

The Discipleship Project-Summer 2017

Series 1: The Oneness of God

A series by Gerald McLean.

Series Big Idea: The Lord our God is one.

Lesson 1.3: The Complete Identity of Jesus

Lesson Big Idea: Jesus was both God and man.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: Matthew 14:25–32 (PPT)

As a child and young man, Jesus was identified as a carpenter's son. Even those who knew Him best only recognized His humanity, and failed to recognize His deity. Perceptions of Jesus began to change when He launched His ministry. His baptism by John the Baptist was accompanied by supernatural signs and wonders. (See Matthew 3:16–17.) Jesus forgave a man's sins and proved He was able to do so by healing the man. (See Mark 2:5.) Additionally, "the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28–29, KJV).

His magnificent and anointed teaching; His display of power over sickness, death, and demonic spirits; and His command over the elements began to cement in the minds of the people that Jesus was more than just a man—He was God manifest in flesh.

Nowhere was this more evident than on the night the disciples set sail for Bethsaida. (See Mark 6; Matthew 14.)

Jesus had delayed His departure so He could enjoy a time of private prayer, while the disciples reluctantly began their journey across the Sea of Galilee without Him. In the middle of the night, the wind began wildly blowing across the surface of the sea. As the disciples toiled to keep their boat afloat—struggling with the waves, wind, and water—a few of the men caught a glimpse of a lone figure off in the distance.

As they pointed out the phenomenon to the rest of the crew, each man was convinced it was a ghost. However, knowing the fear in their hearts, Jesus called out to them, identifying Himself so they would no longer be afraid. As He approached them, they saw the miracle before their very eyes; Jesus was walking on the water. As Jesus proceeded to board the vessel, the wind miraculously ceased. The incredulous disciples were amazed! Being overcome with wonder and worship they proclaimed, "Thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33, KJV).

The disciples had a growing understanding that Jesus was God manifest in flesh. They began to recognize that Jesus was the express image of the invisible God. (See Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3.)

FRAME

The key to understanding the Godhead is to understand that Jesus Christ was both man and God. He was the son of Mary and was conceived when the Holy Ghost overshadowed her. (See Matthew 1:18.) This is why Jesus was referred to as both Son of Man and Son of God. Humanity and divinity united in Jesus Christ for the purpose of salvation. The Bible says, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:19, KJV). (PPT)

Which God was in Christ? He was the God of the Old Testament, the God of Genesis 1:1, the God referenced in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (KJV).

- **Site several verses of Scripture that proclaim Jesus was God manifest in flesh.**
- **Why is it hard for us to understand the idea of Jesus being both God and man?**

The purpose of the Incarnation—God in flesh—was to save fallen humanity. (PPT) (PDG) Fallen humanity could not be saved without a Savior. Although the children of Israel made atonement for their sins through animal sacrifices, these sacrifices could not wash away their sins. At best they could push their sins ahead for another year in anticipation of the coming Savior. Animal blood could never wash away humanity’s sin.

The best of mortal men—Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Daniel immediately come to mind—even had they been willing to do so, could not have offered their lives as a sacrifice for humanity’s sins because, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, KJV). John the Baptist, of whom it was said, “Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist” (Luke 7:28, KJV), could not relieve humanity of the burden of sin through the message of repentance. At his own admission, John the Baptist stated, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11, KJV).

- **What do you think John meant by saying he was not even worthy to bear the shoes of the coming Messiah?**
- **What are some common expressions we use today that say the same thing?**

In John 1:29, when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, his eyes were opened by God and he beheld the Savior of the world, saying, “**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**” (KJV). (PPT) While they were growing up together, John may have had some peculiar notion that Jesus was someone special, but he had no idea Jesus was the Savior until it was revealed to him by God. When the revelation came, however, John immediately understood Jesus was the Lamb of God, or the flesh of God, the long-awaited Messiah, the one who would be the sacrifice for the sins of fallen humanity. When John’s faith faltered concerning the true identity of his distant relative, Jesus confirmed His identity by proclaiming He was the fulfillment of Isaiah 35:3–6 (PPT)—the God of the Old Testament coming as the Healer and Savior in the person of Jesus Christ.

