

JESUS: GOD AND MAN.

Colossians 2v9

There are many who acknowledge Jesus as a great man. Some go further and praise him as a mighty prophet and religious leader on a par with other figures like Mohammed and the Buddha. But if we take the Bible seriously this conclusion is not possible. Our text this morning says that Jesus was and is God. **For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**

The Sadhu Sundar Singh was a Sikh. He was born in India 1889 and as a young man he was severely anti Christian. Yet he went on to become a travelling Christian evangelist (with a distinctively Indian flavour). What caused the change?

As a young man he became disillusioned with life and religion, and so he resolved to pray that if there was a God He should reveal Himself, or else, he would commit suicide. With half an hour to go to a deadline he had set a light began to shine in his room. Describing it later he wrote, *“The light increased in intensity and took the form of a globe of light above the ground. In this light there appeared, not the form I expected (Krishna or the Buddha) but the Living Christ who I had counted dead”*. (He recognised Christ by the tell-tale scars). *“My heart was filled with inexpressible joy and peace, and my whole life was entirely changed.”*

Sundar Singh’s experience was similar to the one who penned this morning’s text to the Colossian believers from a prison cell. Saul of Tarsus had been a Pharisaic Jew with a passionate hatred of Jesus and Christians. He had been actively engaged in having them put in prison, and was even involved in the lynching of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. But then he had his life changing encounter with this same glorious figure of Jesus. Saul became Paul the apostle, the first and greatest Christian missionary, theologian and church planter. As a Jew Paul remained convinced that there was only One God, but now he declared that Jesus the Messiah was that same God become man. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form**

Jesus is God and man. He is fully God at the same time as being fully human. This belief has always been the bedrock of Christian theology, but it has also been contested. Some groups have disputed that Jesus was God; others have said he *was* God but he could *not* have been a real flesh and blood human being. Our text says He was both.

In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. “Deity” here is *‘theotes’*. It speaks of divine nature and the essence of deity. Jesus is the dwelling place of the totality of God’s nature and essence. The fullness of the divine nature was indwelling in the flesh and blood of Jesus.

But is the apostle Paul getting carried away? Is there any evidence in the Gospels from the life of Jesus to back this up? After all, the Gospels give us our information about the flesh and blood Jesus. Is there any evidence from

the things He did? Is there any evidence from the way he viewed Himself? The evidence is overwhelming – so much so that I must restrict myself.

1. His birth is unique.

An angel brings the news of His conception, which is to be by the Holy Spirit and with a young virgin. (Luke 1v35.) He is to be called the Son of the Most High. (Luke 1v32). He *“will save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1v21) He is given the description *“Immanuel – God with us.”* (Matthew 1v23) He is born in Bethlehem in fulfilment of prophecy. (Micah 5v2) Angels announce and then celebrate his birth by giving glory to God. (Luke 2v14) He is worshipped by men from other nations while still a baby. (Matthew 2v2, 11) Jesus is born, a real flesh and blood baby; yet He is worshipped!

His birth is unique because He is unique. Six times the New Testament uses *‘monogenes’* of Jesus. He is the *“only begotten”* son. (John 1v14; 1v18; 3v16; 3v18; Hebrews 11v17; 1 John 4v9) C. S. Lewis wrote: *“When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. What God begets is God: what God creates is not God.”* (‘Mere Christianity’) The Nicene Creed (325 AD) confesses *“We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of the Father before all the ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man..”* **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**

2. He claims to forgive sins, and then authenticates the claim.

In Mark 2v1-12, before healing a paralysed man, he pronounces the man’s sins forgiven. This is deliberate because He knows that many of the onlookers are religious leaders who have come to check him out. They are predictably scandalised! *“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* (v7) Sin is essentially against God, so only He can forgive. So Jesus authenticates his claim to forgive sins by healing the man. He not only has authority to forgive sins, but He has authority over sickness and disability also. Jesus is a man, but He is also God, therefore He can forgive sins. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form**

