

“A Body You [God] Have Prepared for Me [Jesus]”



SABBATH—JANUARY 15

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S STUDY: John 1:1-3; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 1:8, 9; Hebrews 5:7-9.

MEMORY VERSE: “So when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘You didn’t [did not] want sacrifices and offerings. Instead, you prepared a body for me’ ” (Hebrews 10:5, NIV).

ABOUT TWENTY-FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO, Euripides wrote *Alcestis*. In this story, Admetus, king of Thessaly, was doomed to an early death if he could not find a substitute¹ to die in his place. He asked his father, mother, other relatives, and friends. But all of them refused to die in his place. Only his wife agreed to die in his place. After her death, Admetus said, “I shall wear mourning clothes for you, O my wife, not for one year but for the rest of my life.” —Adapted.

The most important idea in this story is *self-sacrifice*. As Christians, we see in Euripides’s story an example of Jesus’ story. He sacrificed Himself not for one person but for an entire planet of sinful people.

This week, we will look at the beginning of Jesus’ unbelievable sacrifice.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON: What was Jesus before He became a human? After Jesus became a human, was He both God and human? How does the Bible picture Jesus as a human? How does the Bible picture Jesus as God? How important is it that Jesus is both God and human?

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 22.

¹substitute—a person who takes the place of another person.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 16

**“IS THE UNIVERSE FRIENDLY?”
(John 1:1-3).**

We need to appreciate what Jesus has done for us by becoming a human. But we should first understand who He is, where He came from, and what He was before coming into this world. These things are not easy to understand. But the Holy Spirit can help us understand what we need to know to be saved.

What do the following verses tell us about where Jesus was and who He was before He came to earth? Micah 5:2, John 1:1-3; John 6:62; John 8:58.

These verses teach us that Jesus is God and that He lived before coming to this earth as a human. Jesus was not just some great person, a great teacher, or a spiritual guide. *He was God.* And as God, He lived before He became human. We see the godhood of Jesus through the whole Bible. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:28). Jesus was one with the Father (John 10:30). Jesus lives eternally (forever) with the Father (John 1:2). There was never a time when Jesus did not live. If He had not lived forever, then He would be a created person. And

the Bible does not teach that Jesus was created.

How does John 1:3 show that Jesus lives forever?

Jesus lived eternally with the Father before He became a human. How does that truth change our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our whole life? Someone once said that the important question facing humanity² is, “Is the universe friendly?” How does your belief that Jesus was God before becoming a human help to answer that question?

MONDAY—JANUARY 17

**IN THE SHAPE OF GOD AND
HUMAN (Philippians 2:5-8).**

The idea of Jesus being God before becoming a human is impossible for most modern people to understand. Today, most people believe that truth is what we can discover only through science. Science cannot tell us how Jesus as God became a human. So most people think that God becoming a human is impossible.

Science will never bring us to the truth we need to know about salvation through the Bible.

²humanity—all the people of the world.



What is God telling us in Philippians 2:5-8 about who Jesus is and what He became in order to save us? How do these verses show Jesus as both God and human?

Philippians 2:6 says that Jesus was “in the form [shape] of God.” Philippians 2:7 says that Jesus “emptied Himself” and took the “form of a servant” (NASB). The word *form* comes from the Greek word *morphe*. *Morphe* means the unchanging characteristics of something. For example, a circle might be red. But the color of the circle is not important to the circle being round. A circle will always be round no matter what color it is. So the roundness of a circle is one of its unchanging characteristics (*morphe*). It is the same way with Jesus. He is truly God, because He has the unchanging characteristics of God. But Jesus humbled Himself and took the unchanging characteristics of a human. So He was truly God and truly human.

Why is the truth about Jesus as both God and human something science can never teach us? What other important truths are outside the areas of science and philosophy? What should this tell us about the limits of science and philosophy in showing us important truth?

TUESDAY—JANUARY 18

**JESUS AS A HUMAN
(Matthew 4:1, 2).**

Based on yesterday’s lesson about Philippians 2:6, 7, read the following from Ellen White: “Wonderful combination of human and God! Jesus might have used His godly nature to keep Himself from getting sick. But He humbled Himself to human nature so the Bible might be fulfilled. Jesus came to earth knowing He would go through a humbling experience to pay for the sins of the world. The humbling experience of Jesus even surprised the angels. No words can ever describe Jesus’ experience. Human imagination cannot understand Jesus’ experience. Jesus was God. But Jesus volunteered to become a human! Jesus’ humbling experience was a wonderful thing!” —Adapted from *Review and Herald*, September 4, 1900.

How do the following verses speak of Jesus as a human? Matthew 4:1, 2; Matthew 8:24;

Matthew 26:37; Mark 2:16; Mark 3:5; Luke 2:7; John 4:6; John 11:41; John 19:28.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John gave different views of Jesus' life and death. But they all showed He was human. They pictured Him as a person who ate, prayed, and slept. They showed He was thirsty, hungry, and tired. They never doubted He was human.

