

## Due Praises to th' Incarnate Love

*Martin Luther (1483-1546); tr. Johann Christian Jacobi (1670-1750)*

Due Praises to th' incarnate Love,  
Manifested from above!  
All Men and Angels now adore  
What we, nor they have seen before.  
Hallelujah.

The blessed Father's only Son  
Chose a Manger for his Throne:  
In the mean Vest of Flesh and Blood,  
Was clothed God, th' eternal Good.  
Hallelujah.

Who had the World at his Command,  
Wants his Mother's swaddling Band.  
Th' Almighty Word was pleas'd to come  
A helpless Infant from the Womb.  
Hallelujah.

Th' eternal Splendor is in Sight;  
Gives the World its saving Light;  
And drives the Clouds of Sin away,  
To make us Children of the Day.  
Hallelujah.

God's only Son, and equal God,  
Took amongst us his Abode;  
And open'd, through this World of Strife,  
A Way to everlasting Life.  
Hallelujah.

This all he did that he might prove  
Unknown Wonders of his Love;  
Then let us All unite to sing  
Praise to our New-born God and King.  
Hallelujah.

## ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

### *In the Nick of Time*

#### **Incarnate Forevermore**

*Michael Riley*

As Christians, we believe that God exists as three eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. In God's plan of redemption, the Son humbled Himself to assume to His person a fully human nature. When through the Spirit Mary conceived and was carrying the yet-unborn Jesus, she was carrying One who was both fully human and fully divine in her womb.

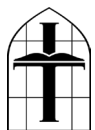
Jesus's human life was one of suffering. He was born among the animals and chased from His home by a murderous dictator. He grew up in obscurity in a town with a dubious reputation. His public ministry was mostly misunderstood, even by those who had the closest acquaintance with His teaching. His life culminates in His suffering in the garden, His betrayal, abandonment, beating, and crucifixion.

Three days later, Jesus is raised from the dead. At that point, His body is of a different kind than it was before. It seems that He can enter locked rooms. His identity is hidden and revealed at His will. After forty days, He ascends to the Father.

This raises an important question: is the Ascension of Jesus the end of the Incarnation? It would be easy to assume that Jesus, having accomplished everything the Father purposed in His humiliation, threw off His lowly human nature and returned to the same state He had before His birth in Bethlehem.

Is Jesus, born in Bethlehem now over 2,000 years ago, still a human today? The answer is, yes, Jesus is still human. He still fully bears our nature, including a body. This is the answer of traditional theology, although it might seem counterintuitive. Let's see in Scripture why we should believe that Jesus is still human.

First, if Jesus abandoned His humanity, we have no mediator. The key proof text here is a familiar one, but it turns on a small and sometimes overlooked word: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). Unless Jesus remains fully God *and* fully human, He cannot be the mediator between God and man. This mediatorial ministry is most clearly seen in the priesthood of Jesus, a priesthood



*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

for which He is qualified (according to the author of Hebrews) *because* He is human: “For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” And a few verses later, he highlights the fullness of Jesus’s humanity: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence” (Heb 5:1, 7).

And although it is of central importance that Christ’s sacrifice of Himself is once for all (Heb 7:27; 9:12, 26; 10:10), intercession is a priestly work of Christ that continues to this day: “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). If intercession is a priestly work, if priesthood requires humanity, and if intercession continues now, we must conclude that Jesus retains His human nature.

Second, Christ’s continued humanity is essential to our hope of resurrection. If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christianity is worthless (1 Cor 15:19). My argument is that if Jesus does not retain His humanity forever, we have no expectation that we will be raised.

We must affirm that Jesus is raised *bodily*. Jesus insists on this to His incredulous disciples: “‘See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them” (Luke 24:39–43). In other words, we have already taken a bad turn if we think that Jesus is raised apart from His humanity. Jesus has not abandoned His body; His body has been raised. We reject all merely metaphorical understandings of Jesus’s own resurrection.

The Christian’s hope is not an escape from humanity. Creation is good—very good. Sin has broken it. The Bible’s story, then, is not about how we will escape this world, but how it will be redeemed. This is why the promise of salvation is resurrection, not disembodiment.

Our confidence in our future resurrection hangs on the security of Jesus’s resurrection. If you search your Bible, you will find that the New Testament almost never speaks of Jesus rising from the dead. Jesus *is raised* from the dead (1 Cor 15:13, 16, 20). The Father raises the Son. In other words, the resurrection is important not chiefly because it is something that Jesus does by virtue of His divinity, but because it is something done *to Him* as to His humanity. The Father has raised the Son, making the Son the firstfruits of the resurrection. This means that our own resurrection is part of the same harvest of redeemed humanity that begins with the Father’s raising of the Son.

Consider the connection that Paul makes explicit in Romans 8:11: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

If the resurrection of the humanity of Jesus is a temporary thing—if He is raised and then obliterates His human nature—our own eternal life is thrown into uncertainty (at best). If our resurrection is tied to His, the eternal blessing of our hope is utterly undermined if Christ no longer shares our nature. Indeed, our own future resurrection bodies are made like that of our Lord: “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Phil 3:20–21). If the ascended Christ no longer has a body, into what likeness will our lowly bodies be transformed?

During the years in which Jesus was on earth, having assumed a human nature, the glory of His divine nature was veiled. This is the significance of the Transfiguration, in which Peter, James, and John see the incarnate Christ in His divine glory. Following the resurrection, Jesus remains human, but He is the first fully *glorified* human, with a human nature that is no longer subject to the curse of sin.

Jesus is born and *remains* our brother. We rejoice this Christmas because Jesus is born; He joined with us by assuming our nature. And He will never, forevermore, abandon us.



---

This essay is by Michael P. Riley, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Wakefield, Michigan. Since 2011, he has served Central Seminary as the publishing editor of *In the Nick of Time*. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

---