

7

THE DIVINE, ANGELIC AND HUMAN NATURES

-

In the last meditation, we looked at "The Body of His Glory". The reference was to the resurrected body of our Lord Jesus Christ. We began by saying that John 1:14 is a very important passage in scriptures. It is a record of one of the three most powerful events in human history, seen from the divine standpoint. John 1:14 reads this way

¹⁴And 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.

We dwelt much on the fact that the Word became flesh. From the first verse of the chapter, we know that the Word refer to the Lord Jesus Christ "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men". So, John was recording something concerning Jesus Christ.

And we reasoned if thousands of divine appearances served God in all of His dealings with the nation of Israel and with all of humanity throughout the period covering the Old Testament age, what specific need then was there for the Word, the Logos, the pre-existent Christ, to become human in a complete change of nature?

The scriptures point to the fact that he became man that he might lay down that life for a redemptive purpose. He died to save us. His death on the cross of Calvary was to procure deliverance from sin and death for the human race that fell in Adam.

Apart from the word becoming flesh, 'Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary, and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there is no single event in all of humanity that has attached to it the same importance as any of these.

Then we said "If Jesus died that we might be saved, and if the thirty-three and a half year of His human existence was for that purpose, it is necessary for us to know what happened in His resurrection. By going through some passages of scriptures, we were able to see that the Lord Jesus Christ resurrected with a spiritual body, a body full of glory and excellency which he veiled all though those forty days of his appearing to his disciples.

We saw that he never had a continuous dwelling with the disciples all through those forty days. He would appear, teach, instruct, and expound on things that relate to the plan of redemption and the kingdom, and then draws away from their sight. There were several cycles of this appearing and disappearing. In each of those appearances, he came in a different body and was recognised only by his deeds or words. By this conduct, He impressed upon the minds of the disciples the fact that he is no longer human and they should not attach to him any specific human form.

Of course we know that if just after three days of his death, he appeared to the disciples and they could not recognise him, it was because he appeared to them in a body different from what they know of him.

We may say that the resurrected estate, a spirit nature and in this case, a divine spirit is endowed with the power to manifest itself diversely. Thus His many appearances in human form should not be taken to mean that Christ took back His human nature in His resurrection. The pre-human Logos was a divine spirit and into this same glory did the Lord Jesus Christ enter in His resurrection. Acts 1:9-11 assures us that He will come in this same glory. He comes to change our vile body to become like unto His glorious body. We will change, not Him. We inherit the kingdom, not in this flesh and blood estate, but as spirit.

The implication of the fact that Jesus Christ can never again take on humanity shall be seen in later editions. But we are simply emphasising the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ will unite the Church to Himself, sharing with her the glory of His divinity. It will be the rare privilege of the church to see him as he is, to relate to him evermore as he is, bearing the same image, likeness and glory. This is infinite Love and we bow in deep worship to the Most High God for this awesome wonder.

Let's explore a little bit of this glorious inheritance in Christ Jesus. What is the divine nature? And again, in this connection, it will also interest us to look at the angelic nature, and the human nature; three distinct natures among other natures. It will prove valuable to discard any view about these natures not thoroughly supported by scriptures. Only the truth of God's word and the life it births in man that will remain unshaken in this last hour

If we go first to 2Peter 1:2-4, we read the following words,

²Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
³According as his divine power hath given unto us all Things that pertain unto life and godliness,
through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue: ⁴Whereby are given unto us
exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,
having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Now, the divine life or glory is associated only with the Most High God. We read from Ephesians 1:21 for example, that the divine nature is far above the estate, glory and honour of angels. In the last edition, we said that angels have dependent lives. Another way of putting that is to say that they are mortal beings. They are sustained in life by the glory of God. But God has life in himself and does not depend on anything outside of Him for His continuous existence. Life inheres in God.

Scriptures require us to see the angels as mortal since Satan and his angels who were created in that same order can and would be destroyed in the second death. (Revelation 20:10). The mere fact that this class of beings can be destroyed supports the notion that angels are mortal. Furthermore, if we go to 1Timothy 6, we find that immortality is the exclusive property of the divine. God alone hath immortality. Giving charge to Timothy in 1Timothy 6:14, 16, Paul says

¹⁴That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁵which in his times shall shew, who is the blessed and only potentate, the king of king, and Lord of Lords; ¹⁶Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

So, the Lord alone hath immortality. When the Logos will communicate something to the angels face to face, he appears to them. That is to say the angels can only see God in the likeness of a vision or when he appears to them in a form they can more easily associate with. This is important.

