
By This You Know the Spirit of God

"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." (1 John 4:2-3, ESV)

1. John tells us today that the greatest test of a teacher is "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" When John wrote his first epistle, a heretical teaching was circulating in the church to the effect that Jesus was not a man. This heresy became known as docetism.

To deny Jesus' true humanity was to deny something at the very heart of Christianity, so that no one who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh was sent from God.

2. Jesus was born of a virgin, had human limitations, lived a sinless life, suffered physical death, and was resurrected on the third day.

3. Jesus had a human body and soul

We see several indications that Jesus had a human soul (or spirit). Just before his crucifixion, Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled?" (John 12:27). John writes just a little later, "When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit?" (John 13:21). In both verses the word troubled represents the Greek term *tarasso* a word that is often used of people when they are anxious or suddenly very surprised by danger

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 533.

4. People near Jesus saw Him only as a man

" And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan." (Matthew 4:23-25, ESV)

5. Jesus was tempted in everyway that we are and yet did not sin

" Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, " 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and " 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' " Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' " Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, " 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' " Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him." (Matthew 4:1-11, ESV)

6. Why was Jesus' humanity necessary? For representative obedience

"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:18-19, ESV)

7. To be a substitute sacrifice

"For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:16-17, ESV)

8. To be the One mediator between God and men

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5, ESV)

9. To be our example and pattern in life

"whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." (1 John 2:6, ESV)

Paul tells us that we are continually being "changed into his likeness" (2 Cor. 3:18), thus moving toward the goal for which God saved us, that we might "be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). Peter tells us that especially in suffering we have to consider Christ's example: "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Throughout our Christian life, we are to run the race set before us "looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). If we become discouraged by the hostility and opposition of sinners, we are to "consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself" (Heb. 12:3). Jesus is also our example in death. Paul's goal is to become "like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10; cf. Acts 7:60; 1 Peter 3:17-18 with 4:1). Our goal should be to be like Christ all our days, up to the point of death, and to die with unfailing obedience to God, with strong trust in him, and with love and forgiveness to others. Jesus had to become a man like us in order to live as our example and pattern in life.

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 541.

10. Jesus will be a man forever

Jesus did not give up his human nature after his death and resurrection, for he appeared to his disciples as a man after the resurrection, even with the scars of the nail prints in his hands (John 20:25-27). He had "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39) and ate food (Luke 24:41-42). Later, when he was talking with his disciples, he was taken up into heaven, still in his resurrected human body, and two angels promised that he would return in the same way: "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Still later, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw Jesus as "the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Jesus also appeared to Saul on the Damascus Road and said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5)—an appearance that Saul (Paul) later coupled with the resurrection appearances of Jesus to others (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). In John's vision in Revelation, Jesus still appears as "one like a son of man" (Rev. 1:13), though he is filled with great glory and power, and his appearance causes John to fall at his feet in awe (Rev. 1:13-17). He promises one day to drink wine again with his disciples in his Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29) and invites us to a great marriage supper in heaven (Rev. 19:9). Moreover, Jesus will continue forever in his offices as prophet, priest, and king, all of them carried out by virtue of the fact that he is both God and man forever.¹⁴

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