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## Is Jesus both God and man?

The idea that Jesus Christ was human and was simultaneously God was very early in the New Testament.

That was the idea that Jesus was human but was actually God the father that had become a man in the world.

The book of Acts tells us a lot about the developing understanding of the Holy Spirit and yet the emphasis needs to be on the word, “developing” because in the book of Acts we see the disciples discovering more and more about the Holy Spirit.

Scholars can detect that the Gospels start out as Binitarian (i.e. God the Father and God the Son) but it is in the

Book of Acts that we learn about how the disciples discovered that our God is Trinitarian: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



If Luke’s gospel is in the New Testament, the opening of the Book of Acts shows us that is the second part of Luke’s gospel. In the Koine Greek of the New Testament we find that Luke’s gospel and the book of Acts are almost identical in length. This suggests that they were originally two scrolls. In Luke’s gospel Jesus is both God and man and in Luke-Acts that we learn about the Holy Spirit. It is this affirmation of a Trinitarian God that is firmly in the Creedal statements of the Church from early times of the New Testament.

More than 600 years ago, Andrei Rublev painted the magnificent Trinity icon. The work was made according to the canons of church art by an artist whose heart was devoted to serving God. Not surprisingly, all of his works are filled with religious content. Before us are three figures of angels sitting at the table. The number three for Orthodoxy is symbolic and directly related to the unity of God in three persons: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Trinity is One God, in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If you look closely, the inner and outer contours of the extreme angels also constitute a large bowl. In the hands of angels, there are sceptres, symbols of power, and in everyone’s attire there is an azure colour, the colour of the sky, symbolizing their involvement in God.

Behind the central figure we see the tree of life, and to the left of it is the building symbolizing the Church. In the upper right corner we can see the mountain (Mount Moriah) as the atonement of the fallen world, the prototype of Golgotha, on which Jesus ascends.

The structure of the icon is subordinated to the idea of a circle, which from time immemorial has symbolized eternity, in this case the infinity of love and the divine trinity. There are no unnecessary details in the icon, each item is symbolic.

The dating of The Trinity is uncertain. The icon of the Trinity is believed to be from the 15th Century.

The Trinity depicts three angels sitting at a table. On the table, there is a cup containing the head of a calf. In the background, Rublev painted a house (supposedly Abraham's house), a tree (the Oak of Mamre), and a mountain (Mount Moriah). The figures of angels are arranged so that the lines of their bodies form a full circle. The middle angel and the one on the left bless the cup with a hand gesture. There is no action or movement in the painting. The figures gaze into eternity in the state of motionless contemplation.

The painting / icon is in the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, Russia.

In Matthew's gospel at chapter 16, and in verse 16, Peter is asked by Jesus "who do you say that I am?" This is what the passage tells us was the reply:

*Simon Peter answered... "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Peter, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."*

As the disciples' understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ was developing and growing, then at the same time we discover that Jesus knew what was to happen and asked God to remove what was to happen if it was God's will .... but only if it was God's will. This is a very human and realistic thought because what was to happen was too much.

In the gospel of John at chapter 10 and verse 30 Jesus says:

*"I and the Father are one."*

We need only to look at the Jews' reaction to His statement to know He was claiming to be God. The crowd that heard those words tried to stone Him for this very reason: "You, a mere man, claim to be God" (John chapter 10 verse 33). The Jews understood exactly what Jesus was claiming. When Jesus declared, "I and the Father are one," He was saying that He and the Father are of one nature and essence.

In John chapter 8 at verse 58, we read:

<sup>58</sup> *"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"*

"I am" was the Hebrew name for God.

So we are seeing human responses and human feelings in what Jesus says and does, but at exactly the same time, we see Jesus Christ affirming that he is one with God.

We must not forget. Jesus is God and Man. He is the supreme representative of our human nature. He is the manliest man. He is the most human of all human beings. And it is this man in His flesh who suffers and dies for you. He's not just an exceptionally decent

chap. We are to turn to him as God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, living amongst us and going up to Jerusalem to die for us.



He is *in* the big city but still he is there as the countryman and not just the city dweller. He represents all of us. He returns from the temple each evening to the house of Simon the Leper at the little village of Bethany, where Martha lived with Lazarus.

Lazarus – that bears thinking about! The walk from the temple to Bethany is about one and a half miles. You go from the temple mount, down the stone steps, past the house of the High Priest, across the brook Kidron and up a long hill that passes the garden called Gethsemane, which means oil press.

In Gethsemane you can still sit where he sat, under the 1,000-year-old olive trees that were just like the ones under which Christ knelt and uttered his agonised prayer for God to spare him: 'Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will but Yours be done.'

From above Gethsemane you can look down over the whole city, the great temple, 1,000 years of sacred history. And what would be in your heart as you looked down over Jerusalem? In Jesus's heart there was sorrow. And he wept. Jesus did not weep for himself, but for the city: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that kills the prophets, and stones those that are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings – but you would not!'

Jesus is true God of true God. But in this scene where he weeps over the city, you can see the very human person as well.

The most important reason that Jesus must be God is that, if He is not God, His death would not have been sufficient to pay sufficient penalty for the sins of the world that we sincerely need for all time (See 1 John chapter 2 at verse 2). A created being, which Jesus, if He were not God would then be, could not pay the infinite penalty required for all our sin against an infinite God. Only God could pay such an infinite penalty. Only God could take on the sins of the world on himself, to reconcile the world with himself (See 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21), die, and be resurrected, proving His victory over sin and death to all of us and for all of us if we believe in Him.

*This was inspired by the Rev Peter Mullen*

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