The realm of the divine is so far above those of the angels. (See Eph. 1:19ff). And immortality is that property in God that makes him to be present everywhere at the same time without any measure of Loss. He is the source of all living. He has life in himself. God does not inhale oxygen in order to survive. He does not depend on anything whatsoever. Rather, He upholds and sustains the material universe by the word of His power. The material universe itself is just a visible expression, a part expression of the vastness of the invisible heaven, the heaven of God.

If you will come with me to John 5, we will find in verse 26 a clear definition of what immortality is (And we say that this is the telling characteristic of the divine nature – immortality).

²⁶For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

Thus, God has life in Himself, and we are shown in Romans 2:6, 7 that the church is given the promise that in Christ Jesus, she will be exalted far above angels to the glory of immortality, to have life in *'herself'* Romans 2:6,7 says

⁶God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; ⁷To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

The common saying that the soul of man is immortal is utterly false and misleading. Neither man nor angels are immortal

Next, we will be looking at the nature of angels. We are told in Hebrew 2:7 in comparison between the angelic nature and the human nature that man is made a little lower than the angles. Scriptures illustrates how this "Little" difference in glory shows itself in a very remarkable manner. (When we see that the divine nature is far above the nature of angels, and we are told further that the angelic nature is only a little above the human nature, then our minds are made all the more fruitful to appreciate the exceeding greatness and riches of the divine nature. What is said in Hebrews 2:7 we find again in Psalm 8:4,5

⁴What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? ⁵For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honour.

In the history of the children of Israel, there was a time in their battles when they sought God's intervention. He sent an angel to assist them in their battle against Assyria. And we are told that a single angel in a one night destroyed one hundred and eighty five thousand Assyrians. Now, that should recommend to our mind the might, power, glory and honour of the angelic estate. This being so, we can only imagine what a glory that must be associated with the divine nature, if it is by the same scriptures described as being "far above the angelic order". No wonder Paul could say in 1Cor. 6:2 "Know ye not that we shall judge angels".

But who are angels? We answer that angels are spirit beings specially created by the Lord God. They dwell in the heavens of God. Now, there are two distinct dwellings. The first is the material world. We have invisible creatures dwelling within the material world. Mention can be made of demonic spirits, principalities and powers that dwell within the material world. They are dependent on the material world for their existence. But the angels of God dwell in the heavens of God, which is the second place of dwelling. The heavens of God are all about us but not within the marital universe. This is putting it simply.

We will take some scriptural readings to assist our minds. The first is Mathew 24. There we are told that the angels dwell in heaven, that they are spirit beings. And that is said in contradistinction to humans who dwell in the visible material world. Mathew 24:36 reads thus.

³⁶But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

We still meet the same phrase in Mark 12:25, it says "For when they shall rise from the dead (a particular class of persons is being referred to here, not just all of the human race), they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven".

So, there are angels who dwell in the heavens of God, in that invisible realm that does not belong to the material world. This invisible heaven of God engulfs the material universe and has the capacity also to express itself in the material world. It is for this reason that we say the heaven of God is all around us. It is hidden from creation, but it can reveal itself at any point of time and space.

However, the fact that this class of angelic beings dwell within the invisible sphere of God's heaven does not mean they see or associate with God, for they do not have the same nature that God has. In fact properly understood the invisible sphere of the heaven is a highly stratified realm. There are various dimensions of glory in the heavens.

Now, we know that angels when they appear in the visible sphere of the earth do so in the form of men, especially when they appear to speak to man. Sometimes the scripture calls them men, emphasising the form in which they appear. And the scriptures tell us further that when humans see angels in the human form of appearance, what they have seen is, in fact, a vision.

