

Jesus Is Truly Human

When alive, human beings are a union of material and immaterial parts. The New Testament makes this repeatedly and variously clear, describing human nature as a duality of:

- body and soul (e.g., Matt. 10:28)
- body and mind (e.g., Rom. 12:1–2)
- body and spirit (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:34; James 2:26)
- flesh and spirit (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 7:1)
- flesh and heart (e.g., Rom. 2:28–29)
- outer man and inner man (e.g., 2 Cor. 4:16)

If Jesus is truly human, he must possess every constituent part that is essential to humanity. Jesus thus has both a body and a soul.

Jesus Was Mortally Human

Jesus experienced all aspects of mortal human life, yet without sin (Heb. 2:14, 17). The New Testament makes this abundantly clear in a variety of ways. Jesus:

- Was conceived and born of a woman (Matt. 1:18, 25; Luke 2:11; Gal. 4:4)
- Died (numerous references, e.g., Luke 23:46; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; Phil. 2:8)
- Was a male (Greek, *anēr*) human being (Luke 24:19; John 1:30; Acts 2:22; 17:31)
- Was circumcised, confirming that he was male and had a sexual identity (Luke 2:21)
- Was a Jew, specifically from the tribe of Judah (Matt. 2:6; John 4:9; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5; see also the genealogies, Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38), and thus had a particular ethnic or national identity
- Had an ordinary appearance (Isa. 53:2; John 6:42; 8:53, 57; Phil. 2:7–8)
- Grew physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually (Luke 2:40, 52)
- Hungered and thirsted, ate and drank (Matt. 4:2; 21:18; Luke 24:41–43; John 4:7; 19:28; Acts 10:41)
- Became tired (John 4:6)
- Slept (Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38)
- Was touched (e.g., John 20:17, 27; 1 John 1:1)
- Felt pain (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:44)
- Perspired or sweated (Luke 22:44)
- Wept (Luke 19:41; John 11:35)
- Prayed (e.g., Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 22:41–45; John 11:41–42; 17:1–26)
- Learned a trade, held a job (Mark 6:3)
- Paid taxes (Matt. 17:24–27)

- Was tempted across the usual range of human enticements (Matt. 4:1–11; 16:22–23; Luke 4:1–13; Heb. 2:18; 4:15)
- Was baptized (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22)
- Desired human companionship (Matt. 26:38)
- Felt emotions, such as:
 - Compassion, pity, and affection (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 8:2; Luke 7:13)
 - Joy or happiness (Luke 10:21; Heb. 12:2)
 - Troubled heart or spirit (Matt. 26:37–38; Mark 14:33–34; John 11:33; 12:27; 13:21; cf. Isa. 53:3)

These descriptions of Jesus rule out the idea that he was a divine spirit dwelling in a human shell. Jesus was fully human, with *both* a human body *and* a soul, mind, or spirit.

Jesus Is Immortally Human

Jesus is still referred to as a human being (Greek, *anthrōpos*) after his resurrection (Acts 17:31; 1 Tim. 2:5; cf. 1 Cor. 15:47). This is supported by statements that Jesus:

- Rose from the dead with a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39)
- Was capable of eating and drinking (Luke 24:41–43; Acts 10:41)
- Had hands and feet that could be touched (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:17, 27)

Jesus thus remained fully human after his resurrection, though his body is now immortal and incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:42, 50–54; cf. Phil. 3:20–21).

Jesus Was Born of a Virgin

It's not shocking that non-Christians reject the Virgin Birth. It is surprising, though, that many in the church today don't believe in it. Chalk it up to a low view of Scripture, lack of awareness regarding the evidence, or both. In addition to simply accepting Scripture, here are three good reasons to embrace the Virgin Birth:

The Virgin Birth is presented as fact in two of the Gospels.

- Matthew and Luke give independent accounts of Mary conceiving Jesus while still a virgin (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38). Harmonizing the two accounts presents some difficulties—not serious enough to knock inerrancy, but serious enough to know the accounts come from independent sources. This means Matthew and Luke didn't conspire to concoct a story. Their historical claims about the Virgin Birth are trustworthy.

