

THE PROFESSOR

IV. The Incarnation

How can the human mind comprehend the mystery of the incarnation? How can we resolve the paradox of Christ's Deity and humanity? In his message on the day of Pentecost, Peter fully acknowledged the humanity of Christ.

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know..."

The clue we're looking for is found in the fifth chapter of John.

John 5:19 Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself."

John 5:30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

"The Son can do nothing of Himself." "I can do nothing on My own initiative." What could Jesus have possibly meant by these words? Surely, **as God**, He could have done anything He desired!

We thrill at the thought of Jesus' creative works.

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in *His* Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Yet here is the One Who made the worlds saying He could do nothing of Himself! **Could it be that there had to be a difference between who He was and what He did?**

“**Being and Doing**” – that sounds like the title of a philosophical treatise. Normally there is no question that what we do flows out of what we are. If such was not the case with Jesus there had to be a good reason. Before we can understand this particular limitation on Jesus (that He could do nothing "as God"), we must understand the full reason for His coming as the Son of man.

In the beginning, when God made man "in His image and after His likeness," He gave some orders.

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

In an obvious reference to this fact the Psalmist drew some powerful conclusions.

Psalms 8:6 Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.

Then, referring to this passage in **Psalm 8**, the writer to the Hebrews makes another startling inference.

Hebrews 2:8 "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, **He left nothing that is not subject to him.** But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

What we have here is a picture of God's purpose for man. He was to fill the earth with beings like himself and "subdue" the earth. Remember, Adam was made from the dust of the earth. Subduing the earth meant self-control, too.

Subdue – *kabash*, kaw-bash'; a prim. root; to tread down; hence neg. to disregard; pos. to conquer, subjugate, violate: -bring into bondage, force, keep under, subdue, bring into subjection. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible)

"...Subdue in **Genesis 1:28** implies that creation will not do man's bidding gladly or easily and that man must now bring creation into submission by main strength. It (creation) is not to rule man." (Theological Wordbook of the Old Test. vol. I, p.430)

However, something awful happened before man could even begin his task. By disobedience, sin and death entered the picture.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned

There are some good reasons for God's simple requirement concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For one thing, God wanted a freely chosen relationship with His creation. Without options there is no freedom. Without freedom there is no love. (For this reason, a relationship based on need is on very shaky ground.)

Another good and sufficient reason for God's command is that He wanted His creation to trust Him for all things. In essence He was saying, "Anything you need to know, ask Me, I will provide all the answers." By eating the fruit, Adam was saying, "I want to find out some things on my own. I don't want to depend on You for everything." In acting against God's will, Adam established his own independence.

While sin and death now held sway in the earth, Adam's authority was still in effect. In order to understand the seriousness of the situation, let's look at what was happening with the human race following the flood.

Genesis 11:6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.

In case this appears far-fetched to our modern ears, a cursory search of "self-help" titles in any bookstore will echo God's assessment of human ability. Books such as *Think and Grow Rich*, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, etc. convey the message that if you can imagine it, you can do it. The practical result of such authority in sinful men is a world of strife and turmoil, war and suffering.

What we have after the fall, then, is sinful man who has yielded his will to satan, but who still has dominion over creation. Since God is a Sovereign God and cannot break His own word, there was only one possible cure for the problem. A man, with the authority of man and acting as man had to accomplish what Adam had failed to accomplish.

Was Jesus legally a man? That fact has been adequately established in our study of Philippians 2. Peter declared it in **Acts 2:22**. The consequence of that truth is that Jesus had the authority of a man.

John 5:26-27 "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷ and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, **because He is the Son of Man.**

Our greatest difficulty with these truths lies in our confusing the words "authority" and "power." Simply put, "authority" is the *right* to do something while "power" is the *ability* to do it. Coming as the Son of man, Jesus had the right to "subdue" the earth. The next question is, "Where did He get the ability to do so?"

One of the most frustrating things about the Gospels is the almost total lack of information regarding Jesus' childhood and young manhood. We know the family went to Egypt for a time. We know they returned to Nazareth to set up housekeeping and maybe to set up the carpenter shop. We know they took Jesus to the temple at the age of twelve. There He demonstrated His knowledge of the Scriptures.

Luke 2:46-47 And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

From that scene to the baptism by John in the river Jordan everything is condensed into one succinct statement.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

At the Jordan River things changed drastically. Before we look at the dramatic experience there at the river, we need some understanding of the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit prior to this time.

The angel announced the conception of Jesus to Mary thus:

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God."

Come upon - gr. *eperchomai*, ep-er'-khom-ahee; to supervene, i.e. arrive, occur, impend, attack, (fig.) influence:-come (in, upon). (Strong's Concordance)

There can be no question of the Divine origin of Jesus. He was conceived by or "born of" the Spirit. Thus, Jesus never lived a day without the Holy Spirit. However, there is a difference between being born of the Spirit and having the Spirit "come upon" you.

Next: A Man Anointed By the Holy Spirit