

**Mortals, Awake, With Angels Join***Samuel Medley (1738–1799)*

Mortals, awake, with angels join,  
 And chant the solemn lay;  
 Joy, love, and gratitude combine  
 To hail the auspicious day.

In heaven the rapturous song began,  
 And sweet seraphic fire  
 Through all the shining legions ran,  
 And strung and tuned the lyre.

Swift through the vast expanse it flew,  
 And loud the echo rolled;  
 The theme, the song, the joy, was new—  
 'Twas more than heaven could hold.

Down through the portals of the sky  
 The impetuous torrent ran;  
 And angels flew, with eager joy,  
 To bear the news to man.

With joy the chorus we repeat,—  
 Glory to God on high!  
 Good-will and peace are now complete—  
 Jesus was born to die.

Hail, Prince of life, forever hail!  
 Redeemer, Brother, Friend!  
 Though earth, and time, and life shall fail,  
 Thy praise shall never end.

Hark! the cherubic armies shout,  
 And glory leads the song:  
 Good-will and peace are heard throughout  
 The harmonious heavenly throng.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***Tried With Fire: Like Jesus, Part One***Kevin T. Bauder*

The incarnation of Jesus Christ brings with it certain mysteries that defy complete description. When we speak of them we step to the brink of an abyss, and if we creep so much as a hair further we risk precipitating ourselves into heresy. When we speak of Christ, we know both that we must say some things and that we must not say others. Learning how much to say and when to stop speaking is part of orthodoxy.

We must say that Jesus Christ is a person. He is one and only one person. He is an eternal person. He is a divine person. He is the second person of the Godhead, one in essence with the Father from all ages, equal with Him in power and glory, yet distinct from Him in personhood.

We must further say that in the incarnation, Jesus Christ added to His eternal, divine person a complete human nature. From the moment of His conception, He was and is a genuine human being. He has never lacked anything essential to humanity. Within the one person, Christ's deity has never substituted for any aspect of His humanity.

By virtue of His incarnation, Jesus Christ became the God-man. He possesses complete divine and human natures, but He is not a mixture of the two. If we confound or confuse His deity and His humanity, then we have stepped over the edge into heresy.

At the same time, Jesus Christ remains one person. He is not a divine person and a human person. He is one, divine-human person. Just as we must not combine His divine and human natures, we must not divide His person.

During the years of His earthly ministry—His humiliation—Jesus acted as one person. He thought as one person. He spoke as one person. Nevertheless, certain of His thoughts, words, and deeds were possible only because of His deity, while others of His thoughts, words, and deeds were possible only because of His humanity.

Consequently, we must say that when Jesus did certain things, He did them *according to* either His divine or His human nature. The properties of each nature communicate to the person—though they do not communicate to the other nature. When we use these words, we do not mean that the *nature*



*In the Nick of Time* is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centralseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu  
 900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

acted. *He*—the *person*, Jesus Christ, acted. But He acted according to one nature or the other.

This language leads us into paradox, for what was true of the person of Jesus according to one nature was sometimes the opposite of what is true according to the other nature. In the manger of Bethlehem the person Jesus Christ was omnipotent according to His divine nature, but literally as weak as a baby according to His human nature—indeed, He *was* a baby according to His human nature. He was omniscient according to His divine nature, but as He matured He increased in knowledge according to His human nature. He was omnipresent according to His divine nature, but spatially limited and locally present according to His human nature. He was eternal according to His divine nature, but He endured hours, days, and years according to His human nature.

Because Jesus Christ is one and only one person, He can be named with either divine or human epithets. He is rightly called *Lord*, which is a divine title. He is also rightly called *Jesus*, which is the human name that was assigned to Him at the incarnation. He deserves labels of both sorts because the person, and not only a nature, is God, just as the person, and not only a nature, is human.

Here is the point at which we encounter one of the strangest phenomena in Scripture. Sometimes the biblical writers speak of the person of Jesus under an epithet that applies to one nature but they focus upon properties that He possesses according to the other nature. Many examples of this phenomenon occur in the Bible. I choose three to illustrate it here.

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). To be the same yesterday, today, and forever is to be immutable, and immutability is an attribute of deity. Jesus Christ is immutable according to His divine nature. Yet *Jesus* is His earthly, human name, received at His incarnation. In other words, Hebrews 13:8 is telling us that a human is immutable. The instant we say such a thing, we recognize that we stand on the brink of heresy. We immediately wish to hedge in such a statement with all sorts of qualifications and clarifications. The one thing that we must not do, however, is to deny that Christ Jesus, who is a human, was and is immutable.

The opposite phenomenon occurs in Matthew 1:23. Here, Matthew quotes Isaiah's prophecy that a virgin is going to become pregnant and bear a son. Gestation and birth are aspects of Christ's humanity—He grew in His mother's womb and was born according to His human nature. Yet Isaiah foretells (and Matthew quotes) that His name will be *Immanuel* which, these authors tell us, means *God with us*. That name applies to the divine nature. In other words, Isaiah and Matthew are telling us that God was conceived and born. We have again come to the brink of heresy, and we again wish to hedge in

that statement with all sorts of qualifications and clarifications. But we must not—*WE MUST NOT*—deny that God was conceived and born.

Addressing the Ephesian elders, Paul states that God purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Clearly *God* in this verse refers to the Second Person, Jesus Christ, who is being designated by His divine title. The blood, however, is a property of His humanity. Christ shed His blood according to His human nature, but the nature did not bleed. The person, Jesus Christ, shed His blood, and this person is also God. Paul says that God possessed blood. We may cringe at the ways in which that statement has been misunderstood. We may wish to qualify it and clarify it. But we must not—*WE MUST NOT*—deny it, for if the divine-human person did not shed His blood, we are lost in our sins.

Christ is one person in two natures. Each nature is complete, possessing all the essential properties of that nature. The properties of each nature communicate to the person, but they do not communicate to the other nature. Nevertheless, the person can be designated by labels applying to one nature while acting according to properties communicated from the other nature. All of this is difficult theology. It is hard to understand. When we speak of these matters we are at the very limits of human understanding. Some may question the relevance of such abstruse precision.

This discussion is necessary, however, because the incarnation of Christ tells us something about the nature of suffering. Who or what suffered during Christ's humiliation? Does the answer to this question even matter? That is the point at which I intend to pick up this conversation in two weeks.



---

This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

---