The Virgin Birth has always been part of the church's faith.

- The Virgin Birth is affirmed in the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. These creeds are still recognized by

the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and most Protestant denominations.

- The Virgin Birth is affirmed in official confessions of faith of every major branch of Protestantism—Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal.
- The Virgin Birth was taught by all Christian theologians until the rise of modern antiscapernaturalism. All of the great Christian thinkers—Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and many others—have affirmed it.

The Virgin Birth is consistent with orthodox Christology.

- Liberal critics (Like John Hick and Marcus Borg) argue that the Virgin Birth somehow undermines the *true* humanity of Jesus, since the claim means he would've had no biological father. But having a human father—or human parents *at all*—isn't essential to a person's true humanity. Simply consider Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26–31; 2:7, 18–25).
- Unitarians argue that the Virgin Birth is true but inconsistent with Jesus having preexisted. He thus can't be God incarnate. Where do they get this idea? From Luke 1:35, which is traditionally translated:

Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God (CSB; similarly, KJV, NASB, NIV).

This might sound like the Virgin Birth *caused* the Son of God's *existence*. However, the text can also be translated:

Therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God (ESV; similarly, LEB, NABRE).

This sounds more like the Virgin Birth *confirmed* the Son of God's *holiness*. Which translation is best?

Just one chapter later, Luke uses the same construction with the same adjective and verb: “Every male who first opens the womb *will be called holy* to the Lord” (Luke 2:23b). Here the emphasis is clearly on the *holiness* of the one being born. The same almost surely holds true, then, in Luke 1:35.

So rather than implying that the Virgin Birth would *cause* the Son of God's *existence*, Luke 1:35 is stating that the Virgin Birth would *confirm* the Son of God's *holiness*. He would be set apart by God for a special purpose. Regardless, the Unitarian argument from Luke 1:35 is too shaky to overturn the massive evidence from John, Paul, and other New Testament writers for Christ's preexistence.

In sum, Christians should be very hesitant to reject—or minimize the importance of believing in—the Virgin Birth, since it is presented as fact in Scripture, has been part of the official beliefs of virtually all Christian bodies spanning all of church history, and is consistent with orthodox Christology.

Jesus Was Sinless

Given Jesus' humility, it shouldn't be surprising that we find no statements where he forcefully proclaims his sinlessness. Nonetheless, he says and does things that drop some pretty strong hints. For example:

- Jesus forgave people's sins (Matt. 9:2–6; Mark 2:5–10; Luke 5:20–24; 7:47–49).
- He taught his followers to forgive others for their sins and to pray for God's forgiveness for their own sins (Matt. 6:12–15; 18:21–35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37; 11:4; 17:3–4).
- Jesus never, however, spoke about needing forgiveness himself—a surprising omission if good spiritual leaders are supposed to model what they teach!
- Jesus said he had come to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28 = Mark 10:45). Ransoming or redeeming people presupposes a sacrifice without defect.
- Similarly, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he said the wine represented his “blood of the covenant” shed for “the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt. 26:28; cf. Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). This imagery in that culture presupposed Jesus would die as a blameless sacrifice.
- The Synoptic Gospels report Jesus prevailing over extreme temptations just prior to his public ministry (Matt. 4:1–11 = Mark 1:11–13 = Luke 4:1–13) and right before its end (Matt. 26:39–42 = Mark 14:36–39 = Luke 22:41–44).
- John quotes Jesus as saying that his very food was to do the Father's will (John 4:34). He confirmed in his prayer the night before his death that he had indeed accomplished all the work the Father had given him to do (17:4). He perfectly fulfilled the Father's will, implying his sinlessness.
- Jesus said the Son could do nothing except what he saw the Father doing (John 5:19). This statement implies that Jesus could not sin (see also John 5:30; 6:38). The idea that he *could not* sin is called *impeccability*. Evangelical theologians differ on whether Jesus was impeccable, and, if so, how.
- The idea of sinlessness is practically explicit in Jesus' statement, “I always do the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29). Later in the same passage, Jesus rhetorically asks his hearers, “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” (8:46).