3. He issues commands to nature and it obeys.

He calms a ferocious storm on Galilee, and the disciples ask *“What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”* (Matthew 8v27). He rules over nature because He was there in the beginning of creation and brought nature into being. (John 1v1-3; Colossians 1v15-17) Jesus is God and man. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.** In a separate incident He walks on water and then calms another storm on the same lake. This time the disciples don’t waste their breath on questions; they worship Him! (Matthew 14v33). These are not pagan fishermen; they are

Jews who know that worship belongs to God alone. Which brings us to another piece of evidence:-

4. He does not correct those who worship Him.

He accepts their worship. Jesus did correct the disciples from time to time about a number of issues but never when they worshipped Him. Yet worship is meant for God. This was fundamental for every believing Jew. There is only One God, and worship is for Him alone. Jesus is worthy of worship because He is God. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.** On another occasion a man he had healed, who had been blind from birth, reacted by worshipping Him. (John 9v38). Again, there was no rebuke. He received the man's worship.

5. He claims final authority to judge and give eternal life.

He says He will judge and separate all men and women like sheep and goats on the Day of Judgment. (Matthew 25v31-46) He claims that the Father has given Him this authority. *"The Father judges no-one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son..... He has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man."* (John 5v21-27). One of the mountain peaks of Jesus' public ministry was the raising of Lazarus in Bethany. This was a man who had been dead for four days. Before raising him Jesus says: *"I, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."* (John11v25). This goes further than any of the other great religious leaders in history. They never made such claims. But Jesus did. Why? How? Because **in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form**

6. He speaks of His pre-existence.

Many times Jesus speaks of being "sent" from and by the Father, and sometimes of His life before birth! Let's eavesdrop on Him at prayer. *"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."* (John 17v5) *"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."* (John17v24) It is this kind of language which makes us agree with C. S. Lewis, who wrote that Jesus did not leave us the option of concluding that He was a great or good man; he was either mad, bad, or who He claimed to be. We believe that Jesus is God. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**

7. He invites the charge of blasphemy.

On several occasions Jesus was almost lynched because people said he was *"making himself equal with God"* (John 5v18). For example, His personal use of the phrase "I AM" (John 8 v57-59.) led to a crowd shaping up to stone him. This use of I AM was a deliberate echo of God's revelation of His name to Moses (Exodus 3 v14) *"I am who I am"*. I AM became the signature of God. Yet Jesus kept on using it. "I, I AM" - the Bread of Life, the Light of the World,

the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, the Way the Truth and the Life. Jesus could use this language because He was God. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**

He was also accused of blasphemy because of His claim to be the "Son of Man". It resulted in Jesus being sentenced to death by the Jewish ruling council: (Mtth.26v63-27. Mark 14v61-64). Its background is an apocalyptic vision in Daniel 7 v13-14 of one who was given "*dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his domain is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.*"

8. He is raised from the dead.

Jesus dies on the cross. He gives up His life because this is central to God's great rescue plan purposed from the beginning. He dies as a perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God. (John 1v29, 36) He alone is able to do this. "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.*" (1 Timothy 2v5) He is God and man. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**

But death could not hold Him. He is raised from the dead. Once again, the response to Jesus in his resurrection appearances is worship. Mary Magdalene and another Mary fall at his feet and worship. (Matthew 28v9) Later Thomas sees Jesus and cries out, "*My Lord and my God!*" (John 20v28). No Jew would utter such words carelessly; it would be a terrible profanity. This is a great confession of faith from someone who had been plagued by doubt. The resurrection is the great confirmation of all Jesus has claimed. "*Who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Romans 1v4). Jesus is Lord. His resurrection proclaims it. He is God. **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**

9. His famous last words declare that He is God.

Matthew 28v18-20: Then Jesus came to them and said, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" All authority! His name alongside the Father and the Spirit! With His disciples everywhere and always –throughout the coming ages! What kind of talk is this? They are the words of God Himself. It is no surprise that worship is once again the response of the disciples as Jesus is taken up into heaven. (Luke 24v52) There, in heaven's glory, He is still fully God and man! **In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.** This is still true today. He has taken humanity to the throne of heaven. He represents us there. He bears the marks of sacrifice. He is our great intercessor, with his blood and his prayers.

John Wilthew. October 2006.