

# The Nature Of Christ

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The first promise of the coming Deliverer who should vanquish Satan declared that he would be born of a woman, just as any other member of the human family. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Through Moses the announcement was made of another prophet of whom he was the type. "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken,"

Unto David the prophet Nathan foretold an everlasting kingdom, and assured him that his seed would sit upon the throne of that kingdom forever. These were the Lord's words: "When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

To the same effect the psalmist declared the purpose of the Lord: "I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David my servant: Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations."

Through Isaiah it was distinctly prophesied that God would manifest himself in the flesh for the salvation of the human family. Here is one statement: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, concerning which it is said, "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," and the word "Emmanuel" is interpreted as meaning "God with us."

Again, it was said through the same prophet: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." That this prophecy had reference to the birth of Jesus is plain from the announcement which the angels made to the shepherds on that memorable night: "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

So also in the epistle to the Hebrews, that divine commentary upon the plan of salvation as revealed in the sanctuary and its services, we have a clear statement concerning the humanity of Jesus and the purpose of his taking the flesh. We therefore quote at some length: "Both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me. Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he gives help to the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For we have not a high priest that can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

And it is further declared that the flesh which Jesus took and in which he was tempted, was the same as the flesh of the other members of the family, sinful flesh. Here is the direct statement: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

In the face of these plain statements of the Scriptures the question of-en arises whether Jesus did not have some advantage over us in the conflict with sin, and some are at a loss to understand how it could be otherwise since Jesus committed no sin even as a child, while other children are "brought forth in iniquity." It may therefore help some minds if we should give this matter consideration. In the first place, let us settle it that the statements already read are absolutely true, and that we shall not find any satisfactory explanation

of a supposed difficulty by trying to modify the glorious truth taught in them. Jesus is a perfect Savior because, having lived in our sinful flesh without sin, the Son of man, he has formed such a union between divinity and humanity that he is able to live the same life in us. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

Let us note, then, what the Scriptures say about Jesus and his being born into the human family. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Here we have the divine genealogy of Jesus. His appearance upon earth was not the beginning of his existence. In foretelling the place where his earthly career would begin, the prophet declared that out of Bethlehem should one come to be ruler in Israel, "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

Jesus was both Son of God and Son of man, and as the only begotten Son of God he was with the Father "before the world was." He came to this world as the result of his own deliberate choice. It is true that the Father gave him to us, but it is also true that he gave himself for us. All this is set forth very clearly: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." He who existed in the form of God entered upon a new stage of existence in the form of a man.

Before entering upon this new stage of existence Jesus committed himself to his Father's care, and trusted him to keep him even during his infancy and childhood. This is plainly declared in the twenty-second psalm, which is "prophetical of Messiah's passion." These are the words of the divine sufferer: "Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God since my mother bare me." Both the Son and the Father knew that the child Jesus would be exposed to the temptations of Satan, and that as a child subject to all the conditions of childhood he could be kept from sin only by the same provision which has been made for every child of God, but they accepted the conditions which sin had imposed upon the human family. "Into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted his Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss."

It was through being born of the Holy Spirit that Jesus entered upon his new stage of existence as the Son of man. Said the angel to his mother Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." Thus Jesus was born again by the Holy Spirit. So it must be with every child of God. Said Jesus to Nicodemus, "Except one be born anew, he can not see the kingdom of God." When one commits himself to God and submits to be born of the Spirit, he enters upon a new stage of existence, just as Jesus did. The failure to see the perfect parallel between the two experiences may arise from the fact that Jesus was a perfect being of an infinitely higher order before he was born of the Spirit as the Son of man, while we are already in the flesh as sinful beings before we are born of the Spirit. In the process of conversion we become as little children by being born again, and then our experience is parallel with the experience of Jesus, who was born of the Spirit. There is the same condition of weakness in both cases, and the same dependence upon the keeping power of the Father.

It was the experience of Jesus in being preserved from sin although dwelling in sinful flesh, by casting himself upon his Father, which has made it possible for any member of the human family to have the same experience in the same way. "The Savior was deeply anxious for his disciples to understand for what purpose his divinity was united to humanity. He came to the world to display the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. God was manifested in him that he might be manifested in them. Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, which men may not have through faith in him. His perfect humanity is that which all his followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as he was."

Instead of finding any occasion of stumbling because Jesus was kept from sin in his childhood, we ought to be able to see in this a wonderful testimony to the efficiency of the grace of God when we cast ourselves like helpless children upon his keeping power. Praise be "unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." November 9, 1905.

### Christ and His Brethren

Two readers of the SDA Review have written to us concerning our recent editorial, "Like unto His Brethren." One says: "In an editorial in the SDA Review Of November 9 are these words: "Into the world God permitted his Son to come, at the risk of failure and eternal loss." I hope I am not a skeptic as regards divine revelation, but in this instance I can not harmonize your statement with the results of my reasoning. God permitted his Son to come, and of course he knew what the result would be. I therefore conclude that he knew the result would not be failure or loss, else he would not have permitted him to come. Christ before coming must also have known these facts, either of himself or through faith founded on the knowledge of his Father's omniscience. I also have the Bible statement that "He shall not fail." This reasoning does not controvert the truth that while -here in the flesh Christ must and did gather his knowledge from the Bible.

