

**Luke 2:39-52****God and Man**

We will turn to Luke 2 today.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”<sup>1</sup>

So one piece of evidence that Jesus is true and real is how much He satisfies a hunger, how much He matches a desire of our hearts that can’t be matched with anything else in the world. How much we sense we were made for Him.

A newborn baby can’t explain how he knew that milk was what he was after, but he craves it, and cries for it, and when he drinks it he knows this is it, with certainty. He doesn’t know the science, but he knows that this satisfies a deep craving.

Sometimes we think certainty can only come from a scientific proof. But certainty doesn’t only come from logic and analysis, it can also come from a craving perfectly satisfied.

Luke introduced this book in chapter 1 verse 4 by saying he wrote it “that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” So we’re spending this year in the Gospel of Luke to build our certainty in Jesus.

And when we look at Jesus here and expect this to build our certainty, this doesn’t mean every chapter will have air-tight scientific and historical proofs of the reality of Jesus. But the portraits of Jesus painted here are compelling to us, they quench a universal human thirst, they satisfy a hunger, they resonate with our hearts. And we don’t understand all of it, we can’t prove all of it scientifically and logically right away, but we know this is it, that

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (New York: MacMillan, 1953). 120.

He is the one, and staring into these stories of who He is help our hearts to know this with certainty.

It's often the kind of certainty that defies analysis, like being certain that a painting is beautiful or that that's the most amazing piece of music you've ever heard. The certainty of love that says "I can't explain all of this, but I'm sure of it."

So the hope in studying the book is not just that we'd leave with lists of things to do this week, that we'd have pointers for our lives, that we'd feel mildly encouraged, but first and foremost that we'd leave trusting more in Jesus. That we'd read the stories of Jesus and be sure of Him, that we'd rest the weight of our lives on Him, that we'd trust Him, that we'd worship Him, and that we would over time become more like Him.

So let's look at the only story we have about the childhood of Jesus in Luke 2:39:

#### **I. Truly God and Truly Man**

**Luke 2:39-52** "39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. 41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. 43 And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, 44 but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, 45 and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. 51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

This is the only account we have of anything that happened during the childhood of Jesus. He was presented in the temple as a baby, and then he is an adult, and were it not for this story, we would know nothing about His childhood.

*This has caused people to try to fill in the gaps. The Gnostics, who were a group of people that weren't Christians and denied that Jesus came physically, put together a book called the Infancy Gospel of Thomas that contained stories that were purported to be stories of his childhood.*

*The book wasn't written by anyone with authority (it wasn't Thomas who wrote it.) It is completely made-up, and the picture of Jesus painted there is comical. You read it and it might as well be titled, "The Strange and Wacky Adventures of Boy Jesus." It includes stories like Jesus blinding some other children, laughing, and then healing them. In these stories he kills a bunch of people, including the son of a scribe and a boy who accidentally bumped into him. He turns rude children into goats and stretches a piece of wood that Joseph cut too short in his carpenter's shop.<sup>2</sup> None of these stories are true at all. They're fiction produced by a non-Christian sect about 170 years after Jesus walked the earth.*

All we really know about the true childhood of Jesus comes from this story about this incident in the temple when he was 12. And this important story tells us an awful lot about who Jesus is.

So in this account, Joseph and Mary are now married, Jesus is 12, and his family is making their annual trek from Nazareth where they lived to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover. It was about a 65 mile trip that they would make on foot, and they would travel in a caravan so they could watch out for each other. It's not crazy to think that they had hundreds of people with them in their group, and that many similar groups were making this trip for the Passover feast in Jerusalem. It would usually take 4 or 5 days to get there.

So they go to Jerusalem, they celebrate the Passover, and the caravan heads home. They leave in the morning and make their first day's journey. And in a caravan, someone as old as Jesus would have been trusted to stick with the group. He would probably go off and play with the other kids along the way, and Mary and Joseph didn't think anything of it. Our son is 10, and already, during the summer, he comes and goes hanging out with his friends in the neighborhood, and only checks in occasionally throughout the day. So a well-behaved 12-year-old like Jesus only would have been loosely supervised by his parents all day.

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<sup>2</sup> James R. Edwards, The Gospel According to Luke, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2015), 90.

And when they settle down that first evening, they have have the *Home Alone* moment where they say, “Where’s Jesus? I thought He was with us? I thought he was with you? Are we sure he even left Jerusalem with us?” He wasn’t with the caravan.

Now we might criticize and think, “what terrible parents.” But most of us have done something like this. We haven’t done it yet with our own kids, but when I was in youth ministry, twice I left a kid somewhere. Once we had taken two vans to a backpacking trip, and a teenage guy named Chris was in one van. We stopped for lunch, everybody got in different vans afterwards, and we drove for 20 minutes before that nagging feeling that we didn’t count before we left became overwhelming and I pulled over (this is before most people had cell phones). Sure enough, we were down one, so we turned around and went back to the restaurant where we had lunch, and there he was on the deck of the restaurant, waving to make sure we would see him. He grew up to be a godly man, he’s a leader in his church in Texas and a police officer. So we didn’t mess him up too badly. But these things happen.

They have a big stretched out caravan, Jesus knows to behave himself and stay with the group, you’ve never met a more responsible, respectful kid. So of course Jesus is with them somewhere, they think.

And realizing that Jesus wasn’t there probably brought on more of a sense of panic than you might have with other kids. If Jesus wasn’t with the group, and he always perfectly obeyed his parents, something must have happened to him. So they go back to Jerusalem searching for him everywhere. You can imagine the stress. “Where is Jesus?” And the search goes on for 3 days. I bet that was 3 days and 2 completely sleepless nights for Mary and Joseph. Imagine the stress, and even the guilt and shame! She has to be thinking, “I receive this amazing gift of a child, conceived by the Holy Spirit, announced by angels, and then I lost him.” The ultimate parental fail: you just lost the Messiah.

**46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.**

So they find him in the temple. And he is sitting with the teachers, the PhD’s in religion, and he is listening to their instruction and asking them questions. This seems to be an academic dialogue and debate, and Jesus shows such a profound understanding of God’s law that:

**47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

So the educated PhD's would teach, Jesus would ask, "Have you considered this insight? Did you take this passage into account?" And they say, "this kid is insane, man!" He's brilliant! The PhD's are amazed at his answers, his questions show a grasp of God's word like we've never seen in a twelve year old.

How did Jesus know all of this stuff? We'll get to that in a second. But first let's look at the scene when His parents find Him:

**48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.**

So mom and step-dad find Jesus and ask him, "Why did you do this to us - we were headed home, why didn't you come with us? We were worried sick."

And Jesus replies with a question - did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? I *must be*, it had to be this way. That was a "must" in God's plan. Over and over, Luke talks about things happening because they must ("dei") be that way. Jesus is saying that "The plan has always been for me to be with my Father."

This statement probably played off Mary's earlier statement. In verse 48, Mary said "**Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.**" She was speaking there of Joseph, calling him the father of Jesus. And Joseph was a righteous man and was probably a good step-father, but Jesus is re-affirming here that His true Father is the Father in heaven.

So while this whole thing might look like Jesus ignoring the authority of his mother and father, He is actually submitting to the authority of His true Father in heaven. It all looks like Jesus failed to go home, but Jesus actually went to the place that was even more of a home for Him, the temple in Jerusalem.

They were all worried because he wasn't headed home, Jesus says to them, in effect, "I am home." They were worried that Jesus wasn't with His Father, but He taught them that He was with His true Father in the temple where the presence of God would dwell.

So he was teaching them that He had a unique relationship to His Father in heaven. They had to learn what kind of Messiah he would be, not just a political one, not just a revolutionary zealot, but someone who must be close to His Father. His work on earth wasn't going to be only loosely connected to God's work, He wasn't going to be a leader like Herod who dropped God's name when it was an advantage for him to do so but governed like a monster. Jesus's work was going to be inextricably linked to the work of the Father in heaven.

OK, but why cause this anguish for Mary and Joseph? Why not let them know when the caravan is packing up that you're just going to stick around in the temple? That would have saved them a heart attack or two over the last 3 days. A heads up would have been nice.

I can't say for sure why He did it this way, but verse 51 says

**Luke 2:51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.**

She remembered this event. It got stuck in her heart's treasury. When a stress bomb like this drops in your life, you don't quickly forget it. So it created a lasting impression and memory. And when I think back to my youth ministry days, for all that I've forgotten and all of the memories I've suppressed, I remember that day I lost Chris. So how much more was this burned into Mary's memory.

