SESSION 3: Profile Evidence

**Notes from Book**

***Did Jesus fulfill the attributes of God?***

In the interview with Dr. Donald A. Carson, PhD, Lee Strobel asked, “What did [Jesus] do or say that convinces you of His divinity?’ Carson’s answer was not the miracles, although they are indicative but not conclusive. The first is the resurrection. It is the ultimate vindication of His divinity. Second most factor is that Jesus forgave sins. God is the only entity that can meaningfully forgive sins and asserted that He was without sin. The Jewish leadership was quick to call this a blasphemy because only God can do that.

**Mystery of the Incarnation**

Questions posed to Carson by Lee Strobel:

How could Jesus be omnipresent if he couldn’t be in two places at the same time?

How can he be omniscient if he says, “Not even the Son of Man knows the hour of his return”?

How can he be omnipotent if the Bible clearly states he was unable to do many miracles in his hometown?

The Incarnation is all about God giving up \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to come to earth, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ becoming man, spirit taking on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ becoming finite, and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ becoming time-bound. It is the way theologians for centuries have tried to answer these problematic differences that helps seal belief. There are two or three approaches they have made:

* Benjamin Warfield began combing the Gospels and listing attribute of Jesus as either a sign of his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or a sign of his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This became problematic since it made Jesus one with two distinct ‘personalities’.
* “kenosis” meaning ‘\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’ is another approach. This comes from the passage in Philippians 2 where it says, “being in the form of God, he did not think \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with God was something to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but emptied himself” and became a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. For centuries this has been perhaps the best explanation no one yet knows of what exactly He emptied himself.
  + Did he empty himself of his deity?
  + Did he empty himself of some or all of the attributes of God?

The problem with these is how do you empty yourself of these attributes and still BE God? Some say he didn’t empty himself of the attributes but emptied himself of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the attributes. This would be to have the will not to use his powers or attributes – choosing to be more human.

Others say he emptied himself of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ use of the attributes and did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ what the Father asked or allowed him to do. This is probably much closer to the truth yet, even this, has problems in that the Son has always acted in line with the Father’s will. Here there is a bit of a paradox in that Jesus says ‘if you have seen Me then you have seen the Father’ and what he says elsewhere, ‘I can only do what the Father tells me to do.’

* Nowhere in scripture, especially Philippians 2, tells us of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus emptied himself. But then the Incarnation is a central \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the faith. As the book eludes, what does the transition from formless, bodiless, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, spirit into a finite, touchable, physical, time-bound creature look like?

**Christian theology, therefore, is not concerned with explaining it completely but taking the biblical evidence, receiving it fairly and open-mindedly, finding ways to process it in a rational way, even if there is no way to explain it completely. Perhaps that is the Hebrew 12:1 method. “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”**

If the Incarnation is true, and I believe it is, no wonder finite human beings cannot understand it.

Another difficulty in the deity claim is Created or Creator? Here are some of the scriptures that do not, at least at first glance, appear to balance the argument.

* Isaiah 57:15 says “he who lives forever” meaning eternal, not created. John 3:16 calls Jesus, “Begotten Son of God.” This gives an implication of created. Colossians 1:15 say Jesus was “firstborn over all creation” and sounds again like being created.
* Dr. Carson, an expert in Greek grammar, answers this by pointing out that only in King James Version (KJV) does it say “his only begotten son.” The word translated ‘his only begotten son’ really means ‘unique one.’
* In the Colossians passage being firstborn is really about succession. The firstborn received at least two-thirds of the inheritance. Being firstborn meant you were first in line to become the next ruler. Therefore, being the firstborn gave all the rights of the father. Carson pointed out that if you were going to quote Colossians 1:15 then you should also quote Colossians 2:9 where the same author makes a point “for in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

Another incredible theologian, Dr. Ben Witherington, III, was asked several questions. The questions and answers are listed below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Did Jesus believe he was the Son of God, the anointed one? | YES |
| Did Jesus see himself as the Son of Man? | YES |
| Did Jesus see himself as the final Messiah? | YES |
| Did Jesus believe that anyone less than God could save the world? | NO |

Proof of the Incarnation as Jesus, Son of God; fully human and fully God?