We will just take two quick readings to illustrate that. You may want to read Acts 10:3 and then verse 30. Verse 3 says Cornelius saw in a vision an angel of God coming in to him. But while recounting the experience to Peter, he said in verse 30, "behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing". In Luke 24:4 and 5, in some of the first appearances of the Lord to his disciples after his resurrection, we have this recorded.

⁴And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments...

The glory of their appearance showed that there was no change in nature even though they are seen in human form. It is always possible for a higher nature to manifest itself in a lower nature. The divine can manifest his presence in the form of a spirit angel or a human person. So, also, angelic spirits can manifest themselves in human forms. So, the glory of the nature of these angels shining through their clothing is what is shown to us in verse 4. Now, when the disciples were to report their experience in the twenty-third verse, this is what the inspired writer says. Verse 22, and 23

²²Yea, and certain woman also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; ²³And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

The reference is to what these two men in shining garments spoke to them in verse 5. These men appeared to them but in their report it was said to be a vision of angels. Another scriptural reference we may read on our own is Luke 1:11-22.

So, angels always appear in form of men, retaining their nature and glory, but veiling it from man, because, it will be dazzling for man to behold an angel in his unveiled glory. This is important. When men see angel therefore, what they see is only a vision. They do not see these beings as they really are. And this is what is said in the scriptures we referred to above.

More things may be said about angelic spirits but what has been mentioned so far is sufficient for our present purpose. We can add to these by saying that angles do not have all wisdom, all knowledge. Mathew 24:36, which we read earlier, say the hour knoweth no man, not even he angels of heaven. In Ephesians 3:10 we are told that certain aspects of the work and word of redemption are made known to these creatures through the church. Again Peter says that the things that pertain to the salvation of the church, the great and glorious calling God has extended to the church, are things the angels desire to look into (Peter 1:9-12).

So, angels do not have infinite wisdom. In Job 4:18, the Bible says God charges His angels with folly. Fullness of wisdom, fullness of knowledge, fullness of understanding dwells only in Christ, the divine One.

Of, course, we know what the human nature is. The soul of the flesh is in the blood. The vital life principle working upon the spirit of man gives him ability to relate to the spirit world. But in the fall, man loses that. In regeneration, which takes place at the new birth, man's spirit is brought to life.

Before we round up this meditation, something needs to be said about the divine nature. We will simply put it this way. The divine life consists of two parts: the divine character and the divine body. And, in 2Peter 1:4; we are told that we are partakers of the divine nature. The emphasis there is character. That is the principal aspect of the believer's spiritual development in this age. He is to take on the divine attributes of character, wisdom, knowledge and understanding as Christ is preached.

But divine character or the divine nature is to be housed in a divine body. The redemption of our body is an end aspect of the work of redemption. That is, the redemption of our body is the last experience the church comes into before coming to incorruptibility and life. Thus, we notice that it is God's plan is to first of all perfect us in His character before we can be clothed with the divine body.

Again, in the divine realm, as it shall be finally constituted, we must distinguish between the Godhead, that emphasises the essence of the divine from other members of the divine class (the church) who express attributes of His character, wisdom, power in all fullness. This is important.

We will round up on this note. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes, He comes to fashion our vile bodies that it might be conformed to His glorious body. This agrees with Romans 8:23 which closes with an indication that the redemption of the body is something to earnestly long for. And we have just shown that the divine character must be worked into the church before she can put on the divine body or else there will be a conflict in nature.

Seeing then that when Christ comes, the emphasis is on the fashioning of our bodies to be conformed to his resurrected body, it is important for us to understand that prior to the change of our bodies, there is so much of work that the Lord must carry out in and among us to bring us to moral perfection. We may put it this way. Moral perfections qualify us to receive the divine body.

Let us now bring in the time elements in all of this development. There is the time period in the Second Advent of Christ, identified as the first phase in which Christ works to perfect His church. Then there is the hour of the church associating fully with Christ in the glory of the divine and fully manifests Him on earth. This is the second phase. The third and final phase is the kingdom reign, the millennial rule begins and runs its course.

These three distinct time periods in the Second Advent (or coming) of Christ are clearly marked out in the New Testament scriptures. Interestingly there are three Greek words used in the New Testament that offers clear insights into the divine program drawn in connection with Christ's Second Advent. This will be taken up in the next edition – God bless you richly.