And historically, one of the sources that Luke consulted in writing this account was Mary the mother of Jesus. She may have been a primary source (Joseph had probably died, and someone had to have told Luke about the infancy narratives we've been reading for the last month). And we believe this is the word of God, every word breathed by the Holy Spirit, but God used means. And in this book, He used the mind and pen of doctor Luke, who diligently researched and wrote an orderly account of events.

So when Luke is interviewing Mary for this book and he asks, "What was Jesus like as a child?," Mary says, "Well I'll never forget that time I thought I lost him and found him in the temple. It didn't make any sense to me then, but I will never forget it." This burned the memory in her mind.

So Jesus may have done it this way because He was making sure that we would have this story so we could know Him better. This story had to be in the Bible. What's here is

important enough for us to know that it had to be firmly fixed in Mary's mind so that we wouldn't miss it. He wanted us to know the kind of relationship He had with the Father. Now we read this and ask, just like the PhD's there, "How did Jesus know so much?" And our easy quick answer is, "He's God, He knows everything. This stuff comes easy for you if you're God. Of course He understood the scriptures - he wrote em!"

And it's true, He is God. But this passage doesn't allow us to come to such an easy answer. Because twice it says something we may not expect as the bookends on this passage:

**Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.**

And verse 52:

**Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**

So twice this passage says that the childhood years of Jesus were the years when he grew and became strong (which we would expect - his body developed,) but also that he grew in wisdom.

Now that's strange and sometimes a hard thing for Christians to feel comfortable with.

Because on the one hand, Christians believe that Jesus is God.

**John 8:58 "Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."**

There are dozens of passages that affirm this. A few:

In Matthew 28:9 He accepts worship

Titus 2:13 He is called "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

John 20:28-29, doubting Thomas worships Him and Jesus commends Him for it.

Again and again the scriptures affirm that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Which Christians have always believed to be true.

And Christians believe God knows everything:

**1 John 3:20 “for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.”**

That means God doesn't have anything to learn. He knows all things. God has never had a new insight. He has never had to wrestle with difficult concepts. He is unchanging and all-knowing, he can't learn something to make his knowledge more complete (that would imply it was incomplete before.)

But here is Jesus, who we say is God, learning. So what is going on here? This passage forces us to wrestle with the most important question there is: “Who is Jesus?”

### **There are Three Important Errors to Avoid:**

#### **1) One Error is to Believe Jesus wasn't Truly God.**

Some have read this passage and others like it and concluded that Jesus was just a man, a superior one and really good one, maybe even the ultimate one, but somehow less than God. Or perhaps that he learned and grew so much that he attained deity - he went farther in righteousness and learning than any of us could and graduated to being God.

The problem is that doesn't make sense of passages like:

**John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”**

This passage says He was God in the beginning. He didn't become God, He always was God.

#### **2) Another Error is to Believe Jesus Wasn't Truly Man**

So some, in response to verses like that, have said that Jesus is God who for a time pretended to be a man. He pretended to learn and grow as a PR move. Kind of like a president going to hammer a few nails into a house they're rebuilding after a hurricane, for the cameras to see, and to show some solidarity. Jesus pretended to learn and grow to say, “I'm not really one of you, but I'm with you.”

There used to be a doctrine called Docetism, from the Latin word “docetae” which means “to seem.” It said that Jesus only seemed human, and everything that seemed human about Jesus was an illusion. The Greeks typically thought the material world was

evil, and God could never therefore become man, so Jesus wasn't actually human. He just seemed human, but ultimately was just a phantom, (or maybe like those holograms on Star Trek.)<sup>3</sup> Some greeks thought that if he was God, He was God "trapped in evil matter," but not really truly human.<sup>4</sup>

The problem with all of that is the Bible:

**1 John 4:2-3 "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**

So the closest followers of Jesus said that to deny that Jesus came in the flesh was to deny Him altogether and to be against Him - anti-Christ.