Our correspondent practically raises the old question of free will and foreordination. His position is that God knew before he sent his Son into the world that he would not fail, and therefore there was no risk of failure. In the same way Christ must have known the outcome of his mission to this earth, either through his own divine foreknowledge or through his faith in the foreknowledge of his Father, and therefore there could not have been on his part any risk of failure and loss.

In coming to these conclusions our correspondent looks at the question from the standpoint of the divinity of Christ, and does not give due weight to the considerations which arise from the humanity of Christ. God sent his Son into the world as a man, subject to the conditions and experiences of humanity. As a man Jesus sustained the same relation to the foreknowledge of God as is sustained by every man. The foreknowledge of God did not limit his freedom as a man. His freedom as a man did not interfere with the foreknowledge of God. As a man endowed with the freedom of will, the second Adam, there was the same possibility of failure as there was with the first Adam in his sinless state. Otherwise there would be neither force nor comfort in the statement that he was "in all points tempted like as we are." Otherwise the agony and the bloody sweat and the cry, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" would have been merely the acting of a part, and Christ's experience on this earth would have been the same sort of an example of trust in God as is that of the villain in the play who knows that the revolver is loaded with blank cartridges, and that he will be all right again as soon as the curtain falls. As a man Christ knew, through faith in God's word, that his Father was able to keep him from falling, just as any man may know, it who will believe God. In the fullness of this faith Christ committed himself to his Father's keeping power and was not disappointed. The same privilege is offered to every man.

Human reasoning fails in the effort to explain the union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus, Son of God and Son of man. This is the mystery which only God can understand. Therefore we cannot explain how it is that the eternal Son of the infinite God, equal with the Father, could take upon himself the weakness of our nature without laying aside his divinity. This is the wonderful thing into which angels desire to look. It will be the wonder of the redeemed for all eternity.

It is true that through the prophet Isaiah the success of Christ's mission is foretold, and so it was in the promise made to our first parents in the garden, and in many other places in the Scriptures, but these blessed assurances did not make of the Son of man a mere machine to register certain decrees concerning himself. His faith in these very promises gave him the victory in the hour of temptation, but faith's victories prove the possibility of failure.

Our other correspondent urges that our experience and Christ's could not be so wholly parallel, inasmuch as he existed in another form before he took the flesh, and was therefore able to commit himself to God before he entered upon his new stage of existence as a child while "our existence only begins at birth, and we could not share in the trusting of ourselves to God.

A more careful reading of the editorial under consideration will show that we pointed out that the parallel between Christ's experience and ours begins when we are born of the Spirit as he was. It may be many years after being born of the flesh before we are born of the Spirit, but by virtue of this birth we become children of God entering upon a new stage of existence just as Christ did when he was born of the Spirit. Jesus enjoyed no advantages over any member of the human family who has been born of the Spirit. The provision for one is the provision for the other.

It is quite possible that these two letters express thoughts which have arisen in many minds, and, for this reason we considered them in these columns. We venture to hope that this further of the subject may make it clearer to all our readers.

#### In Sinful Flesh

A reader of the Review has written to the editor at some length concerning the statement made in a recent editorial to the effect that the flesh which Jesus took was sinful flesh. Many questions are asked, but the most of them will be answered by settling the main question at issue.

The paragraph to which objection is offered reads as follows:

And it is further declared that the flesh which Jesus took, and in which he was tempted, was the same as the flesh of the other members of the family, sinful flesh. Here is the direct statement: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Referring to this paragraph, our correspondent says: I notice that this scripture does not say that God sent his own Son "in sinful flesh," but "in the likeness of sinful flesh." To me this seems a very different statement. How could one in sinful flesh be perfect, be holy, be unblemished (free from stain)?

There are two ways in which we might deal with this inquiry. We might introduce positive proof in support of our view, or we might show how that such consequences would follow from the position taken by our correspondent as would forbid us to accept it. To make assurance doubly sure, we shall do both of these things.

Let us, then, consider, some of the positive statements of the Scriptures bearing directly upon this matter. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." The natural and legitimate conclusion from this declaration would be that the flesh and blood of Jesus were the same as the children had. This is further emphasized in the same connection: "For verily he takes not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he takes hold [margin]. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren." The mission of Jesus was not to rescue fallen angels, but to save fallen man. He therefore identified himself with man, and not with angels, and he became "in all things" like unto those whom he proposed to help. The flesh of man is sinful. In order to be "in all things" like unto man, it was necessary that Jesus should take sinful flesh.

