

## “Jesus Was a Man”

January 8, 2022

Brian Watson

I suppose that when most people think about God, they imagine God to be one of two things. Some people think of God as being distant and remote, utterly beyond the universe. The theological word for this is “transcendent.” People who have this view of God don’t imagine experiencing a deeply personal and loving relationship with God. If my understanding of Islam is correct, the Muslim view of God, Allah, is that he is utterly transcendent.<sup>1</sup> Deists also believe that God is transcendent and not very personal. Deism was particularly popular during the time of the Enlightenment, and many of our Founding Fathers were Deists. These include Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and other significant figures around the time of the American Revolution, like Thomas Paine. They believed in a God who created the universe to be an orderly place, like a watchmaker making a watch, winding it up and letting it go. They believed in a God who was generally benevolent. But they didn’t believe in a God who revealed himself in a personal way or interfered with events in the world. In fact, they were very much against that idea. Benjamin Franklin believed in God but he didn’t believe that Jesus was divine. (Or, at the least, he claimed to be agnostic regarding Jesus’ deity.)<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine, who wrote the revolutionary pamphlet *Common Sense* in 1776, was very much against Christianity. He seemed

---

<sup>1</sup> Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1991), 83: “Not only is Allah absolutely sovereign, but he is utterly transcendent and cannot be identified with anything in the created world.” On page 84, Netland writes, “The notion of Allah’s radical transcendence leads to the concept of *shirk*, the ultimate sin in Islam. *Shirk* is the sin of identifying anything in the created order with deity.”

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Franklin, Letter to Ezra Stiles, March 9, 1790, <http://www.franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedNames.jsp> (accessed January 3, 2015): “Here is my Creed: I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That He governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable Service we can render to him, is doing Good to his other Children. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another Life respecting its Conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental Principles of all sound Religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever Sect I meet with them. As to Jesus of Nazareth, my Opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the System of Morals and his Religion as he left them to us, the best the World ever saw, or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting Changes, and I have with most of the present Dissenters in England, some Doubts as to his Divinity: tho’ it is a Question I do not dogmatise upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble. I see no harm however in its being believed, if that Belief has the good Consequence as probably it has, of making his Doctrines more respected and better observed, especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme takes it amiss, by distinguishing the Believers, in his Government of the World, with any particular Marks of his Displeasure. I shall only add respecting myself, that having experienced the Goodness of that Being, in conducting me prosperously thro’ a long Life, I have no doubt of its Continuance in the next, tho’ without the smallest Conceit of meriting such Goodness.”

to think that God was above meddling in human affairs. In *The Age of Reason*, a pamphlet written in 1793–1794, he shares his views on Christianity. Referring to some of the stories of the Old Testament (the stories about Samson, in particular), he writes, “When we contemplate the immensity of that Being, who directs and governs the incomprehensible WHOLE, of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel shame at calling such paltry stories the word of God.”<sup>3</sup> In his view, God is too big, too immense, for us to know him, and certainly too big to condescend to our level. Like Franklin, he did not believe that Jesus was God. But his views were far more extreme. He writes,

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of atheism; a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of man-ism with but little deism, and is as near to atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, Paine thought that the idea of a man, Jesus, standing between God and humanity, was blasphemous and irrational. Apparently, the idea of a God who would become man was revolting to Paine, as it is revolting to Muslims.

Deism may seem to be rather outdated, but it’s actually the functional view of God that a lot of people have. A decade ago, a couple of sociologists, Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, discovered that most American teenagers have a view of God they called “moralistic therapeutic deism.” Essentially, this belief holds that there is a God, however vaguely defined he may be, who wants people to be nice to each other. He watches over us but doesn’t generally get involved in our affairs. Also, this belief holds that the purpose of life is to be happy, and that good people go to heaven when they die.<sup>5</sup> So Deism is alive and well.