Of course, claims of Jesus' perfection don't go unopposed. Here are two arguments against the sinlessness of Jesus and brief responses to them:

First, Jesus was baptized by John and John's baptism was for repentance (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:32–34). Doesn't this suggest Jesus turned from sin?

- When Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke from heaven, calling Jesus “my beloved Son” and saying that he was “well pleased” with him (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:21–22). This remarkable pronouncement was not made for anyone else John baptized (nor was it repeated in any subsequent Christian baptisms), implying Jesus had no need for repentance.

- John protested that it was *he* who needed to be baptized *by Jesus*. What was Jesus’ response? That John needed to baptize him to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:14–15). This clearly suggests that Jesus got baptized for something other than sin.

Second, a rich ruler asked Jesus, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded: “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:17–18; Luke 18:18–19). Was Jesus denying that he was good?

- The ruler obviously assumed Jesus was just a man. Rather than challenge that assumption directly, Jesus pointed out that no mere man can claim to be good. God alone can truly claim to be truly good.
- Jesus then asked the ruler if he had kept the commandments against murder, adultery, etc., and the ruler claimed to have kept them from his youth (Mark 10:19–20; Luke 18:20–21). The ruler evidently thought he was good and assumed Jesus was, too.
- In a startling reply, Jesus told the ruler he lacked one thing: he needed to sell everything he had and follow Jesus (Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22). If one assumes that Jesus was not *totally good*—indeed, was not *truly God*—then his statement here is deeply unsettling. In that case, he should have told the ruler that what he lacked was a love for God above all his possessions. Instead, Jesus put himself in that lofty place: “Follow *me*.”

Here’s some final food for thought: “It was a widely disseminated tradition in earliest Christianity that Jesus was sinless . . . a claim made all the more pointed by the fact that many of the church’s leaders were drawn from Jesus’ family members or closest associates (George Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 313).” Need we say more?

Jesus Is Truly God

What do we mean by “God”? Here are five key points:

- Only Yahweh is God (Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; 32:39; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Ki. 8:60; 2 Ki. 5:15; 1 Chr. 17:20; Isa. 44:6, 45:5, 14; Mal. 2:10).
- Yahweh is the sole Creator of all things (Gen. 1:1, 31; 2:4; Neh. 9:6; Job 38:4–7; Ps. 95:5–7; Isa. 37:16; 44:24; Jer. 10:16; 51:19; Rom. 11:36).
 - The Bible divides all existence into two categories: Creator and creation (Rom. 1:19–25). There are no other options.
- God’s nature transcends space, time, matter, and energy.
 - He is eternal (Pss. 90:2; 102:25–27) and is infinite spirit (Isa. 66:1–2; John 4:20–24).
 - He is omnipresent (Gen. 28:15; 1 Ki. 8:27; Ps. 139:7–10).
 - He is omnipotent (Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Isa. 55:11; Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37; Eph. 1:11).
 - He is omniscient (1 Ki. 8:39; Ps. 139:2–6; Isa. 41:22–23; Matt. 10:30; 1 John 3:20).

- No being but Yahweh is to be worshiped or served (Exod. 20:3–5; Deut. 6:13–15; Rom. 1:23–25).
- Yahweh rules over all creation from the most exalted position in all existence, expressed figuratively as his heavenly “throne” (e.g., Pss. 11:4; 93:2; 103:19; Isa. 6:1; 66:1–2 [=Acts 7:49]; Lam. 5:19; Ezek. 1:26–28; Dan. 7:9; Matt. 5:34; Rev. 4:2–10; 19:4–5).

