of suffering and its final mitigation. Our goal is not to explain evil but to see it gone.

When the Mel Gibson film, *The Passion of the Christ*, appeared, it raised considerable discussion and controversy. An excellent compilation of scholarly essays on the film appeared afterward.<sup>12</sup> Each writer, to a certain extent, reacted to the amount of *violence* portrayed in the film, but not always with approval. Watching the scourging of Jesus, driven by Roman cruelty and religious acquiescence, viewers recoiled and wanted to turn away. One writer commented,

God's presence in Jesus of Nazareth has a word for suffering humanity. That word is not condemnation: "Look what you did. Look what I am suffering because of you." That word is, "You are not alone. I am with you."<sup>13</sup>

She objected to the objectification of violence, but in place of that offers,

The suffering of God on the cross can be a way to understand the full measure of what it means that "God is with us." God is with us even in the most painful suffering of our lives.<sup>14</sup>

Ancient Israel already had language to speak about such suffering. From the prophet Isaiah comes the image of Yahweh's "Suffering Servant," a figure who was "human, all too-human." National Israel had been through the torment of exile and awaited the moment of restoration. Through the long nightmare of the Babylonian invasion and its aftermath, godly and pious Jews looked for the day when their suffering would produce the necessary atonement, and they would at last be saved. In the minds of most, the Suffering Servant was Israel. The second half of the prophecy (40-66) begins with the words of hopefulness:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins (Isaiah 40:1-2).

Notice how pardon for Israel comes through her suffering "double for all her sins."

Moreover, Isaiah offers an extended portrait of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, a section which begins with the words,

13 Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. 14 As many were astonished at you- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind- 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand (Isaiah 52:13-15).

Of relevance to this week's study is the manner in which "my servant's" appearance "was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind — so shall he sprinkle many nations..." Plainly, enormous violence had been done to Yahweh's Servant, but from this suffering has come cleansing even among the nations. That is, the suffering of the Lord's Servant has become redemptive.

What the New Testament writers see in this important Isaianic prophecy is the foreshadowing of Jesus who comes as the Suffering Servant on Israel's behalf, taking Israel's place, and bearing Israel's sin. But in order to do this, he must be fully human and completely united with Israel. This solidarity of Jesus was his people is essential to their salvation, and the New Testament takes up that theme in a number of places. What does Isaiah prefigure about the coming servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53:1-12?

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<sup>11</sup> The word "theodicy" refers to an argument which tries to explain how God can be all that He is —good, powerful, just — and yet allow suffering in the world. Literally, the term means "justifying God": *theos dikeō*.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Burnham, editor, *Perspectives on The Passion of the Christ*, Miramax Books, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Thistlewaite, "Mel Makes a War Movie," *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup> For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. <sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? <sup>9</sup> And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:1-12).

The vocabulary used here includes a rich range of meanings, each of them portraying the genuinely human nature of Jesus' suffering. Perhaps the humanity of Jesus receives no greater treatment anywhere than in this passage which, with poignancy and pathos, reveals his sufferings.

1. "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief"
2. "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"
3. "stricken, smitten, afflicted"
4. "wounded, crushed, chastised, striped"
5. "oppressed, afflicted"
6. "crushed, put to grief"
7. "anguish of soul"
8. "poured out his soul to death"

Hardly a Hebrew word for suffering is omitted when describing what the Suffering Servant endured because of Israel's sins.

### **The Suffering Jesus: Evidence for His Humanity**

Perhaps no greater evidence for the true and genuine humanity of Jesus is offered in the New Testament than in his sufferings. From the lips of Jesus and from his followers we hear about what he underwent on the cross. A brief summary of the evidence speaks for itself.

#### **The Gospels**

Jesus must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things (Matthew 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31; 9:12, 22; Luke 17:25; 24:26, 46).