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, Chapter 7, [http://infidels.org/library/historical/thomas\\_paine/age\\_of\\_reason/part1.html#1](http://infidels.org/library/historical/thomas_paine/age_of_reason/part1.html#1) (accessed January 3, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 11.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religions and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162–63, summarize the beliefs as follows:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Another view of God that some people have is the exact opposite. Some people don't think God is transcendent at all. The theological word is "immanent." People who believe that God is immanent think he is very near, and only very near. On this view, God isn't distant; God is equivalent to the world, or the world is part of God, or God is inside everything. Pantheists believe that everything is "god": you, me, the rock, the tree. This belief is part of some forms of Buddhism and Hinduism. That view may seem very foreign to us, but it's shared by New Age spirituality. New Age teaching tells us that God isn't transcendent. He's not "out there." Rather, he's "in here." He's in you. In fact, he *is* you! Everyone from Deepak Chopra to Shirley MacLaine to Dr. Wayne Dyer wants to tell you that you are God.<sup>6</sup> These ideas may sound silly, but they are prominent in best-selling books.

So, those are two very different views of God. One holds that God is removed from us. He is transcendent, he is other, and we can't know him personally. The other holds that God is here. He is in nature. He is nature! He's in you. He is you!

But there are problems with both of these views. If God is utterly transcendent, then he can't enter into this world and fix it. If God simply is this world, is he also in cancer and AIDS? If this world is God, or part of God, that says very negative things about God, since this world is both beautiful and also rather messed up. And if God is messed up, then we would have reason to doubt that he can fix the world.

But the Bible teaches us that God is both transcendent and immanent. He is beyond the universe because he made it. He existed prior to the creation of the universe, and he is not bound by his own creation. But he's also involved in his creation. However, God should not be confused with his creation, and he certainly shouldn't be confused with us. We are not gods, and we will never be gods.

The most amazing thing that the Bible teaches regarding God's interaction with the world is that in Jesus, God became man. That's what I want to talk about today.

Now, when I say that "Jesus Was a Man," the title of this sermon, I don't mean that Jesus was merely or only a man. That would be wrong. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is God.<sup>7</sup> I will talk about that in another sermon. But Jesus also became a human being. John

---

<sup>6</sup> Pantheist and New Age ideas are described in James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 144-213.

<sup>7</sup> John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Bible states that the Father created the universe through Jesus (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2) and Jesus indicates that

1:14 says, “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.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus, the Word of God, became a human being. He didn’t cease being God, but he added a second nature, a human nature. We call this the incarnation, which means the “enfleshment.” When God took on a human nature, he appeared in the flesh, but it wasn’t a mere appearance. He really and truly became man.

This is what Christians have believed since the first century, but there have often been distortions of this belief. In the early centuries of Christianity, there were some heresies, or wrong beliefs, about Jesus’ human nature. There were people called “Docetists,” who believed that Jesus only appeared to be human.<sup>9</sup> They believed this because they thought that all matter—the physical world—was inherently evil. How could God actually become material when God is immaterial and matter is bad? So, they believed that Jesus only appeared to have a body. That’s the error that the apostle John fought against when he wrote 1 John 4:2–3: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” That’s why John begins that letter with these words:

<sup>1</sup> 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—<sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us (1 John 1:1–2).

I think there are times when Christians come dangerously close to docetism. We so want to protect the divinity of Jesus that we don’t emphasize or think enough about the humanity of Jesus. Jesus was—and still is!—actually a man. He is fully God, but also fully man, and it’s worth reflecting on his humanity.

We see his humanity in his birth. Though his conception was supernatural, as we discussed two weeks ago, his birth was typical. And as a boy, he grew physically and intellectually. That’s what we read in Luke 2:39–52. The main story in that passage concerns

---

prior to his earthly life (the incarnation) he existed with God (John 8:58; 17:5). Other passages indicate that he is God (20:28; Rom. 9:5; Tit. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1). Only God can forgive sins and receive worship, things that Jesus did (Matt. 9:2–8; Mark 2:1–12; Matt. 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52).

<sup>8</sup> All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

<sup>9</sup> *Docetism* comes from the Greek word *δοκεω* (*dokēō*), “I seem” or “I appear.”