### **3) Another Error Is to Believe Jesus Was a Cross Between God and Man - a Mixture**

Some others have said that Jesus was a mixture of God and man. He had God as His Father and Mary as His mother, so he was basically a cross between the two. He had some of the attributes of his human mom (like needing to learn, getting tired, getting hungry, needing sleep,) but also some attributes of God the Father, like miracle-working power.

But the problem with that is that if you mix his nature with another nature, you have a third thing altogether. If you mix God's nature with anything else, you have cut it, you have diluted it. And you no longer have God, you have something less than God. And scripture affirms that Jesus is not less than God.

If you mix human nature with divine nature, you have someone that isn't human, you lose His humanity. And scripture affirms He was very much a man.

So Christians took centuries wrestling with these questions and wondering how these things could both be true. So finally, in 451 AD, they called a council, where they got together church leaders and scholars from around the world to suss this out and and

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<sup>3</sup> More on Docetism can be found here: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Docetism>

<sup>4</sup> Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). 469.

make a statement about Who all Christians believe Jesus to be. This council, the Council of Chalcedon<sup>5</sup>, issued the Chalcedonian Creed<sup>6</sup>, which said, among other things, that:

- 1) Jesus was truly God and truly man.
- 2) Jesus was human in all ways that we are, but was without sin.
- 3) Jesus possessed 2 natures - He was God and man. And those two natures existed in Jesus without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.
- 4) The distinction of each of his natures was preserved but occurred in one Person, Jesus.

This means Jesus is not God who looked like a man, He is really a man.

Jesus is not a great man who became divine.

Jesus is not a mix of God and man or a cross between God and man, He is truly man and truly God.

Jesus was not a superman because He is God, and He was not a lower form of God because He was a man.

He was always God and never ceased to be or became less than God.

He was truly human, but didn't have sin in His genes like we did. The human nature of Jesus was just like Adam's nature was before the fall in the garden. It was un sinful human nature.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Read more about the Council of Chalcedon here:

<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/council-of-chalcedon>

<sup>6</sup> The Chalcedonian Creed, or Chalcedonian Definition: *"Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the Self-same Perfect in Godhead, the Self-same Perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly Man; the Self-same of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, the Self-same co-essential with us according to the Manhood; like us in all things, sin apart; before the ages begotten of the Father as to the Godhead, but in the last days, the Self-same, for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin Theotokos as to the Manhood; One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged in Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis; not as though He were parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as from the beginning the prophets have taught concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Symbol of the Fathers hath handed down to us."*

<sup>7</sup> Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). 469.

Now at this point, this might all sound like theological nerdmanship. But it really matters for a few reasons.

## **II. Applications That Matter a Little - I'll start with less important reasons and work toward more important.**

### **A) Human Limitations Are Not All Sinful.**

Jesus, as a true man, willingly accepted true human limitations. We will read in the Gospels numerous accounts of Jesus experiencing human weakness. Not sin, but limitation and weakness. So the scriptures talk about Jesus not knowing things, because with regard to his human nature there were things He didn't know. They talk about Him being hungry, thirsty, tired, weeping, and tempted. They talk about Him praying as if He had needs. He could only be in one place at one time. And all of those things were just as real for Him as they would be for us.

And because Jesus, in His humanity, was limited, we know human limitations aren't wrong. Calvin: *"There is no doubt a sinful blindness of the human mind, which is justly reckoned a part of original sin: but here we ascribe to Christ no other ignorance than what may fall upon a man who is pure from every taint of sin."*

So we can only be in one place at one time, for every good thing we decide to do we are having to not say no to another good thing. We need rest. We need prayer and solitude. We need breaks. We need sleep. We will experience real temptation. And none of those things are sin for us.

So we can, without guilt, say to no things that would be good for us to do because we need enough rest, enough quiet, enough emotional energy. Now, Jesus poured his life out for others, so this isn't an excuse for laziness - we should be working hard to do good and often going to be tired with little left at the end of the day. But we can also put up our feet, invest deeply in a few important things and not to all important things, say no to great things because we can only be in one place at one time. Because Jesus did.

### **B) We Could Resist More Temptation Than We Think**

Sometimes we compromise with sin and think, "Jesus wouldn't do this, but He's Jesus!", as if He his being God made it easier for Him not to sin. As if He had some advantage in temptation that we don't have.

But Jesus is true God and true man without mixture or confusion. Which means that He never used His deity to make it easier to be human. It was as hard for Him to resist temptation as it is for us. And He didn't sin.