“God is a Spirit” (John 4:24, KJV). A Spirit does not have flesh and bones. (See Luke 24:39.) God’s plan, even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; I Peter 1:20) was that He would put on flesh for the purpose of redemption. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. (See Hebrews 9:22.) Animal blood was not efficacious in the washing away of humanity’s sin, and no human prior to Jesus was sinless, therefore, God became flesh (I Timothy 3:16) so He could go to the cross, shed innocent blood, and make provision for the remission of humanity’s sins. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Peter 1:18–19, KJV). (PPT)

God had to come in flesh for the purpose of redemption. (PPT) (PDG) What God chose not to accomplish in the Spirit realm, He accomplished through His own Incarnation.

- **Why was it necessary for God to put on flesh for the purpose of redemption?**

Jesus is both God and man. Centuries after the Day of Pentecost and the birth of the church, too many of today’s professing Christians are saddled with a so-called orthodox definition of the Godhead, manufactured by Greek philosophers masquerading as theologians. No wonder there is such confusion over Christ’s identity. Jesus said, “And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14, KJV).

It is misleading and erroneous to suggest that Jesus is anyone other than God manifest in flesh. The divine mystery of the Incarnation is incomprehensible to us in the sense that the human mind cannot comprehend how an invisible God could become a man. But the Incarnation is not incomprehensible in the sense that God did become a man. God was manifest in flesh (I Timothy 3:16), and that should settle it.

Jesus Christ was both man and God. **Jesus had two natures.** As a man he was born of a woman. (See Luke 2:7.) Like any other man, he got hungry (Matthew 4:2), thirsty (John 19:28), and tired (John 4:6). He grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52). He prayed (Luke 22:41), became the sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 10:10–12), and acknowledged that His Father was greater than He was (John 14:28). But as God, He is eternal. (See John 1:1–2.) As God He could multiply the fishes and loaves and feed the

multitudes. (See Matthew 14:19–20.) As God He was living water (John 4:14), and as God He calmed the sea (Mark 4:39–41). As God He answered prayer (John 14:14), and as God He forgave sin (Mark 2:5–7). As God He knew no equal (John 5:18) and had all power (Matthew 28:18).

There is not a distinction of persons in the Godhead, but there is a distinction between the humanity and divinity of Jesus. (PPT) (PDG) Once this is understood, so-called “confusing verses” are more easily comprehended. When reading verses that seem to convey the thought of multiple persons in the Godhead, one must ask, is Jesus speaking as a man, as God, or both?

In his book *The Oneness of God*, David Bernard explains it this way: “We must always remember that Jesus is fully God and not merely an anointed man. At the same time, He was fully human, not having just an appearance of humanity. He had a dual nature unlike anything we have, and we cannot adequately compare our existence or experience to His. What would seem strange or impossible if applied to a mere human becomes understandable when viewed in the context of One who is both fully God and fully human at the same time.”

- **Where in the Scriptures does it show us that Jesus was fully God?**
- **Where in the Scriptures does it show us that Jesus was fully man?**

Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30, KJV). (PPT) The wording of this verse could not be any more direct or emphatic. Jesus was asserting that He was God manifested in flesh. Some would suggest that this verse expresses unity between the Father and the Son rather than numeric oneness. If this were true, however, how can this verse be reconciled with John 14:8–9 which reads, “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (KJV).

Jesus was concerned that Philip, who had been with Him nearly from the beginning of His ministry, still did not know who He was. Jesus questioned Philip: “How is it even possible that you don’t know who I am?” To help convince Philip of His identity, Jesus implored, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:10–11, KJV). (PPT) Jesus prodded Philip: understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. On what basis was Philip to believe this assertion? On the basis of the miracles he had witnessed and the teachings he had heard.