#### **The Acts**

After Jesus' resurrection, the followers of Jesus digested the meaning of Jesus' suffering and consider its importance for them in light of his resurrection and ascension. The Gospel message they proclaim includes references to his sufferings (1:3; 3:18; 17:3; 26:23).

#### **Paul's Letters**

The topic of Christ's sufferings emerges in Paul usually in connection with the sufferings his followers share with him. Had not Jesus actually suffered, it would be hollow comfort to his followers who suffer for his sake (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24).

#### **Hebrews**

The theme of sacrifice, particularly the way Jesus fulfilled the aim of the Jewish sacrificial system, incorporates the additional feature of Jesus' suffering (2:9-10, 18; 5:8; 13:12).

## Peter

Christ's suffering is assumed to be real and something we are to share with him and to imitate in our own lives. Again, without a true account of Jesus' suffering, our suffering would be for nought (1 Peter 1:11; 2:21, 23; 3:18; 4:13; 5:1).

## Gethsemane: The Cup of Suffering

36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." 40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." 43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again (Matthew 26:36-44).

We observe the intense suffering of Jesus, even *before* he goes to the cross. In fact, we might well see the sufferings of Jesus beginning here in Gethsemane. Though the Creed says he "suffered under Pontius Pilate", we cannot deny he began to suffer in Gethsemane. Numerous words describe his emotional state, and the condition of his heart:

1. "My soul is very sorrowful, even until death" (Matt.27:38): *perilupos estin hē psuchē mou heōs thanatou*. From previous studies, we have noted that the "soul" is identical with the "self" in all of its dimensions: intellect, emotion, and will. It is not limited to just the invisible, inner self, but also includes aspects of the biological self, since all of those functions express themselves in visible ways through the body (e.g. when sad, we cry tears; when angry our faces turn red; when we choose, our hands perform the deed). Hebrew thought does not make sharp separations between spiritual and physical, even as we recall God's creation of the first human: "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7), a passage foundational to our understanding of "humanity" as created by God. A whole human being, Jesus entered into his sufferings; God incarnate, he was yet "passable", that is capable of experiencing pain, emotion, and grief. Matthew and Mark both agree in their use of *perilupos* to describe the emotion of Jesus at this juncture. Thayer's lexicon explains it with "encompassed with grief", picking up on the prefix *peri*, meaning "around" (as in "perimeter"), and the common word for "grief", *lupos*.
2. "He began to be sorrowful and troubled" (Matt.27:37b): The word for "troubled" is interesting, *ademonein*, a compound of the so-called "alpha privative" (use of the Greek letter alpha to denote "not", such as our "atheist"-"no God") along with the word *demos* which can mean either "home" or "people". In either case, the word carries the connotation of social isolation and distance. That is, besides being surrounded by sorrow, he is clearly alienated from the social groups gathering around him. Thayer handles this literally as "not at home".

We may, then, with confidence, speak about the emotional "struggle" of Jesus, and Donald Hagner, in his commentary on *Matthew*, labels the larger section before us (26:36-46) as "Jesus' Struggle in Gethsemane." What we witness in the Garden is not a matter-of-fact commercial transaction between God the Father and God the Son, a sort of theological "slam-dunk", in which a semi-human, but very artificial Jesus, simply says "Yes" to the will and purpose of his Father. True, Jesus comes to that persuasion before the high drama ends on the cross ("into your hands I commend my spirit" certainly tells us that), but on the pilgrim journey to that destination, much conversation with God takes place. Nor are the Gospels our only sources providing insight into these final hours of Jesus' struggle. Consider:

10 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he

learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:7-10).

What is startling to us about this passage is the "process" that Jesus had to undergo on his way to becoming our "high priest". The writer must have had eyewitness sources to such obviously specific actions as Jesus' "loud cries". Through these, bathed in his tears, Jesus comes to "reverent submission", having "learned obedience", and "became perfect". Perhaps it is this last word which halts us in our steps. Drawing on previous studies, we recall how the Greek word *telos* carries, among its other meanings, the notion reaching the goal, making the finish line, hitting the target, and becoming complete. For Jesus, there is no completion of his work, no fulfillment of his purpose, without the human dimension of the struggle, entailing suffering, painful prayer, tears, and obedience to the will of God.

