

DID JESUS COME WITH A DIVINE OR HUMAN BODY?

John 1:14 *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

The origin of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ is a matter of salvation. Jesus came into this world with a flesh which had its source in the Word of God – heavenly flesh. To believe that the Lord Jesus' body was of an earthly, human, dust origin diminishes his glory and distorts the Lord's work of salvation. In what follows, I will address a few objections raised against what is generally referred to as "divine flesh" or "heavenly flesh" doctrine.

1. Jesus was human but avoided inherited sin through the virgin birth

When asked how the Lord circumvented or avoided the original sin inherited from Adam, the adherents point to the virgin birth. They argue that sin is passed down through the father, and since Jesus had no human father, he was not contaminated by the sin of Adam. There is a problem with this line of argument though. There is a false assumption to the effect that a woman aside from the man has no sin. Such an assumption is contrary to the word of God.

Genesis 5:2 *Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.*

1Corinthians 11:8 *For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.*

According to Genesis 5:2, the man and woman share the same source and origin – dust. The apostle Paul goes on to state that the woman has no separate existence of her own apart from the man. Hence it cannot be the case that the Lord would avoid the sin of Adam if he took biological material from Mary alone. Indeed, such reasoning ultimately led to the deification of Mary as the so-called mother of God. On the contrary, the virgin birth proves that the Lord took nothing and needed nothing from humanity. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). It is for this reason that the Lord referred to Mary as "woman" twice in the Gospel of John (2:4; 19:26) – not to insult or demean her, but to preempt any veneration or deification.

To summarize, the Lord Jesus had to be born of a virgin to demonstrate the fact that his body had no earthly origin. "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). Hence the Lord's body was untainted by adamic sin. His body is, as John declared, the Word made flesh (John 1:14).

2. *Jesus could sin because he was genuinely human*

Another tenet or belief of those who deny the heavenly flesh position is that the Lord did experience the temptation to sin because he was a genuine human like you and I but resisted sin. They claim to find support in the following scripture, among others: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Let us examine this verse. The writer is stating that the Lord feels compassion (Greek *sympatheō*) upon us in our trials because he himself experienced trials and was tempted (Greek *peiraō*) like us. Firstly, as even our opponents concede, Jesus never sinned. What they are claiming is that the Lord had to come in human flesh to legitimately sympathize and understand our suffering and temptations. This is where the problem lies. They are forgetting that God is omniscient – he knows everything. He does not need to share in our genetic material and nature in order to genuinely sympathize with us. Apologies for the crude analogy, but one does not need to become a dog to empathize with a dog. God did not have a body in the Old Testament yet felt the pain of his people acutely.

Isaiah 63:9 *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.*

The plain biblical fact is that God cannot be tempted with sin. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13). A Christian who acknowledges the Godhood of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot at the same time believe that the Lord could be tempted with sin. That does not mean that Satan and humans will not try to tempt the Lord, only that God cannot entertain or feel any urge to break his own holy laws. Every created being is subject to sin but the Creator cannot sin – in fact he is immune to sin. “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:16). We believe and affirm that Jesus is the one true God. The apostle John puts it beautifully, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (I John 5:20). If we believe the Son of God is the true God, we are committed to further believing that he could never feel sin. In summary, to believe that Jesus came as a genuine human being of the lineage of Adam makes one vulnerable to the accompanying belief that he could sin. The Bible, however, teaches that Jesus’s flesh was of the Word of God – hence not subject to temptation.

3. *Jesus' human body was changed into a glorious one after the resurrection*

Those who believe in a human origin for the body of our Lord maintain that the Lord's human body was changed into a glorious body after the resurrection. "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:39). A careful reading of John 7:39 does not say anything about the body of the Lord changing but the accomplishment of the mission of the Lord to defeat sin and Satan. This is what the Lord meant by "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus did not die to change his body, but for change our bodies. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:21).

If the teaching that Jesus' body transmuted after the resurrection is unscriptural, why do the proponents advocate such a view? The answer is because they understand that a human Jesus with an adamic body cannot enter heaven and so must experience a transmutation (radical change in form or nature). Sadly, some of the statements of the Superintendent of the UPCI church, David Bernard, among others, shockingly assert that the Lord could not even inherit heaven with his human body.

Before His resurrection, Jesus had the same kind of body (flesh and blood) that we have - capable of suffering, death, and decay and not able to inherit eternal life without a change (Bernard 2001).¹

In short, the Bible reveals that the humanity of Christ had to qualify for exaltation and glorification, which occurred by His death, resurrection, and ascension (UPCI 2003).²

Significantly, while the second citation is available following the link in footnote 2, the first has been withdrawn and archived. It truly beggars belief that an organization that believes that Jesus is the only true God can state that he was "not able to inherit eternal life without a change". On the contrary, Jesus declared that he could go in and out of heaven at will, even before his resurrection. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). In summary, Jesus' body is of the Holy Spirit and hence is indigenous to heaven, not earth. As such, his body does not need to undergo any transmutation or change to "qualify for exaltation".

¹ Bernard, David K. "The True Humanity of Jesus Christ." Foreword Magazine Summer. 2001.
http://www.oocities.org/robert_upci/true_humanity_of_jesus_by_ber_nard.htm.

² http://www.spiritualabuse.org/issues/position/true_humanity.pdf

4. *Jesus is our kinsman redeemer – a blood relative*

Many Christians believe that the Lord Jesus is our “kinsman redeemer”. By this they mean that since the Lord shared in our humanity, he is qualified to redeem us as a blood relative. What we find in the Bible is that “kinsman” alone occurs 13 times while “redeemer” alone occurs 18 times – without the two used together. In the Old Testament, a kinsman or blood relative played a role in (a) marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10); delivering individuals from death (Psalm 130:8; Hosea 13:14); redeeming from slavery (Leviticus 25:47-49); delivering Israel from bondage (Exodus 6:6); buying back land (Leviticus 25:25) and exacting revenge (Numbers 35:12-19).

Again, note that nowhere do we find any scriptural injunction which demands that God must become a human blood relative if He is to save us. This is an interpolation. On the contrary, as Bishop Teklemariam Gezahagne explains:

Christ cannot be the kinsman of uncircumcised human beings. Until the earthly Adamic nature is removed by means of baptism, Christ cannot be their kinsman...Christ cannot be kinsman even for the Jew who is naturally circumcised until he experiences New Testament circumcision (Gezahagne 2007, 36).

The above statement upholds the Pauline separation of the heavenly man from the earthly man, “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven (I Corinthians 15:47). The two Adams have two different origins which cannot mingle because the one derives from God Himself, while the other is a product of created material - dust. They never converge but run parallel to each other with the Adamic man doomed to the eternal flames of hell without undergoing the process of rebirth (John 3:5). Between the two Adams is water –the agent through which the descendants of the first Adam can remove their dust bodies. In this water, the last Adam, Jesus, steps in to perform the circumcision and clothe the recipient of His grace with His heavenly body.

Galatians 3:27 *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

In conclusion, it is clear that the body of the Lord Jesus is from the Word of God. Humanity and the created order contributed nothing to his body. It was necessary for the Lord to beget or father his own body because salvation can only come from God. “Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah” (Psalm 3:8). Through such a heavenly body alone (Son of God) salvation was attained for us. Amen!