Again we have the statement previously quoted: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The suggestion is made that the expression "in the likeness of sinful flesh" does not mean the same as "in sinful flesh." We might then properly ask, What does it mean? Does it mean "in sinless flesh"? If so, why did it not say so? Why are the words "flesh of sin," as it reads in the margin of the Revised Version, introduced, if it is not the intent to convey the meaning that the flesh of Jesus was the same sinful flesh which we have? It seems to require a forced interpretation in order to attach any other meaning to the statement.

But we may apprehend the meaning of this passage more clearly if we compare it with another statement in which a similar form of expression is used. Here is one: He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Do we not rightly conclude that Jesus was really a man when we read that he was made "in the likeness of men"? Most certainly. The only way in which he could be "in the likeness of men" was to become a man. That he did really become a man, and

that he still is a man, is shown by the assertion that there is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Is it not equally clear that the only way in which God could send his Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh" would be for that Son to have sinful flesh? How would it be possible for him to be "in the likeness, of sinful flesh," and yet his flesh be less? Such an interpretation would involve a contradiction of terms.

It should, of course, be remembered that although Jesus was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh," yet he did not commit sin. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

We now turn to consider some of the consequences which follow if Jesus did not take sinful flesh. We must remember that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh, being both Son of God and Son of man. This is the great central truth of Christianity, and from it come blessed results to believers. "The Savior was deeply anxious for his disciples to understand and there would still be a separation between Jesus and men in sinful flesh. The Roman Catholic Church, having created this separation by its creed, has introduced a system of mediation between the Son of God and men in sinful flesh. First come the priests on earth, which are known to have sinful flesh; then come those who did dwell in sinful flesh, but are now canonized by the church as saints in heaven; next the angels; and lastly the mother of Jesus. Thus the door into heaven is not Jesus, but the church, and such a price is charged for opening the door as it is believed the sinner or his friends can pay. These are the consequences which naturally follow the doctrine that Jesus did not take sinful flesh, and we avoid these consequences by denying the doctrine, and holding to the plain teaching of the scriptures.

Furthermore, our correspondent asks, "How could one in sinful flesh be perfect, be holy?" This question touches the very heart of our Christianity. The teaching of Jesus is, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." And through the apostle Peter comes the instruction, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." No one will deny that we have sinful flesh, and we therefore ask how it will be possible to meet the requirements of the Scripture if it is not possible for one to be perfect or holy in sinful flesh. The very hope of our attaining perfection and holiness is based upon the wonderful truth that the perfection and holiness of divinity were revealed in sinful flesh in the person of Jesus. We are not able to explain how this could be but our salvation is found in believing the fact. Then may be fulfilled the promise of Jesus: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love Him and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is the crowning glory of our religion that even flesh of sin may become a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

For what purpose his divinity was united to humanity? He came to the world to display the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. God was manifested in him that he might be manifested in them." In order that the character of God might be manifested in sinful men who should believe on him, it was necessary that Jesus should unite divinity and humanity in himself, and that the flesh which he bore should be the same as the other men in whom God was thus to be manifested. Another way of expressing it would be to say that the Son of God tabernacled in the flesh when he appeared in Judea, in order that the way might be prepared for him to dwell in the flesh of all believers, and that it was therefore necessary that he should take the same kind of flesh as that in which he would afterward dwell when he should take up his abode in the members of his church.

This is not a mere matter of theory. It is intensely practical in its bearings. If the Son of God did not dwell in sinful flesh when he was born into the world, then the ladder has not been let down from heaven to earth, and the gulf between a holy God and fallen humanity has not been bridged. It would then be necessary that some further means should be provided in order to complete the connection between the Son of God and sinful flesh. And this is exactly what the Roman Catholic Church has done. The creed of that organization is in perfect harmony with the view taken by our correspondent. The formal expression of this doctrine is called the dogma of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary, according to which the mother of Jesus was "by a special privilege preserved immaculate, that is, free from the stain of original sin: from the first moment of her conception." As the mother was thus entirely different from other women, so the flesh which Jesus took from her would be different from the flesh of other men.

Much more could be said in reply to the question of our correspondent, but we hope that the principles involved and their relation to Christian experience have been made clear, and we trust that none of our readers will accept the doctrine of the papacy because they

are unable to explain the mystery of godliness. It is safe to believe in the plain teaching of the Scriptures. Advent Review And Sabbath Herald December 21, 1905.

"Christ bore the sins and infirmities of the race as they existed when He came to the earth to help man. In behalf of the race, with the weaknesses of fallen man upon Him, He was to stand the temptations of Satan upon all points wherewith man would be assailed.

"In what contrast is the second Adam as He entered the gloomy wilderness to cope with Satan single handed! Since the Fall the race had been decreasing in size and physical strength, and sinking lower in the scale of moral worth, up to the period of Christ's advent to the earth. And in order to elevate fallen man, Christ must reach him where he was. He took human nature, and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race" (Selected Messages, Book One, pages 267, 268, italics supplied).

"In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin" (Selected Messages, Book One, page 256).

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