These five points can be conveniently summarized and remembered using the acronym HANDS:

- *Honors*: God alone is the proper object of the full range of religious honors.
- *Attributes*: God is the one uncreated, eternal Being (because he is the Creator).
- *Names*: The God of Israel alone bears the name Yahweh; he alone is truly “God.”
- *Deeds*: God is the sole Creator, Redeemer, and Judge of all things.
- *Seat*: God is the one who rules over all things (from his heavenly “throne”).

Where does Jesus fit into all this? Before we answer this question, we need to establish some hermeneutical ground rules. Here are four:

- Heretical religions commonly appeal to isolated verses to support their view of Christ. Unfortunately, Christians often do the same thing (though generally not in the same Scripture-twisting fashion). **Rule 1: No simplistic prooftexting.**
- Ideally, we want to integrate into our view of Christ everything Scripture says that is relevant to the subject. Admittedly, that is an ideal toward which we strive, not something anyone attains perfectly or something we can expect of every churchgoer. **Rule 2: Build a comprehensive case.**
- Contrary to the method used by some groups (notably Unitarians), we should allow the New Testament to interpret, and expand on, what is revealed in the Old Testament, rather than limiting what the New Testament teaches to what we *think* the Old Testament texts say. Of course, the New Testament should not be interpreted to *contradict* Old Testament doctrine about God. **Rule 3: Let the New explain the Old.**
- Based on these considerations, we should seek to build our Christology primarily from the longer, more substantive passages in the New Testament that provide an overview of who and what Jesus is and what he has done. We shouldn’t limit our Christology to these passages, but we should expect them to reveal more directly and fully what is found elsewhere. **Rule 4: Start with “big idea” texts.**

According to these interpretive guidelines, the following four texts—coming from three different New Testament authors—are by far the most important places to begin:

- **John 1:1–18**: Jesus Christ is the Word who became flesh and dwelled among us to bring us grace and truth.
- **Philippians 2:5–11**: Christ was in God’s form but humbled himself by becoming a man and dying on the cross. God then highly exalted him so that all creation will confess Jesus as Lord.
- **Colossians 1:12–20**: The Father’s beloved Son is the heir of all creation, the one who is to be preeminent in all things from creation to reconciliation.

- **Hebrews 1:1–14:** God’s Son is superior to the angels, since he has higher names than they, is worshiped by all the angels, is greater in nature than they are, made the heavens and the earth, and rules over all things from God’s throne.

Returning to the question *Where does Jesus fit into all this?* brings us back to the HANDS acronym. All five above points describing what we mean by “God” are equally applicable to Jesus:

- **H:** Jesus receives *honors* due to God.
- **A:** Jesus possesses *attributes* of God.
- **N:** Jesus bears *names* of God.
- **D:** Jesus performs *deeds* of God.
- **S:** Jesus sits on the *seat* of God’s throne.¹

Remarkably, these five ways that Jesus fits into the discussion of God are all mentioned or implied in all four main Christological texts found above. Below is a brief overview showing this to be the case. We’ll zoom in on one of the four main texts to see more closely how each letter of the HANDS acronym is embedded within it.

- **John 1:1–18**

- **H:** Christ is the object of belief in his name (v. 12).
- **A:** He has the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (v. 14b).
- **N:** He has the name “God” (vv. 1, 18).
- **D:** All things—the world—came into being through him (vv. 3, 10).
- **S:** God the Son is at the Father’s side (v. 18).

- **Philippians 2:5–11**

- **H:** Every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him (vv. 9–10).
- **A:** Christ existed in the form of God (v. 6).
- **N:** He has the name “Lord” (*kyrios*, v. 11), representing the divine name Yahweh.
- **D:** He humbled himself to die on the cross for our redemption (v. 8).
- **S:** God has “highly exalted him” above all creation (vv. 9–11).

- **Colossians 1:12–20**

- **H:** Implied: All things, including thrones and the like, were created for him (v. 16).
- **A:** In him all the fullness (of God) was pleased to dwell (v. 19).
- **N:** No *overtly* divine name, but in context “Son” (v. 13) is a divine title.
- **D:** All things were created in and through him (v. 16).
- **S:** In everything he is to be preeminent (v. 18b).