OMNIPOTENCE – Matthew 28:18

OMNIPRESENCE – Matthew 28:20 and Matthew 18:20

OMNISCIENCE – John 16:30

ETERNALITY – John 1:1

IMMUTABILITY – Hebrews 13:8

The Old Testament gives a portrait of God with titles or descriptions of the Alpha and Omega, Lord, Savior, King, Judge, Light, Rock, Redeemer, Shepherd, Creator, giver of life, forgiver of sin, and one of divine authority. Each of these is also ascribed in the New Testament to Jesus.

Jesus said it all in John 14:7 “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well!

The Old Testament describes attributes of God.

Omnipresent – existing everywhere in the universe

Omniscient – knowing everything that can be known throughout eternity

Omnipotent – all powerful

Eternal – being beyond time as well as the source of all time

Immutable – unchanging

Loving

Holy, moral perfection

Wise

Just

When

**Notes from the Video**

God becoming man, spirit taking on flesh, the infinite becoming finite, the eternal becoming time-bound – it’s ***A Mind-Boggling Proposition.*** And the Virgin Birth is at the center of it all.

Was the Virgin Birth necessary?

Does the Virgin Birth make sense?

Theologically

Scientifically

Is the virgin birth consistent with reality?

79% of Americans believe the Virgin Birth of Jesus

In Dr Seuss’ “The Grinch that Stole Christmas,” the Grinch says, “What if Christmas doesn’t come from a store?

The Virgin conception of Jesus is clearly taught in the Bible:

Matthew 1:18

Luke 1:26-38

Does the Virgin Birth make sense theologically?

Theologically

1. It makes it possible for Jesus to be fully God and fully man – which it a foundational biblical claim about Jesus.
2. It makes it possible for Christ to be born without original sin. All other people have inherited a corrupt moral nature, thanks to our first father, Adam.

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” If we believe in a God who can create heaven and earth out of nothing then creating a Y chromosome is simple.

Jesus’ dual nature, his humanity and his divinity, is important.

* Because Jesus is human, he can relate to our situation.
* Because of his divinity, he can give us spiritual wisdom, use the power of God to help us, do much in our lives and open the gates of heaven for us.

Luke 1:35 “holy” and moral purity

Immaculate Conception

Pope Pius IX quote from *Ineffeablis Deus* on December 18, 1884

Does the Virgin Birth make sense scientifically?

Alexander Vilenko quote

What kind of God would be the Creator

1. Powerful
2. Smart
3. Immortal (Spirit; not created)
4. Timeless; Eternal
5. Personal
6. Caring
7. One; Unique

Eugene Peterson in the Message John 1:14

“The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.”

Hebrews 4:15 NLT

Tim Keller quote

**Group Discussion Questions**

Why is the virgin birth important for Christians?

What is important for us that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine?

Read John 1:1. What is important about the verse? Are there other verses in the Gospel of John that tell us Jesus is God?

**Between Sessions Personal Study (AKA homework)**

**Studying God’s Word**

The Gospel of John focuses on the Christology of Jesus. John 20:30-31 gives us John’s reason for writing the Gospel. What does that mean for you and for us?

Read John 1:1-14 noting words or phrases that speak to the deity of Jesus.

The Gospel of John also lists a number of miracles. As you review them, tell how each verse(s) shows the deity of Jesus:

John 1:1

John 4:46-54

John 6:1-14

John 6:15-21

John 9:1-41

John 11:1-44

**Put It into Practice**

Through the Gospel of John and our discussion of the virgin birth, we have learned Jesus was both fully divine and fully human – King of all kings and Lord of All. Just as the Magi brought gifts to honor Jesus, Son of God, what would you bring to honor your Lord and Savior?

In PRESENCE:

In your PRAYERS:

In GIFTS:

In SERVICE:

In your WITNESS: