

Because He lives

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John 5:21-29

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²¹ “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²² “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, ²³ “that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

²⁴ “***Most assuredly, I say to you***, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ²⁵ “***Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming***, AND NOW IS, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

²⁶ “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, ***because*** He is the Son of Man.

²⁸ “Do not marvel at this; for ***the hour is coming*** [AND IS NOT NOW] in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ “and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (Joh 5:21-29 ^{NKJ})

***Well, it's Easter. As we like to say “He is Risen!”
And all God's people responded, “He is risen indeed!”***

We live between the already and the not yet. Some things are complete in God's Plan of Salvation, like the payment for our sins; other things are progressing, like our life in Christ; and still others are yet to come, like the Judgment. This passage from John 5 includes all three of those. If you've heard the voice of the Son of God, and you responded by trusting Jesus to raise you from the dead, then you have begun a process of transformation. You were spiritually dead, but you have life in you ***now*** because Jesus has life in himself, and you are united to him by faith. You're busy putting off the sinful habits of your old self, and putting on the new self that is being renewed in the image of Christ. As for the future, you're looking forward to Jesus' return in glory, and “to the resurrection of life.”

Those who don't know Jesus, and haven't heard his voice, remain enemies of God. They're awaiting “resurrection to damnation.” If you hear Jesus' voice for the first time today, I beg you, place your faith and trust in him. Let all the blessings I'm about to describe flow to you through his blood that was shed for you.

Even for believers, life isn't a bed of roses. Between the already and the not yet, ***life happens***: babies happen, sickness happens, pain happens, death happens. We may wonder, What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ have to do with any of that? What difference does it make in our ability to carry on in this world, ***now***? There's an old Gaither hymn titled, “Because He Lives.” The lyrics go like this:

God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal, and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, All fear is gone.
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

But WHY? *Why is life worth the living just because he lives?* The answer is found in this passage from John. ***It's wrapped up in Jesus being the Son of Man, as well as the Son of God.*** I want to focus on the *humanity* of Jesus today, as the Son of Man, and how his humanity affects our life today and forever. I'm hoping that if we understand who Jesus *is*, not who he *was*, it will enable us to receive his love and comfort, and that will *make life worth the living*. Let's backtrack a bit.

Jesus of Nazareth walked the earth among us. He is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. He was sent by God to save His people. But he came because of his deep love for us. Jesus is "God incarnate," meaning he's God in fleshly form. He is the Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. John the Baptist called him the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He was born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died, and was buried. The third day he rose again *in bodily form*, as the Son of Man, and he ascended to the right hand of God the Father Almighty where he rules today. All things, whether in heaven or on earth, are being placed under him *right now*. One day he will come again to judge the living and the dead. What a glorious day that will be for those who belong to him and are dearly loved by the Father!

"Jesus is the *Son of Man*." What does that mean? It's not just another name for the *Son of God*. It's used three times as often as *Son of God* is used in the Gospels. *Son of Man* refers to Jesus' humanity, his incarnation, while *Son of God* refers to his deity, his transcendence; but these two things cannot be separated. You may not have thought of it this way, but Christmas celebrates the *incarnation* of Jesus

Christ. We read in Matthew 1.20-23 that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name *Immanuel*, which means, 'God with us.'" God walked among us as Jesus.

Today we're celebrating Jesus' resurrection from the dead. But Jesus was born a man, lived as a man, died as a man, rose as man, ascended as a man, and he will return as a man – yet *he is God* in fleshly form. He is the eternal God-Man.

This passage from John reminds us that Jesus is equal to God, and yet he is a man. Jesus raises the dead, gives life, judges the earth, receives the same honor as his Father, saves us, has life in

himself, and calls the dead to rise. These things belong to God. In short, Jesus is the ***Son of God*** who came to represent God to us – to *reveal* God to us in all His glory and power in a way we could understand – in a way that we could see with our eyes and touch with our hands. God wanted us to *know* Him, and so he sent his only son to *show* Himself to us.

At the same time, Jesus is the ***Son of Man***. He represents us to God. He stands in our place, experiences our pain, and receives our punishment. He *was* and *is* our living representative. ***He came as the Son of God, and he ascended as the Son of Man***. He is both, at the same time. J. Gres'ham Machen wrote,

*If you believe that Jesus is God incarnate, born of the Virgin, then there is no stretch in believing that he rose bodily from the grave. Accept the Virgin birth, and you have in Jesus Christ much more than the best man who ever lived, who left a great impression and example to follow. Instead, you have the **Savior** who came voluntarily into this world for your deliverance, who suffered all the human indignity, including birth into poverty, and an unjust death on a cruel cross. You have one who then rose again from the dead by the power of God. He lives now, a human being like us, making intercession at the throne of God.*

That's this message in a nutshell. Let's begin with, ***Why Jesus became a man***.