Nor are his struggles for his benefit alone. Why does he thrice seek out his disciples? Is it not that they, in fulfillment of Passover, see and experience for themselves the weight of suffering he even now bears on his way back to the Father, and into his own Exodus from death to resurrection life? Here is what it means to become "a faithful high priest", as the writer to the Hebrews penned in the previous chapter:

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. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:15).

Our confidence in approaching God as Father draws its strength, in part, from what we witness in Jesus' own struggles here in the Garden, though his disciples sleep.

It is tempting to contrast the spirit of this prayer and its attendant agony of soul with John's account in his 17th chapter. In that passage we read a different sort of prayer, marked by confident appeals to the Father for the oneness of his disciples, the oneness of the future disciples, grounded in the oneness of God Himself. John 17 is often called the "high priestly prayer" of Jesus. However, for its own part, it lacks the expression of deep emotion and pain found in the Gethsemane prayer. The two prayers are separated by, at most, minutes, for no sooner does Jesus complete his words in John 17:26, than he makes his way to Gethsemane (18:1). Of course, John is the only Gospel incorporating this particular prayer into its Passion narrative. Still, knowing what we do about John's style of editing his material, though he seems to place the prayer before the Garden experience, we must not assume he intends for us to isolate that prayer from the content of what happened emotionally in the Garden. We are best served reading John 17 in light of Gethsemane, and, conversely, Gethsemane in light of John 17. When we do, the picture is clearer, and the power deeper, than if we were to simply label them different prayers and isolate their content. The same Jesus who prays with confidence in John 17, prays with contention in Gethsemane.

When Jesus slips away from this inner sanctuary to encourage his disciples, he finds them asleep. They keep no vigil, and, as Jesus tells them, this is to their great peril: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." He knows only too well that the "spirit" is willing, while the "flesh" is weak. This juxtaposition of the essential human condition (Greek word for flesh is *sarx*) expresses his crisis and theirs. Only in prayer, Jesus tells them, can spirit and flesh find their rest. He knows. Three times he returns to remind them; three times their sleep deepens until at last he exclaims, "It is enough!" No more can be accomplished in the garden either for Jesus or for them. For while the unraveling of the great human drama has begun here, it must move forward to its climax.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Alanis Morissette penned the lyrics to the song made popular by Joan Osborne: "What If God Were One of Us?" Like a great deal in popular culture, there is much irreverence in the poetry. However, a certain something resonates nonetheless. Art has its license, and in matters of the Gospel, we ought to be just a bit more forgiving if our pagan friends don't always get it exactly right. The prodigal son didn't yet know the immense love of his father when he trudged home in hopes of getting a job among the hired hands. So, cutting Morissette some slack, we should soak up the burden of the song, especially in light of what the Bible tells us of the human Jesus.

If God had a name what would it be?  
And would you call it to his face?  
If you were faced with him in all his glory  
what would you ask if you had just one question?

Yeah, Yeah, God is great  
Yeah, Yeah, God is good  
Yeah Yeah yeah yeah yeah

What if God was one of us?  
Just a slob like one of us  
Just a stranger on the bus  
Trying to make his way home

If God had a face  
What would it look like?  
And would you want to see  
If seeing meant that you would have to believe  
In things like heaven and Jesus and the saints  
and all the Prophets

Just trying to make his way home  
Back up to Heaven all alone

Like a holly Rolling Stone  
Back up to Heaven all alone  
Just trying to make his way home  
Nobody callin' on the phone  
'cept for the Pope maybe in Rome

"Like one of us..." Herein is the heart's cry for the human face of God. "What if God was one of us..." This is the echo of the humanity of Jesus. "A slob...stranger..." Jesus embodied in the untidiness of our human lives. "Home, heaven..." These are the places where the human Jesus brings us as he passes through the veil of his body to the cross, and then makes his way home through the vale of death. Thankfully he is not alone, though he bears our sins and carries our sorrows alone. "Fully God and fully man..." The great creeds got it right, but it is left to us to find the language for letting the world know. In Jesus the "What if" of Morrisette's poem becomes the "Amen" of his true humanity and the suffering which brings us to eternal life.

