

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 17:5

Wherefore the almighty God gave his only begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him: he suffered temptations but gave no need to them; he was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; and ascended into heaven to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father, that as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved: not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life, as well as those who should come after, who should believe in the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father, and of the Son, which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen.

He received not of the fullness at first, but continued
from grace to grace, until he received the fullness.

The record of Jesus' life as contained in the four gospels, the teachings about him which are contained in the New Testament epistles, and the tradition and experience of the Christian church during the centuries intervening, all teach us that Jesus was both God and men, both human and divine. It is impossible for man to understand or to grasp completely the mystery as to just how such a fusion of nature could be. But it is no mystery as to why it should be. Although it is an antinomy and a paradox to say that both human and divine were united in the personality of Jesus, yet because it needs to be true, we believe it to be true. In this present sermon we shall say very little about the divinity of Jesus -- reserving that for the next sermon in this series, but we shall discuss why it was necessary for Jesus to be true man as well as true God.

When Adam sinned and fell, he became subject to sin's penalty or consequence--death. Therefore, all his descendants who have inherited his nature from that day until now have also been subject to both sin and death. To redeem men from this bondage, it was necessary that another man, perfect as Adam was perfect in the beginning, should act for the human race. Only by becoming a part of the human race, and submitting himself to all the temptations and limitations of human-

ity could Jesus meet man's enemy -- death -- on the human level and subdue it. Unless Deity entered into and became a part of humanity, death could not be met and conquered on its own ground. Therefore the incarnation was necessary and essential. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."

Of course it was equally true that humanity alone could never have broken the power of sin and death. Only the power of Deity could do that. Only Deity could live a perfect, sinless life in the midst of all the temptations and downward drags of the flesh. Therefore it was necessary that two natures -- the human and the divine -- should meet in Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man.

The incarnation was necessary for another reason. Man needed to know what God was like. Jesus came to reveal God to man. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," he said. The incarnation demonstrated as nothing else could have done, God's love and concern for a lost and fallen race. The life of Jesus, its sinless purity, its love, its truth, its wisdom, and its good works, was a constant revelation of God. Every man may be comforted and strengthened by the thought that Deity has lived on the human plane

of existence, and that we now have an advocate with the Father who knows what it is to be a man, to bear the temptations, the trials, the pains, the joys and sorrows of human life, who because of his life among us can be expected to temper justice with mercy and understanding in the day of judgment.

The incarnation was also a revelation of manhood. In his human existence Jesus showed manhood at its best -- as it ought to be -- as it was meant in the beginning to be. Jesus revealed a manhood which was at all times perfect in its relationships both to God and to man. He demonstrated that it is possible for man to live a perfect life -- that manhood can be perfect. And as the crowning demonstration of all, after he had overcome death in the resurrection, he took this perfect, triumphant manhood back into the presence of God. The manhood of Jesus was not a temporary acquisition which he renounced when he left the world. His manhood is permanent. It exists today, for Jesus took back into the presence of God a human body, a body born of a human mother, a body which even after its resurrection from the tomb had been nourished with fish and a honeycomb to demonstrate its humanity even in the glorified, resurrected state.

The incarnation of Jesus as a man accomplished another purpose which very much needs to be emphasized in today's world of national and racial tensions. Such incarnation shows God's respect for the dignity of human nature. Because God has become man, renouncing for a time the prerogatives of divinity in order to dwell in human flesh, all manhood has taken on a new dignity; and every man, whether black, white, red, or brown, who shares human nature, has become brother to every other man, and all brothers to the Christ.

When we look for evidence that Jesus was perfect man, as well as perfect God, we find them in almost endless variety. One of the titles which Jesus most frequently applied to himself was "Son of Man." He was conceived and brought into the world by a human mother. He grew as other boys grew. His parents regarded him as a normal child, and taught him as other children were taught. He ate and drank with human companions. He endured a very human hunger during his forty day fast in the wilderness. He knew thirst and cold and fatigue; he slept in a boat during the storm on Galilee as any exhausted fisherman would have slept. Satan tempted him with appeals to human weak-

nesses -- hunger, ambition, pride, and greed. He had a human will. He made human choices with that will. He was wounded, suffered, bled, and died as any other man would have done under similar conditions. As a man forsaken, he cried out on the cross.

Jesus knew every human emotion. He rejoiced in spirit. He loved the young ruler, and his friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He knew anger when he cleansed the temple of the money changers. He had compassion for the multitude who were tried and hungry. He knew sorrow at the death of Lazarus, and at the betrayal of Judas. He wept over Jerusalem. He was mentally and emotionally agitated in the Garden of Gethsemane as he faced the horrible possibilities of the crucifixion. At times he showed a very human limitation of knowledge. He never enlarged our store of natural, physical, or historical knowledge. His power depended on prayer and communion with God. In all these -- and many other things, Jesus indicates a true humanity. This is not to say that he was not true God as well, but that the two natures were mystically and inseparably fused in him in order that the power and perfection of Deity might join and assist the helplessness of humanity to overcome death and bring men back to God.

Although Jesus seemed to be aware at a very early age of his Messiahship, and although the circumstances of his birth were such as to indicate his deity from the beginning, yet it is also true that Jesus received not a fullness at first, but continued from grace to grace until he received a fullness. Because of his love for us, Jesus came to live among men under conditions not natural to the Son of God. He emptied himself. He gave up and ceased to exercise temporarily certain natural prerogatives of deity, and voluntarily became subject to the restrictions of manhood, without, however, in any way relinquishing or disavowing his deity. As he grew and learned, seemingly like a normal boy, we never feel at any stage of his development that he is imperfect, or that he needs improvement. He passes through each stage of normal human growth and development as a perfect example of manhood, until he eventually arrives at completeness so that Paul could say of him that in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth -- true God and true Man. Let us respond to this great love, and follow this great example, accepting Jesus as the Son of God, our Redeemer, and our Savior.