- **Has it ever been difficult for you to grasp the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit? Explain.**
- **Why is describing Father, Son, and Spirit as “persons” not biblical?**

Hear the words of the prophet Isaiah: “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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6, KJV). Isaiah identified the “son” of Isaiah 7:14 as Immanuel, or God with us.

The birth of Jesus signaled God’s willingness to live in a human body so He could be “God with us” in a way He could never have been with us in Spirit. Isaiah reconfirmed Jesus’ identity by proclaiming that the “son,” the “God with us,” of Isaiah 7:14 and the “everlasting Father” of Isaiah 9:6 is God manifest in flesh. Jesus was exhorting Philip: I am the visible representation of the invisible God. I am God with you.

Jesus continued His Godhead lesson with Philip. “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:14–20, KJV).

Jesus was letting Philip know that He was the Comforter. He told Philip that He would not leave him comfortless. Jesus prophesied to Philip that after His death, burial, and resurrection, He would come again unto him through the infilling of the Holy Ghost. This was fulfilled in Acts 2:1–4 as Philip was among the 120 in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:13).

Addressing His purpose, Jesus taught that He would leave this world as a man, but as God He would raise Himself from the dead (John 2:19) and ascend into Heaven (Acts 1:9–11). He then promised to return as the Comforter or Holy Spirit to whomever would receive Him. When Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit, they have the Spirit of Christ in them—the hope of glory. (See Colossians 1:27.)

- **How did Jesus convey to His disciples that He was God manifest in the flesh?**

The apostle Paul addressed the complete identity of Jesus Christ in Philippians 2:6–8. “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (KJV).

God has no equal. (See Isaiah 40:25.) Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God, because He was God! When God became a man, He did give up some of His rights as God. When God put on flesh, He submitted to the limitations of the human body just like an ordinary man. But, as God, He continued to exercise all power and authority. That is why He could forgive sin, raise the dead, command demons, and direct the elements.

For the purpose of redemption, God did become what He had never been, namely, a man. (PPT) (PDG) However, He never ceased to be the almighty God. “For in

him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9, KJV). (PPT)

FINISH

Jesus had not been long in Galilee, perhaps only three days, when He and at least three of His early disciples—Peter, Philip, and Nathanael—were invited to a wedding in Cana. Mary knew the families involved quite well and was already there helping with the wedding. As the wedding guests celebrated with the new bride and groom, Jesus and His friends shared in their joy.

As the feast neared its conclusion, those in charge of the celebration noticed the wine was gone. When Mary found this out, she felt responsibility to the family and knew Jesus could do something about the dilemma. However, without asking Jesus for permission, she asserted her mother’s role and told Jesus to fix the situation. Calling the servants over to where she and Jesus stood, she told the servants, “Whatever He says to do, do it” (John 2:5, NKJV).

At this command, it appears the human side of Jesus was annoyed at His mother’s insistence on His involvement. “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4, NKJV). Though some have seen His response as disrespectful, this is just not the case. In fact, the use of the word we translate as “woman” was actually a term filled with the utmost respect. However, what it did infer was that the days of Jesus being subject “to her were past for ever, and that the old relation was merged in the new one of Messiah and disciple” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*, John 2:1–11).

Yet, though their relationship was changing, Jesus remained submitted to her and her request for the purpose of contributing to the joyous occasion. Both the deity and humanity of Jesus were at work. In His humanity He submitted to His mother’s request. However, in His deity He gave strict instructions to the servants and turned water into wine.

Jesus was both God and man. When God took on flesh, He became a man in the fullest sense. He confined Himself to location, time, and human frailty—something He had never done before. Yet the Spirit that was in Christ was God. Jesus never ceased to be the omnipresent Spirit of God, the Father of all Creation.