^{NLT} **Hebrews 2:14** Because God's children are human beings – made of flesh and blood – the Son **also** became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. ¹⁶ We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

In Hebrews 4.15, we read that he became a man to sympathize with us:

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

But why did Jesus have to die as a man? In what way does he represent us as the Son of Man? Paul says that just as in Adam all died, so in Christ all shall be made alive (1Cor 15.22). A ransom had to be paid to release all mankind from the penalty of death; and only the God-man Jesus was sufficient for the task.

^{NIV} **Heb 9:15** For this reason, Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, that ***those who are called*** may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

But that's not the only way he represents us. There is more going on than the *payment for our sins*, as profound and glorious as that is. Part of the answer lies in the fact that Jesus didn't just represent us *on the cross* – he ***continues*** to represent us for eternity. He is and will always

remain our heavenly representative. His humanity assures us that Jesus understands, in a very *personal* way, the struggles we endure and the contest in which we are engaged, as his people. ***He is identified as much with us, as he is identified with God.*** We are united to him as the *Son of God*, and he is united to us as the *Son of Man*. He is our ***Mediator*** not because he knows mankind in general, but because he knows each one of us personally.

Please keep in mind that Jesus didn't give up his Godhood to become a man; but he did relinquish his *rights* as God in order to suffer and die as a man. And yet he maintained his equality with God to show us the Father as He is. In Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2.9). The Spirit of God was given to him without measure (Jn 3.34). As the *Son of God*, he is *fully* God. And as the *Son of Man*, Jesus is *fully* man. The ***Son of Man*** is Lord of the Sabbath for our sake (Mt 12.8), and yet ***the Son of Man*** has no place to lay his own head (Mt 8.20).

Phi 2:6-8 ^{ESV} “though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [i.e. *clutched or held onto*], ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

You may have heard this verse many times, but do you really understand what Jesus gave up for your sake, out of his great ***love*** for you? He didn't become a man for a day, or even for his lifetime on earth. He became a man... *forever*. That's part of what he sacrificed for you, to redeem you and bring you to God – to make you completely acceptable and pleasing in his Father's sight. You can come before the throne of God with confidence because of what Jesus Christ did; but even more because of *who Jesus Christ is*: he is the eternal God-man, ever-living as your King below, and as your Brother above. Because of him, the gates of heaven have been opened wide for you. ***That's why life is worth the living.***

What about Jesus' promise that ***he is with you always***? Many of us either don't believe that, or else we don't understand it. We think that Jesus somehow left us. He ascended into heaven and all we have now is an intangible presence in the Spirit of God. We know that 2000 years ago, Jesus suffered as a man and knew our pain, but we may think that His Spirit *lacks* that understanding and compassion. We may think he's not *like* Jesus; he's different than Jesus. He can't identify with us like Jesus can – ***and so we feel like Jesus isn't with us.*** He came and left. He's waiting for us *elsewhere*; he's gone on ahead. Where he has gone, we will follow; but in the meantime we think we're pretty much on our own. We have the enabling power of his Spirit, but we don't think we have fellowship with Him. God's Word tells us we ***do*** (2Cor 13.14). So I'm guessing we don't realize that fellowship with the Spirit *is* fellowship with Jesus. If our concept of the Trinity is flawed, it will affect the relationship we have with our Lord Jesus Christ. He is man *and* Spirit.

In order to represent us, Jesus must be *like* us, right? He isn't just remembering what it was like to be a man, or how his experience is something like yours. *That's not the sympathy described in Hebrews*. Jesus is experiencing humanity daily, and eternally, and fully. Remember, as the *Son of Man*, he is *fully* man. In order to sympathize with us, he suffers and endures as we suffer and endure. ***But how?*** By his Spirit who *lives* in us, and who *unites* us to Christ. The Spirit who lives

in you is no passive observer of your life. He is the reporter and recorder of your life, conveying to Christ everything you're going through, *as* you go through it.

And as Jesus receives these things by our confession, mediated by the Spirit, he **overcomes** our sin and suffering, and he **overcomes** our temptations and weakness, because he **overcomes** the world by His Spirit. He cleanses us from our sin right there in the sight of God, before the heavenly throne. The penalty for your sin was paid on the cross 2000 years ago, but it is *applied* to your sin *now*. The Bible says we are **being** sanctified *in Christ* because we are one with him. His cleansing blood courses through us; it takes away our sin and purifies it in him:

Heb 2:11 ^{NKJ} For both He who sanctifies and those who are **being** sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren...