He never used His deity to his advantage. He was tempted and didn't have an easier time of it than we do. He was tested but didn't have any more access to the answer key than we have. And He had to study and learn the scriptures just like we do.

### **C) A Singlehearted Love for God Makes Our Minds Far Stronger**

In Jesus in the temple, we have a picture of what it is like when a human being is wholly and completely devoted to loving the Lord His God with all of his mind. He wasn't distracted by sin, He didn't give Himself to an idol, His motives were right, so He could learn.

And of course we'll never be without sin, but confessing sin and being free from idols and sinful distractions is a massive boost for our minds.

### **D) Children Can Learn the Scriptures**

Here's a child that knew and loved God at age 12. He understood and loved the scriptures. And we might say, "Yeah well, He was God." He was truly God and truly human without mixture of His natures, and being God didn't make his learning easier. He had to learn and grow. So our kids are capable of knowing God, of caring about God, of really worshipping God.

So for us as a church, for example, we use the Gospel project curriculum because it walks children through the Bible. It is engaging, but doesn't operate on the premise that kids can't know or be interested in the Bible. They can. Jesus was truly human and as a child loved and knew the scriptures.

So those are the smaller applications of this doctrine of the humanity of Jesus.

II. Applications That Matter a Lot - There are three weighty ones:

### **A) The Love of God for Us**

Listen to **Philippians 2:5-8** "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born

**in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

He emptied Himself - but He didn't empty Himself of his deity. He emptied Himself by what he took on: the form of a servant, being born like people, dying, and dying the death of a cursed person on the cross.

This whole thing is called the doctrine of the humiliation of Christ which Westminster Shorter Catechism sums up as his being born in a low condition, being under the law, undergoing the miseries of life, experiencing the wrath of God on the cross, experiencing the death of a cursed person on the cross, being buried, and remaining dead for a little while.<sup>8</sup>

Calvin writes, “There is no doubt whatever, that it was the design of God to express in plain terms, how truly and completely Christ, in taking upon him our flesh, did all that was necessary to effect his brotherly union with men.”<sup>9</sup>

Jesus accepted true humanity, not humanity with an easier go of it, but full humanity, including the worst stuff: a hard life, death of friends, poverty, betrayal, opposition, and a criminal's death. And He did it for us. What kind of love is this?

## **B) The True Sympathy of God**

These doctrines also matter because they tell us that Jesus fully understands by experience what we are going through.

**Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**

We have a Jesus that we approach, that is praying for us, who can fully sympathize with what we are going through, because while He is truly God, and truly man, his humanity is not mixed with his deity.

In other words, Jesus experienced everything that we experience. He was tempted just like we are. But he never used his deity to cheat at being human.

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<sup>8</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 27. Available here: <https://www.opc.org/sc.html>

<sup>9</sup> Calvin, John. Commentary on the Book of Luke. Located here: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/luke/2.htm>

Sometimes we think Jesus being God was like his cheat code in a video game. The game gets hard, so you type in the cheat code, and now you're invincible. Or it was like he got to take the test with the answer key in his hand.

But there was no mixture of His deity and humanity. Jesus is truly human, and never used his deity to cheat at humanity.

His being God never made life easier for Him, never made His experience less human, never made Him above temptation and weakness. He took on full humanity.

Calvin wrote, *"though God and man are united in one person, it does not follow, that the human nature received what was peculiar to the Divine nature: but, so far as was necessary for our salvation, the Son of God kept his divine power concealed."*<sup>10</sup>

So just as we have to labor and study to learn from God, so did He. Just as there are things we don't fully understand, in His humanity, He had those too. He is a fully-sympathetic high priest, He has been there.

And in our temptation we know that He wasn't less tempted. If anything, Jesus was tempted more because he never failed. We give up and fall to temptation quickly, so we never experience the full extent of how severe temptation can be. Jesus experienced the full onslaught of temptation and didn't fail - He knows our temptation better than us. And Hebrews says:

**Hebrews 2:18 "For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."**

We pray to a God who gets it. Who suffered through real temptation, and He knows. He didn't stay above it all, he took it all on and walked through it all. He knows.

