

Jesus' Human Nature

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | August 28, 2009



For years I've had a hard time explaining why Christ had to die. Each of the various reasons given just didn't seem to add up. Payment, substitution, and other reasons never sounded good enough.

As I've come to understand the "health-care model" of salvation and Jesus' death as necessary to perfect love in the human race and win us back to trust in God, I find myself wishing I had come to know these beautiful truths earlier. I had Hindu classmates in Medical school in India who had asked me about Jesus death and told me how they never really understood why someone considered God had to die. My explanations, I'm certain, were never adequate. But now I have an understanding of salvation in a manner that is consistent with God's love. Reading your blogs and listening to the various examples you give helps immensely. But there are a few points that I would like you to address as it is something I struggle with.

You've stated that Jesus had neither the pre-fall nature of Adam nor the same nature as fallen man. It definitely seems logical to come to that conclusion when we consider Jesus' parentage - a sinful mother & God the Father. But how do we reconcile that with Hebrews 2:17 "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." (NIV) Also how can we understand Romans 1:3 that mentions that Jesus was "born of

the seed of David according to the flesh.”(NKJV) and Romans 8:3 where its said that “God [sent] His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.”(NKJV)

I'd like to thank you for the wonderful insights you have given me, both through your blog and through the discussions of your class on the character of God. I find myself growing as I spend time comparing what you discuss with passages in Scripture. Please convey my thanks to your class as well for the lovely thoughts provided. Its wonderful to hear many of the truths I have come across in the Bible echoed in the class and just fall into place together. Thank you for taking the time to go through this message. Continue to serve our God through your ministry.

With love and prayers, Dr. P.J.

Thanks for your affirmation and sharing the truth about God in your circle of influence. And thanks for allowing me to clarify my thoughts on Jesus' human nature.

The traditional argument on the nature of Christ has primarily been between two ideas: 1) Jesus had a nature exactly like Adam's before his fall, and 2) Jesus had a nature exactly like ours after Adam's fall.

I believe both these ideas are incorrect. Jesus' physical body was made just like ours in every way. He was subject to fatigue, hunger, thirst. He experienced physical pain, required sleep and rest. Adam before the fall didn't experience fatigue, hunger, physical suffering and pain as Christ did. Some have argued Adam didn't even require sleep.

But more than this, fallen humanity experiences temptations from our own "evil desires" (James 1:14). Adam never experienced any such internal pull or temptation to sin. Christ took upon Himself a nature like ours, a nature which did experience the internal pull of temptation. "He was tempted in every way, just like we are, yet was without sin" (Heb 4:15).

We see this most clearly in Gethsemane when Christ was tempted by powerful human emotions to avoid the cross and "save self". Yet with each temptation Christ overcame the desire to save self and instead gave Himself in love according to the Father's will.

Therefore, Christ, through Mary assumed a humanity capable of experiencing the full force of selfish temptation – something Adam never faced. Yet, because His Father was God, the mind of Jesus was in perfect harmony with God's character of love. In the human brain of Jesus Christ the ultimate battle of the universe was fought. In the human brain of Jesus Christ God's love warred against the full force of warped and selfish, sinful human desires. In the mind of Jesus Christ love overcame and destroyed the desire to save-self and He gave Himself freely in love.

In summary, Adam, before his fall, could experience temptation only from an external source. Humans, since the fall, experience temptation from both external and internal source. Humans, since the fall, not only experience temptation from an internal source but are born with our mental faculties bent toward gratification of our fallen, selfish nature (Romans 8:5-7). Or, as Psalms says "we are born in sin, conceived in iniquity" (51:5). But, while Jesus was born with a nature that could experience temptation from within, a nature that could feel fear, anxiety and a desire to act selfishly, because His Father was God the faculties of His mind were fully in harmony with God's character of love. Jesus' mind was never defiled by indulging selfish temptations, even though he experienced the force of such temptation. His

character was developed perfectly in harmony with God's law of love, in the face of the most intense temptations from human fear and emotion ever experienced in the universe. Therefore, Jesus was not exactly like Adam before the fall nor was He exactly like us after the fall. He was unique, one of a kind – the God-man, our Savior!