We are **being** *cleansed* from sin, and yet we're **already** *perfected* in Christ:

Heb 10:14 ^{NKJ} For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are **being** sanctified.

That's why, *united to Christ*, we are perfectly acceptable to God. And so we say,

"I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal 2.20.

Jesus went before us as a man, doing everything as a man, completely submitting to the Spirit as a man, to *set an example* for us in both life and death. But he also went before us to *perfect us*, in our name, **as the Son of Man**. Having atoned for our sin, he redeemed us from the grave, and he made us pleasing and acceptable to God. We have been adopted as sons and daughters of the Living God; we have been made heirs and co-heirs with Jesus. And then Jesus returned to the Father, not to leave us behind, but to be with each of us forever. He took the form of a man to represent us; but in the form of a man, he could not be with all of us. And so he returned to the Father to send his Spirit to be with us. The Spirit shares Christ's things with us, reminds us of his words, and comforts us in our sorrow and pain, *individually*. Jesus could not stay with us in human form and still accomplish that.

Jesus **had** to die on the cross, and rise from the dead, to send the Spirit to us.

Joh 15:26 ^{NLT} "But I will send you the **Advocate** – the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.

Joh 16:7 ^{NKJ} "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the **Helper** [*or Comforter - paraclete*] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he revealed himself to Mary Magdelene. She was overjoyed and didn't want him to leave her again. With many tears, she clung to him. She didn't think life would be worth the living without his physical presence. She didn't understand what was about to happen.

Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’” (Joh 20:17 NKJ)

He had to go in order to send the Promised Spirit to her, and to all the others, HIS Spirit – the One who would *make life worth the living* because He would be the presence of Christ in them, fellowshiping with them, and abiding with them.

Now the last point. *Why did Jesus have to be resurrected as a man?* What does it prove? *Jesus rose from the dead to prove that he was who he claimed to be:* he was the Promised One sent by God. He rose to prove that he had the power and authority to defeat death. And therefore he has the power and authority to raise us up on that Final Day when he comes again. If he was not both the *Son of God* with the authority to judge and forgive us, and if he was not the *Son of Man* who could receive that forgiveness in our name, then his promises and his words were just nice ideas, metaphors, figurative speech, without effect or force – without the power to change us, to redeem us, or to instill faith and hope in us. Jesus said,

Joh 10:18 ^{NAU} “No one has taken [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. **I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.** This commandment I received from My Father.”

His resurrection was the proof of his authority. But what about *our* resurrection?

^{ESV} John 6:40, 44 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I *will* raise him up on the last day.

God sent His son to satisfy the Law and to destroy death on our behalf. That’s why the day is coming when there will be no more fear or sorrow, no more tears or pain. Jesus died as a man on the cross to receive the punishment we deserved for our sin. **Praise God!** Because Jesus is the Son of Man, his victory is *our* victory! His payment is *our* payment! His righteousness is *our* righteousness. By *faith* we call upon Jesus to be the Son of Man for us, to be our representative, and our ambassador to the throne of God.

There was no other way to save us than by his Incarnation. There was no other way to prove his authority than by his Resurrection. And there was no other way to comfort us than by his Ascension. Because that’s when he sent the Comforter to be with us. Jesus became fully man and fully God *forever*, without separation or distinction between them. He is our King and Intercessor – and by his Spirit, Jesus has become our ever-present Comforter and Companion in true fellowship.

Heb 10:12-17 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he *sat down* at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” then he adds, “*I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.*”

Christ is with us by his Spirit. *To have the Spirit of Christ is to have Christ himself.* Paul tells us, “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” (Rom 8:9 ^{ESV}) Therefore, if you belong to Christ, you have been given his spirit as a deposit, a pledge of what is to come. He is “with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mt 28.20) In your trials and pain, in your triumphs and joy, ***remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ*** from which you received his Spirit to be with you, to comfort and guide you, to convict and correct you, to empower and sustain you, until Christ comes again. ***Honor his presence in you.***

If you have not called upon the name of Christ to be saved from the Judgment to come, and you hear his voice calling you now, we’re going to take a moment with heads bowed so that you can respond. ***All heads bowed.*** You can know today that you belong to Jesus Christ, and that he will raise you up on that Last Day to everlasting life. The prayer I want you to pray is very simple. As I say it, you can repeat it quietly to Jesus who is here with you now: “**Lord Jesus, I’m a sinner. I recognize that you are my Lord and my only Savior. I confess my sins to you, and I renounce them. I place my soul in your care forever.**”

It’s that simple. If you prayed that prayer, I’d like to know. May the peace of God which transcends all understanding guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. **AMEN**