Just as we have to study to learn the word of God, Jesus emptied himself and became man and had to study and learn as well. Just as we have to walk by faith and hope in the promises of God, Jesus had to as well.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Calvin, John. Commentary on the Book of Luke. Located here: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/luke/2.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Bavinck, Herman. "The Person of Christ," in *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2006). Volume 3, Page 238.

### **C) The True Mediator**

We said earlier that the portraits of Jesus ring so true because they're the answer to a fundamental human hunger. In most world religions, there are mediators between God and man. Those who bring blessings, that reveal God to man, that carry prayers to God. There seems to be a fundamental need for someone to connect us to God.

There was a time when Job was suffering in the Old Testament. He had, for reasons he didn't understand, lost his family, his wealth, his health. And in Job 9 he was lamenting this gap between himself and God. He knew he could never understand him, that he could never convince God to withdraw his hand of discipline because he was a man and God is God and infinitely higher than him. And he said:

**Job 9:32 "For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. 33 There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both. 34 Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. 35 Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself."**

He said, "How could I ever know God when God is not a man as I am? How could I ever speak without fear of him? If only there were an arbiter, a go-between, a mediator who could lay his hand on us both!"

Jesus is the answer to that and so many other prayers. One who is truly God and truly man. He gets us, and He gets God. Only God could lay His hand on God's shoulder, and only a human could truly claim to fully understand a human. Jesus is the answer for that longing.

We believe in a doctrine called the substitutionary atonement. That Jesus, dying on the cross, took the deserved punishment for all who would believe in Him.

But if we do the math, if Jesus is only a man, his suffering could maybe pay the price for one other person. One righteous person suffers so one sinner can be free. Let's say that could happen, he could pay the debt for one.

But if He is God, He is infinite. And his suffering could pay the price for all who believed in Him.

Also, His cross was horrifying agony. But it didn't last a day. How could that pay the price for the sins of millions that should cost them an eternity in hell? If He is infinite God it makes at least some sense to us. an eternity in hell for all? Infinite God.

**2 Timothy 2:5-6 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”**

And in Jesus, we have Him. He is truly God, so no human limitation keeps him from being fully one with the Father on our behalf. But He is fully man, so he can sympathize and knows us.

This means He can save you.

If you sense you are sinful and disconnected from God, as we all are by nature, your need is for the mediator who can connect you to God. And only Jesus can. Only his suffering can pay the price. Only his humanity can know your need. Only his deity can approach God on your behalf.

You have a hunger for this Jesus. And if you’ll turn from sin and trust Him, you’ll find certainty that He is the one who meets your deepest need.

Scriptures Referenced:

Luke 2:39-52

Luke 2:46

Luke 2:47

Luke 2:48-50

Luke 2:51

Luke 2:40

Luke 2:52

John 8:58

1 John 3:20

John 1:1

1 John 4:2-3

Philippians 2:5-8

Hebrews 4:15

Hebrews 2:18

Job 9:32-35

2 Timothy 2:5-6

Sermon Notes:

- I. Truly God and Truly Man (Luke 2:40, 52)
  - A. Error 1: The Belief that Jesus is Not Truly God
  
  - B. Error 2: The Belief That Jesus is Not Truly Man
  
  - C. Error 3: The Belief That Jesus is a Cross Between God and Man
  
- II. Applications That Matter a Little
  - A. Human Limitations Are Not Sinful
  
  - B. We Could Resist More Temptation Than We Think
  
  - C. A Single-hearted Love for God Strengthens the Mind
  
  - D. Children Can Know, Love, and Comprehend the Scriptures
  
- III. Applications That Matter a Lot
  - A. The Great Love of God For Us
  
  - B. The True Sympathy of God
  
  - C. The True Mediator

Discussion Questions for Small Groups:

- 1) Why is it important to believe that Jesus is “true God and true man” as opposed to “half-God and half-man?”
- 2) In what ways do we downplay the humanity of Jesus and an excuse to avoid excellence or fall to temptation?
- 3) What advantages did Jesus have over us in resisting temptation?
- 4) How did the deity of Jesus affect his life on earth?
- 5) How is the love of God displayed by Jesus as a child a challenge to parents?
- 6) Discuss this quote from C.S. Lewis in light of the true deity and true humanity of Jesus:

*“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”*