Jesus at age 12 at the temple in Jerusalem. It indicates how exceptional he was, even as a boy. But the story is framed by two comments from Luke. Verse 40 says, “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.” Jesus grew as any normal human being would. He grew up in size and he grew in strength. This is amazing to think about. God grew in size and strength. Now, Jesus’ divine nature didn’t grow. How could the omnipresent and omnipotent God get any bigger or stronger? He couldn’t. But as a man, in his human nature, Jesus grew.

We see the same thing in verse 52: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Jesus grew physically, but he also grew intellectually. He had to learn to read. He then had to read Scripture. At the temple, he was listening to the teachers. He grew in his knowledge and his wisdom. Again, how can God do this? God is omniscient. Jesus’ divine nature didn’t grow in wisdom, but his human nature did.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus seemed not to use many of his divine attributes. God is omnipresent, but Jesus was physically limited to one place. God is immaterial, but Jesus had—and still has!—a body. How do we understand all of this?

I think understanding how God can also be man is very difficult. It would seem that God, who is infinite, cannot be joined to human nature, which is finite. But while this is somewhat mysterious and hard for us to grasp, I don’t think it’s a contradiction. One of the best explanations of the incarnation that I have read is from a Christian philosopher named Douglas Groothuis. He says that when Jesus became man, he didn’t lose his divine attributes. He didn’t cease being God. But he “temporarily suspended *the employment* of some of his divine attributes” without losing them. He then gives us an illustration: “For example, during his prime as a basketball player, Michael Jordan might play a pickup basketball game with some junior high children in Chicago. In order to have fun with lesser players, he would voluntarily *suspend the use* of some of his exemplary basketball skills. He would continue to *possess* those powers, but they would be held in check in order to play basketball with the children. However, at times Jordan might decide to dazzle the kids by showing his true stuff.”<sup>10</sup> I think that’s a good analogy. Jesus never lost his divinity, but he chose to live primarily as a man to identify with us.

---

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for the Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 525-26 (original emphasis).

In case one illustration isn't enough, consider another one, which comes from Bruce Ware, a theologian. He asks us to imagine a great, strong, wealthy king who decides to live among the poor to understand how they live. So he becomes a beggar. Ware writes,

In every way he could, he acquired the day-to-day life and limitations of a beggar. Now, having taken on the restrictions of beggarly life, when the king was hungry, although he could have called for the royal chefs to bring him a choice meal, in order to live life as a beggar he instead learned what it was like to go hungry or beg food. And when the king grew ill from the disease surrounding him, while he could have called for a highly trained doctor to attend to him, in order to live life as a beggar he accepted being sick with little if any help for his illnesses. And when insulted and mistreated by mean-spirited passersby, although he could have called for the royal guard to defend him and bring justice to bear against this cruelty, in order to live life as a beggar he accepted with no retaliation the mistreatment and insults foisted upon him.<sup>11</sup>

The point of this illustration is to show that the king never ceased being king or having access to all his power and privileges. But in order to know what the life of a beggar was like, he had to refrain from using those powers and privileges. That's a fitting analogy, because we read this in 2 Corinthians 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

Jesus experienced a wide range of human experiences. He was born (Luke 2:7). He grew (Luke 2:40, 52). He could become tired (John 4:6). He slept (Mark 4:38). He was thirsty (John 19:28). He was hungry (Matt. 4:2). He ate and drank (Matt. 11:19). He bled (John 19:34). He died (Luke 23:46). He also had a range of emotions. He marveled (Matt. 8:10). He wept with sorrow (John 11:35). He had joy (John 15:11). He was troubled (Matt. 26:37; 22:44; Heb. 5:7). He was tempted (Heb. 4:15), something I will talk about next week. Jesus experienced everything that is essential to the human experience. He experienced love and heartbreak. He experienced fellowship and betrayal. He had troubled relationships, even with family members. His own brothers didn't believe that he was the Messiah (John 7:5).<sup>12</sup>

There are a number of reasons why it was important for Jesus to be truly human. Here are some of them.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Jesus Christ: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 22.

<sup>12</sup> This is an example of the criterion of embarrassment: if the story of Jesus was fabricated, would such a potentially embarrassing detail be in the story?

<sup>13</sup> These are outlined in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 540–42.

