

Away in a Manger
Sound City Ruins Christmas Carols #3
Hebrews 5:7-10
December 11, 2022

Introduction

- Highly popular song, as high as #2 most popular in some recent polls
- Used to be attributed to Martin Luther, but zero evidence to corroborate
- There is a lot that this song gets right
 - Poverty | No crib for a bed
 - Jesus's love for children | Bless all the dear children
 - Jesus ruling from heaven and near us | Look down from the sky...stay by my cradle
 - Jesus sanctifying us and making us fit for heaven | Fit us for heaven to live with thee
- What the song gets wrong
 - The word "cribb" is an Old English word that means...feeding trough/manger
 - Moralizing. All about kids, Jesus being a baby who doesn't cry, "be like Jesus"
 - **But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes**
- Developmentally, babies cry, it's what they do.
 - Sometimes babies wake up from a nap without crying
 - Many have seen in this line a diminishment of the humanity of Jesus
 - *He's no ordinary baby, he's God. He's peaceful. He's rational and unemotional*

The Tension of Jesus' Identity

- Jesus was born as a human. Not an animal, not an angel, not an alien.
 - "Isn't this Joseph and Mary's son?" "Aren't you just a guy from Nazareth?"
- But his teaching begins to raise some eyebrows
 - **John 10**³³ We aren't stoning you for a good work," the Jews answered, "but for blasphemy, because you—being a man—make yourself God."
 - **Matthew 27**⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"
- This leads to all sorts of questions, speculations, councils, conversations | Let's explore!

(big idea) Jesus is the eternal Son, fully God and man, the man of sorrows

I just wanted to sing Away in a Manger. You get the Chalcedonian Creed instead.

I. The Eternal Son

Before we talk about the full humanity of Jesus, we first need to acknowledge his full deity

- Preexistent | John 1:1-2 1 *In the beginning was the Word [Son], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.*
 - The SON did not come into being when Jesus of Nazareth was born, always existed

- Eternally Son | John 17:24 *Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world's foundation.*
 - Eternally, there exists a dynamic of love akin to a Father and Son
 - Not lesser, not eternally subordinate, but a relationship of persons
- Equal divinity | John 1:18 *No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.*
 - Like Paul in Col. 1 – *Image of invisible God...by him all things were created*
 - Or Phil. 2 – *Existed in the very form of God*
- 318 AD - Enter Arius's teaching

Bruce Shelley To Arius, when Christians called Christ God, they did not mean that he was deity except in a sort of approximate sense. He was a lesser being or half-God, not the eternal and changeless Creator. He was a created Being—the first created Being and the greatest, but nevertheless himself created.

****325 AD****

Nicene Creed We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made.

- This guy Jesus who showed up, he really is God!! Like 100%

II. The God-Man

Hebrews 1 ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature [hypostasis], sustaining all things by his powerful word...^{2:14} Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death...¹⁷ Therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in **every way**, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people.

- Exact nature of God, but also exactly and fully like us humans. HoW?!?
- Over the next 100 years after Nicea, people started wrestling with this

Faulty Answers

- Apollinaris | Divine nature takes over
 - He really wanted to emphasize the deity of Jesus
 - But then he's just a shell, not a full human being, only able to save our bodies
- Nestorius | Two people in one body (switching out as needed)
 - He didn't like the term "God-bearer" that people were starting to use for Mary
 - Then who died for our sins? A human-only death isn't sufficient
 - Nestorius said "That's not what I said" | Poor communication?
- Eutychus | New mixture of human and divine
 - But this creates some "third nature" that's neither human nor divine

****Time for another council!!!**** | October 8, 451 in Chalcedon

- *We really like the Nicene Creed, and it would be enough*
- *But, some new problems have arisen, so here is our addition*

Chalcedonian Creed We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man...to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son.

- **One person, two natures | Hypostatic Union**
 - Not mixed like Eutychus, but also not separate like Nestorius
- Objection: isn't this some theological hair-splitting?
- Answer 1: possibly. It is fair to say that we can never truly plumb the depths of understanding of the incarnation. This is a once-per-universe miracle.
- Answer 2: this is an attempt to make sense of what the various biblical authors about who Jesus is and how he accomplishes our salvation
- More about setting some guard rails and not exhaustively trying to explain

Justin Holcomb It might be helpful to think of Chalcedon as a way to correct extremes in our thinking. Because we sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that Jesus is spiritual and far removed from us, it can be comforting to remember that he is really human...However, against the tendency to think of Jesus as merely human, a wise man, or a spiritual leader, Chalcedon brings to our attention those passages that show his eternal power and glory...The conclusion of the council was that as paradoxical as a God-man might seem, it was important to remember that both portraits show us the same person.

Which leads me back all the way around to where we started...the little Lord Jesus cried. And, what's more, the full-grown adult Jesus cried. A lot.

A Man of Sorrows

Isaiah 53 ³...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

- When the Messiah shows up, he's going to understand human's grief and pain and sorrow
 - *Chalcedon says, "yeah, because he's a full real human being"
- The Messiah will not just be a conquering king, but one who enters into all the brokenness

(idea) At every stage of life, Jesus knew sorrows

Infancy - refugee in Egypt (maybe 2 years?)

Childhood - unusual parentage (John 8:41ff)

Adult life ministry - resistance from leaders, suspicion from family, betrayal from friends

Crucifixion - ultimate physical and spiritual suffering

****Which brings us full circle to the passage we started with in Hebrews****

The One Who Weeps

Hebrews 5⁷ During his earthly life, he offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.⁸ Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.⁹ After he was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,¹⁰ and he was declared by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

- He was THE SON, fully God
- At the same time, in his human nature he walked through hardship in order to be trained
 - LIKE US - A priest who get it, he gets us, he represents us
- Psalm 30:5 says “sorrow lasts for the night, but joy comes in the morning”
 - JOY of the resurrection “the one who could save him from death”
 - Now he can be a source of eternal salvation

Encouragement in Christ

If you are sad, Jesus understands better than anyone else ever could

- Your own sin, failures, and mistakes
- Broken relationships and painful experiences
- Here, the doctrine of the hypostatic union, his full humanity and divinity, come into play
 - As a human, he understands fully
 - As God, he can do something about it

Reflective Prayer