

How Come He Didn't Know?

There is a passage of Scripture that has often puzzled new Christians and at the same time been used by critics to discredit the deity of Christ. It is to be found in the following statement Jesus makes concerning Himself, which reads:

But about that day and hour no one knows,
neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but
only the Father.

(Matthew 24:36-37)

Critics argue that if Jesus was God, He could not have been limited in His foreknowledge. It is noteworthy that older translations of the New Testament lack the words, "*nor the Son.*" For this reason, some believe this was probably an error or deliberate corruption of the text. I am not qualified to say with certainty that this is true, but even if the translation is authentic, it would in no way prove Jesus was not God.

The Scriptures say that in becoming a man, the Lord took upon Himself limitations. The Apostle Paul makes this very clear in the following passage of Scripture:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

(Philippians 2:5-9)

When God became a man, He was still fully God in His spirit, but His physical body and soul were fully human. This being so, Jesus' physical mind did not know all things when He was born; He had to learn and grow in awareness that He was God manifested in human form and accept it by faith.

This explains why Satan continued to say, "*if you are the Son of God,*" during the Lord's Temptation in the wilderness. He was trying to get Jesus to doubt His identity.

An Overlooked Fact

It is interesting that the Old Testament actually hints to God the Father also limiting His foreknowledge at times. In the Book of Genesis, we are told He repented for having made mankind.

Again, in First Samuel we are told the Lord was sorry He made Saul king. And in the Book of Jeremiah we learn there are some things that God Himself said He never foresaw:

They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter my mind that they should do this abomination, causing Judah to sin.

(Jeremiah 32:35-36)

These passages have also been a puzzle for some and the Bible does not explain much on the subject. It is most probable, as one commentator suggested, that God

sometimes chooses to not exercise His ability to foresee in every situation, or to the extent that He would see every single action man would make, because absolute use of His foreknowledge would hinder Him from having anything to do with mankind at all!

Other Passages Justified

What we have shown concerning Jesus' humanity helps explain other passages of Scripture that appear to question His deity.

For instance, when we read of Jesus being "*amazed*" at the unbelief of His neighbours at Nazareth and at the faith of the centurion.

Or when we read in the Gospel of Luke that the boy Jesus was listening to the teachers in the Temple and asking them questions.

However, in this case, I am tempted to believe Jesus was not asking questions to learn. It is more probable He was, by them, challenging the religious leaders to question their interpretations of God's Word, something we see the Lord do quite frequently during His Public Ministry. A prophecy given to Isaiah centuries earlier certainly supports this. It says:

For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground.

(Isaiah 53:2a)

The Hebrew word used for *dry* here is *tsiyah*. It means dryness, drought, parched and desert. It is used mostly in Scripture to speak of spiritual dryness, and by its use here the Prophet is giving all a clear picture of the spiritual climate into which Messiah was born!

Made Perfect in What Way?

We will finish up with one last passage of Scripture frequently cited to deny Jesus' deity. It is found in the Letter to the Hebrews, which says that the Lord was made perfect through suffering.

But there is no conflict at all. Jesus was indeed perfect in every way. But a physician is better enabled to treat a rare disease if he has passed through an epidemic of it himself than a physician with just a theory.

In the same way, it was only by undergoing temptation and suffering that the God-Man could truly understand what it is like to be human, and it is this experience that fitted Him to be our High Priest!