Jesus had to be truly human in order to be the perfect human being. This matters because he is called the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). In the big story of the Bible, the first man, Adam, was disobedient. And all subsequent human beings have been disobedient. But Jesus is the only human being who was perfectly obedient. This is what Paul writes in Romans 5:18–19: “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” The gospel—the good news of Christianity—states that those who believe in Jesus have their sins transferred to him. When he died on the cross, our sins were punished. But there’s something else: Jesus’ perfect obedience—his righteousness—is credited to us. If Jesus were not perfectly obedient as a human being, humans couldn’t be credited with perfect obedience. Jesus is the perfect human covenant partner of God; if we have faith in him, we are regarded by God as perfect.

I’ll talk more about this next week, but it’s worth mentioning now. Jesus was perfectly obedient as a man. We often think he was sinless simply because he was and is God. It is true that God cannot sin. But it would appear that Jesus was sinless not by using his divine attributes. Instead, he fought to be obedient by using resources available to us: prayer, the Bible, and the power of the Holy Spirit. He learned to be completely obedient to the Father. It was not something that was easy. He fought for it.

Consider what happened in the garden of Gethsemane. This is Matthew 26:36–44:

<sup>36</sup> 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.” <sup>37</sup> And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” <sup>39</sup> 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.” <sup>40</sup> And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? <sup>41</sup> Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” <sup>42</sup> Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” <sup>43</sup> And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup> So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

Adam, the first man, was disobedient in the garden of Eden. Jesus, facing temptation in the garden of Gethsemane, obeyed God the Father. But it wasn’t easy. He was sorrowful to the point of death. In Luke’s Gospel, we read that “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to

the ground” (Luke 22:44). He even needed an angel to strengthen him (verse 43). This obedience was hard-won.

Another reason why Jesus had to become human was to be our substitute on the cross. Only a human being can die for another human being’s sins. In that way, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were insufficient, something that the book of Hebrews makes clear. Consider Hebrews 2:14–18:

<sup>14</sup> 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, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Only a man can die for other men. And Jesus had to be fully human. He couldn’t have just a human body. He needed a human mind and a human heart as well, because our whole selves—body, heart, mind—are sinful. Our whole selves need healing. This is what one fourth-century theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus, writes:

If anyone has put his trust in Him [Jesus] as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

Our whole selves are sinful and need to die for sin. Jesus died on our behalf. Our whole selves need to be obedient, and we are credited with Jesus’ perfect obedience: obedience of actions, thoughts, and desires. A semi-human Jesus could never heal us.

Another reason why Jesus had to become truly human was to be our example. Though we cannot be like Jesus in every respect, he serves as our example. This is what John writes in 1 John 2:6: “whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

---

<sup>14</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, “To Cleodionus the Priest against Apollinarius,” Epistle 101, in *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, vol. 7, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 440.



Now, think about this: Jesus grew in wisdom. He learned to read the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. He must have spent a lot of time memorizing it, because he quoted from it frequently. Are we growing in our knowledge of the Bible? Are we growing in wisdom? Jesus had to work hard to grow in those ways. It didn't come automatically. Of course, Jesus could have used his divine omniscience, but he chose to live as a man. The king became a beggar to live among the poor. Are we following Jesus in our learning, in our faith, and in our obedience?

We don't hear much about Jesus from the time he was born until the time that he was about thirty. The only glimpse we get of him is as a 12-year-old at the temple.<sup>15</sup> Why is that? Well, for one thing, the most important part of his life came at the end: in his ministry and in his death and resurrection. In biographies of that time, the focus was more on the end of one's life, not the beginning, whereas today, biographies often focus on one's upbringing. But another reason, I think, is that Jesus' early life was probably somewhat mundane. He spent a lot of time poring over the Scriptures, on his knees in prayer, obeying his parents, and working. He expressed his obedience to God the Father in all areas of life. It doesn't make for exciting reading, but it was very important, because what Jesus faced toward the end of his life is more than we can imagine. He faced unbearable stress, temptation, and rejection. He needed years to prepare for that moment.