Glory to God! Amen.

**Digger Deeper: A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Son of Man**  
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *A Case for Christ-Lent 2010: Jesus as Son of Man*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website <http://notes.chicagofirstnaz.org>, or pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the **Information** desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

1. What reasons could you give someone who asked you, "Why did God need to become a human being?" How does believing that Jesus was a human being, as well as God's Son, create new questions for us?
2. Jesus is called "Son of Man" in the Gospels. Based on reading the following Scriptures, explain the meaning of this phrase, and how it applies to the humanity of Jesus (Mark 8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:45; 13:26; 14:62; Matthew 8:20; 13:41; 19:28; John 1:51; 3:13-15; 5:27).
3. According to Luke 2:51-52, what do we know about the development of Jesus as a young man, and what does this tell us about his humanity? Compare this with Hebrews 5:8-9 and Mark 13:32. Did Jesus have limitations?
4. How does Paul describe the arrival of Jesus as a human being in Philippians 2:6-8? Take note of the key phrases and terms applied to his humanity.
5. Jesus surrendered the *independent exercise* of his divine nature when he became a human being. How do the following passages support that statement? (John 17:5; John 5:20, 36; 8:28, 38; 10:18; Acts 10:38; Matthew 12:28; Acts 1:2; Hebrews 9:14).
6. What does Jesus share with us, according to Romans 8:3, and why was this necessary? Study these additional passages which support the idea that Jesus became "flesh": John 1:14; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:16; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 10:5; Colossians 2:9.
7. Even after his resurrection, Jesus exhibited human qualities. What evidence did he offer his disciples of this fact? (Luke 24:39; John 20:27; 1 John 1:1).
8. Carefully read Hebrews 2:10-18. Why was the true humanity of Jesus essential to our salvation?
9. What human needs did Jesus plainly have, according to these passages? (John 4:6; Matthew 4:2; 21:18; John 19:28; Matthew 8:24; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15; Mark 11:13; 13:32; 5:30-34; John 11:34; 1 Corinthians 13:9, 12; Mark 1:35; John 6:15; Hebrews 5:7).
10. In 1 Timothy 2:5-6, what special role did Jesus have as both a human being and the Son of God? Explain the key term used in this passage, and how it applies to Jesus.
11. Who judges the world, according to Paul in Acts 17:31, and how is he described in that role? Notice the specific words applied to him in this passage.
12. What evidence do the Gospels give us of the historicity of Jesus? (John 1:46; John 7:41; Mark 6:3; John 7:27).
13. The Old Testament foreshadows the coming of Jesus through the image of Yahweh's "Suffering Servant," found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Study this passage, and then list all the evidences for the authentic humanity of the person described there. How is this passage a fitting portrait of the human Jesus?
14. What do the following New Testament texts tell us about the "suffering" of Jesus, and how do they reinforce our picture of him as a real human being? (Matthew 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31; 9:12, 22; Luke 17:25; 24:26, 46; Acts 1:3; 3:18; 17:3; 26:23; Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24; 2:9-10, 18; 5:8; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:11; 2:21, 23; 3:18; 4:13; 5:1).
15. A moving portrait of Jesus as the suffering Son of Man is found in Matthew 26:36-44. Discuss the ways we see Jesus' humanity in this passage. Compare this with Hebrews 5:7-10.
16. Jesus is called our High Priest in Hebrews 4:15. What human traits does he possess which make him more authentic in this role?