The Bible says Jesus was human while He lived on earth. But the Bible also makes it clear that Jesus never sinned. As a human, Jesus never once fell into the temptations of the flesh and Satan's traps. The Letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus "has been tempted in every way just as we are. But He did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15, NIV). Peter, who knew Jesus well, claimed that "He didn't [did not] commit [do] any sin. No lies ever came out of his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22, NIV). John wrote that "there is no sin in him [Jesus]" (1 John 3:5, NIV). And Paul said that Jesus "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus' own words in John 8:29, 46 and John 15:10 all show that He never sinned as a human.

It is not hard to understand why Jesus as a human is so important to us. By taking upon Himself human nature, He joined Himself to the human race in a wonderful way. But why is His sinlessness so important?

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 19

JESUS AS GOD (Hebrews 1:8, 9).

Write down how each of the following verses shows Jesus as God:

John 8:58 _____

John 20:28 _____

Hebrews 1:8, 9 _____



Jesus as God (Hebrews 1:8, 9).

The Bible is very clear about Jesus being human.

But the Bible also is clear about Jesus being God. The God who lived before becoming a human remained the same God. But now He was "clothed" as a human. This is hard for us to understand.

But the fact that we cannot understand something does not mean it is untrue. Many things are real but hard

to understand. The force of gravity is real, but it is hard to understand gravity. It is hard to really understand how a small seed grows to become a large tree. We know life is real, but all around us are mysteries we do not understand. Why, then, should we be surprised that there are things about Jesus we do not understand? No wonder the Bible tells us to think about the mystery of God and Jesus (Colossians 2:2, 3). No wonder Jesus tells us that a true knowledge of Him is possible only through the leading of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 11:25-27; Matthew 16:17).

What other things do we believe are true but find hard to understand? How should this fact help us understand the great truth about Jesus being both God and human? Why should we not turn down something we cannot understand?

THURSDAY—JANUARY 20

AUTHOR OF ETERNAL³ SALVATION (Hebrews 5:7-9).

We do not need to know all the deep things about the nature of Jesus to believe in what He did for us. God has shown enough for us to be saved.

How is Jesus as a man pictured in Hebrews 5:7-9? How is our expe-

rience almost the same as His? At the same time, what did He do for us that we never could have done for ourselves?

In reading Hebrews 5:7-9, we can see so clearly Jesus as a human. We see His flesh, His tears, His suffering, His obedience. In so many ways, this all sounds so human. A very good Person is suffering and struggling through life. He is holding to faith in the Father. All this we see in Jesus. (Read also Matthew 26:39; Matthew 27:46; Luke 22:42.)



But at the same time, Jesus is also God. As God, He started the plan of salvation and established the plan in His human form (shape). He is

³eternal—forever; without beginning or end.

the “author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9). If Jesus were an angel or only a good man, He never could have paid for the sins of the world. A created person, no matter how noble or good, would remain just a created person. Only God Himself could do what was needed to save people from being destroyed. As a human, Jesus created a perfect bond between us and Him. As a human, He showed us how to have faith, how to obey, and how to suffer. As God, He could give the only sacrifice that would be more than enough to pay for the sins of the world. Jesus needed to be both God and human for the plan of salvation to work.

How have you experienced some of the things in Hebrews 5:7-9? For example, how has suffering helped you learn obedience? The word *perfection* comes with all sorts of ideas and struggles, but in what ways have you experienced good character changes as a result of your suffering and your prayers?

FRIDAY—JANUARY 21

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “As one of us, Jesus was to be an example of obedience. For this He put upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. ‘So he had to be made like his brothers in

every way.’ Hebrews 2:17, NIV. If we had to suffer anything that Jesus did not suffer, then Satan would say that God’s power was not enough for us. So, Jesus was ‘tempted in every way, just as we are.’ Hebrews 4:15, NIV. Jesus went through every temptation we have to go through. But He did not use to His advantage any power that is not freely offered to us.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

“The plan for our salvation was not thought up at the last minute. It was not a plan developed after the fall of Adam. It was an example of ‘the mystery that was hidden for a very long time.’ Romans 16:25, NIV. It was a showing of the principles⁴ that from the eternal past have been the foundation (basis) of God’s kingdom. From the beginning, God and Jesus knew of Satan’s rebellion. They knew that Adam and Eve would fall because of Satan’s tricks. God did not plan for sin to happen. But He knew beforehand that sin would happen. So He made plans to deal with sin. God’s love for the world was so great that He promised to give His only-begotten Son—Jesus, so that ‘Anyone who believes in him [Jesus] will not die but will have eternal life.’ John 3:16, NIV.”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does it sometimes take suffering to teach us to obey?

⁴principles—general rules that help people to make specific rules.

2. Discuss the mystery between Jesus' nature as God and His nature as a human. For example: Jesus as God supports all things (Hebrews 1:3), but as a human, Jesus grew in wisdom and stature (body) (Luke 2:52). What

lessons can we learn from these mysteries? How do they help us understand the limits of our understanding? Why is it important that we recognize our limits? How does faith help us recognize the limits of knowledge?