Bruce Ware expresses the importance of this preparation:

How well did he need to know those Scriptures to be prepared for the public ministry the Father had designed for him? Perhaps the fact that he commenced that public ministry at age thirty gives us part of the answer. For three decades the Spirit worked within Jesus, instructing him and bringing him yet greater and greater insight, until finally the day came when he was ready to face the Devil, the Pharisees, the demons, and his disciples, all with the Word of God deeply enmeshed in his soul. Marvel that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, grew in wisdom. And ask yourself, what does that say about how we should live our lives?<sup>16</sup>

Another reason why Jesus needed to be human was to sympathize with us in every way. Consider Hebrews 4:15–16: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us

---

<sup>15</sup> Some New Age teachers claim that Jesus went to India after the age of 12. There's no evidence to support this claim. The claim is made in order to show that Jesus was influenced by Eastern philosophy. Again, there is no evidence to support such a claim, and only the most distorted view of Jesus' teaching could identify it with Eastern or New Age philosophy.

<sup>16</sup> Ware, *The Man Jesus Christ*, 54.

then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Jesus knows what it is like to be a human being. He is like us in nearly every way, except that he did not sin. There are also a few other ways that Jesus may not be like us: he wasn’t married, he never had sex, he never had children. But those are not essential characteristics of being a human being. They’re common, but not every human being experiences those things. You can live a good, fulfilling life without doing those things. Jesus has proved that. But Jesus had experiences that all of us will have. Everyone has a birth and a death. Everyone feels physical pain. Everyone feels emotional pain. Jesus felt all these things. I imagine that the physical and emotional pain he felt were actually far greater than the pain we will ever feel.

This thought can bring us a lot of comfort. I remember thinking about this over a decade ago when I had a herniated disc in my lower back. The herniated disc was between the L5 and S1 vertebrae, and it pressed into the sciatic nerve in my right leg. That meant that I had sharp pain in the very lower part of my back, in my butt, and down my right leg. Some of my toes and parts of my felt numb. The pain was the worst pain I had ever experienced. It was so bad that I couldn’t sit down without extreme pain. I couldn’t walk without limping. It was a miserable time for me. Not only was I in pain, but I was worried about whether I would ever get back to normal. I spent almost two months lying on the floor. As I sat there in pain, wondering what the future would hold, I had two thoughts. One, Jesus knows physical pain. As bad as my pain was, it wasn’t as bad as being beaten, having a crown of thorns shoved on my skull, having nails driven through my hands and feet, and being hung on a cross to die. So, Jesus knew my pain, and he could sympathize with me. I could pray to God the Father through my great High Priest, Jesus, God the Son. I knew that God would hear me. The second thought I had: one day, I would get a new back. Just as Jesus rose from the grave in an indestructible, perfect body, someday all his followers will have resurrected bodies. I can look forward to having a perfect body in a perfect world with Jesus, because I have faith in him.<sup>17</sup>

Maybe your issue today isn’t physical pain. It might be emotional suffering, sadness, mourning. Jesus knows all of this, too. He knew what it was like to be hated, mocked, betrayed, and abandoned. He knows what it is like to mourn the death of a friend. So, whatever you are

---

<sup>17</sup> By God’s grace, I had minimally invasive surgery to remove the herniated portion of that disc. I praise God that my pain was relieved and that I am now healthy.

going through today, Jesus knows what it's like. He's not some distant god, like the god of deism or Islam. The old words of that spiritual are true: "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows but Jesus."

Also, the fact that Jesus became a man means that matter isn't inherently bad, that humans are not essentially sinful. All of us are sinners, and we're affected by the power of sin. The whole creation is affected by sin. But it wasn't that way in the beginning, and it won't be at the end. Creation isn't beyond redemption, and no human is.

Finally, I think one of the most important things we can learn from the incarnation is simply to be amazed at what God would do to rescue his people. Wayne Grudem, a theologian, says, "It is by far the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible—far more amazing than the resurrection and more amazing even than the creation of the universe. The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe."<sup>18</sup>

God became man because we can't make our way to God. God came to earth because we can't rise up to heaven. God humbled himself and stooped to our level to save us. He entered into his own creation to save his creatures. He came poor so we could become rich. Let us praise Jesus, love him, and follow in his footsteps as the perfect man.

---

<sup>18</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 563.