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**DAVID JEWELL** Sun 22 Feb, 14:42 (3 days ago)

to DAVID

'Jesus, the God-man,' Hebrews 4 v14-16

In our investigations of the character of Jesus, we continue to study passages in Hebrews, I would like to focus on just a couple of verses today, from fourteen to sixteen of the chapter we have just heard read.

David Cameron, Tony Blair, Margaret Thatcher: for every person who thinks these people are the epitome of greatness there is a person who thinks contrary to them. In much the same way, most people have an opinion about Jesus. Some only see Him as the baby in the manger, some believe He was a great teacher, Muslims see Him as a great prophet. Some believe He rose from the dead; many do not. As Christians, we have a special responsibility to get a clear and accurate view of Christ. Jesus is at the centre of our faith: not a moral code, not the church, not a set of beliefs. We are after all 'Christ-ians'- we follow Jesus, He is the One we worship. Our understanding of Jesus determines how we interact with Him, how we respond to Him and whether we will spend eternity with Him. How do you view Jesus? Do you see Him as some kind of good-luck charm? Some kind of hard taskmaster-whipping us to work harder and harder for Him until we drop? Or maybe in a comparable way to those who believe that there are fairies at the bottom of the garden-if we choose to believe hard enough it will come true? The first step in being true Christians, then, is to understand who Jesus is.

It's essential to understand that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human. We can observe this declaration in this passage in Hebrews-fully divine in verse 13, the all-seeing eye, the God before we bow in humble, abject realisation of who we are-except we are far worse than that, all our righteousness is as filthy rags, the best good deeds that we have done are full of self-interest or incorporate the desire afterwards to receive hero-worship and adulation. This is balanced immediately by the next verses, particularly the reminder that we worship someone who can sympathise with our every weakness, because He has been there Himself. Not only happening to Him in His life here on earth, but happening to those with whom He rubbed shoulders, with whom He had great empathy. We read in the Gospels of many times when Jesus' heart went out to someone in distress-He was 'deeply distressed' as He healed the man with the withered hand; He had compassion on the leaderless crowds that came to Him; His 'bowels moved in love' for the widow who had just seen her son die; He was

in anguish so that His sweat was like drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane.

Let's look briefly at the history of Jesus, the Son of God. We read in Scriptures that before the world was created He was in existence-John 1v1: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. Interesting that in Mark, the earliest Gospel, we are introduced to Jesus as an adult, in the later Gospels of Matthew and Luke we read about the birth of Jesus, in the last Gospel to be written, from John we go back to before the dawn of time! Throughout the Old Testament there are, what we can see in hindsight, appearances, theophanies of Jesus. Abraham and the angels, the figure who accompanies the three friends of Daniel in the fiery furnace, and so on. Then we have what we have recently celebrated, His birth. Well there is great mystery here, but we do have the words of Philippians 2 v6-8 to help: 'Who, being in very nature, God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, He humbled Himself, by becoming obedient to death.' There is an emptying process, but even for the Son of God, living amongst the pain, suffering, sinfulness, utter wretchedness of some of the lives He came alongside must have been a shock! Emptied Himself for us! Not a God with a human disguise, if you had cut Him up, he would have been exactly the same as us-when the spear was driven into His side at Calvary, blood and water poured out, just as you would expect from any human. But yet God! 'The Immortal dies' as Charles Wesley proclaims in his hymn! Look a couple of pages back at Hebrews 1 v2,3, 'the exact imprint of His very being', calling Jesus God's Son does not make Him inferior to the Father! Doesn't make Him any less than God, through whom all things were created.

Maybe you knew someone as a child who later became well-known. A girl who was in my sister's class at primary school went on to be a regular star in Emmerdale and other TV shows. Several of David Beckham's old schoolmates have been interviewed over the years. One summed it up perfectly: "He was good at football, sure — but mostly he was polite, a bit shy, and obsessed with practising." They remember lifts to matches, muddy boots in hallways, and parents chatting on touchlines. Now, I've read of attempts to describe what God did in coming to live as a human, but they don't really do it. I was reading the other day about a king who would dress in peasant clothes and mix with the common folk to try to gauge the temperature, the climate of opinion about him and his rule, but this doesn't come close to helping us understand what God did. No, He emptied Himself, removed everything that enabled Him to create, to rule, to be omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, to become impotent, caught on the treadmill of time, a victim of circumstance like any other, another lowly

member of an oppressed race governed by a huge empire, only able to be one place at one time, someone who became hungry, tired, despondent, knew joy, love, the hatred and rejection of those He had come to save, endured the traitorous actions of Judas Iscariot: He did all this for us, yet still remained God!

And as we look forward to this year unfolding, we can be reminded that Jesus does not easily entrust Himself to humankind. In John 2v24: 'Jesus would not entrust Himself to them for He knew all people'. He calls us to be His friends - 'You are my friends if you do what I command;' but how do we do this? Well, if you are a Christians you have at one time, maybe almost by a process of osmosis, asked Him into your heart, put your trust in Him. You have declared, 'I am yours' in effect and I'm sure that has wavered since, maybe through the busyness of life, maybe doubts creep in and so on, but what can you do this coming year to grow that friendship? Well, spend more time with Him-remember the preciousness of a solitary hour with a loved one-and you can trust Him in more areas of your life and demonstrate it by your way of living. What area do you keep control of-health, money, family, work, relationships? Ask God to come into that area, take control-no, that doesn't mean we can just be passive from now on! Perhaps this year you will be called upon to be there for someone at the end of their life. The chaplain to the marines who lovingly held a dying young man as he slipped away, because he knew that if his parents could have been there that this is what they would have done. This is what I pray for you and for us as a fellowship. God is doing remarkable things here, He is entrusting us with more and more, we need to show ourselves trustworthy to Him. We live in a beautiful village, but we are called not just to dwell here, but to reach out, to go to the dark places and to meet people where they are. I learned last week of the death by suicide of a teenage girl only a few miles from here. I believe that God deals with those who cannot face life anymore with extraordinary gentleness and agape love, but what can we, you and I do, to help prevent others doing the same? Do you genuinely want to know the heart of God? Then reach out to the fallen, the vulnerable and be prepared to suffer alongside them.