¹ This acronym is the framework for the following two books by Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski: *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007); *The Incarnate Christ and His Critics: A Biblical Defense* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2024).

- **Hebrews 1:1–14**

- **H:** All God’s angels are to worship him (v. 6).
- **A:** He has all the attributes of God and the immutability of the Creator (vv. 3, 11–12).
- **N:** He has a more excellent name (v. 4) and is called both God and Lord (vv. 8, 10).
- **D:** He upholds all things that he created, and redeemed sin (vv. 2–3, 10).
- **S:** He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (vv. 3, 13).

Let’s zoom in on Hebrews 1:1–14 so you can more closely see how the HANDS acronym is embedded in the text:

Hebrews 1:1–14

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world [Deeds]. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature [Attributes], and he upholds the universe by the word of his power [Deeds]. After making purification for sins [Deeds], he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high [Seat], 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited [Names] is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? 6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him” [Honors]. 7 Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” 8 But of the Son he says, “Your throne [Seat], O God [Names], is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

10 And, “You, Lord [Names], laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands [Deeds]; 11 they will perish, but you remain [Attributes]; they will all wear out like a garment, 12 like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end” [Attributes]. 13 And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet” [Seat]? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”

In addition to being found in the above four passages, the five aspects of Christ’s deity represented in the HANDS acronym are scattered throughout the New Testament. Here is a quick sampling, underscoring how comprehensive the evidence truly is:

- **Honors** (all of them; see John 5:23: “all may honor the son, just as they honor the Father”), for example:
 - Worship (Matt. 28:17; Luke 24:51–52; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:14)
 - Faith (John 3:15–16; 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:11; 1 John 5:13)
 - Prayer (John 14:14; Acts 7:59–60; Rom. 10:12–13; 2 Cor. 12:8–9)
 - Doxologies (2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:20–21; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 3:18)
 - Love, above all creatures (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26; 1 Cor. 16:22; Eph. 6:24)

- **Attributes** (all of them; see Col. 2:9: “in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily”), for example:
 - Uncreated (John 1:1–3; 17:5; Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:2). *Note that this attribute cannot be conferred or gifted to a creature.*
 - Omnipotent (Eph. 1:19–21; 1 Peter 3:22)
 - Omniscient (John 16:30–31; 21:17; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 2:23)
 - Omnipresent (Matt. 18:20; 28:20; Eph. 4:10–11)

- **Names**, for example:
 - “God” (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20).
 - “The Word was God” is still the best translation of the last part of John 1:1, so long as readers understand that John is not identifying the Word as God the Father. It’s fashionable today to claim Jesus is called God because he functions as God’s agent. But Christ can’t be called God in this sense here. After all, John says Christ was called God “in the beginning”—before there was anyone to whom he could function as God’s agent.
 - “Lord” often represents the divine name Yahweh, which is translated as *kyrios* in the Greek Old Testament. Indeed, in many cases, New Testament references to Jesus as Lord quote from or allude to specific Old Testament texts about Yahweh (e.g., Mark 1:2, cf. Isa. 40:3; *Rom. 10:9–13, cf. Joel 2:32; 1 Cor. 8:6, cf. Deut. 6:4; Phil. 2:9–11, cf. Isa. 45:23).

***Romans 10:9–13**

*9 If you confess with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** (kyrios) and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the **name of the Lord** (kyrios) will be saved [Joel 2:32; 3:5 LXX].”*

- **Deeds** (all of them; see John 5:19: “whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise”), for example:
 - Creation.
 - The New Testament says *both* that the Son made all things (Heb. 1:10, cf. Ps. 102:25) *and* that God made all things through the Son (John 1:3, 10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).
 - Since the Bible affirms that the Lord God alone made all things (Isa. 44:24; Rom. 11:36), one cannot interpret the above statements to mean that Christ was a creature who acted merely as God’s agent in the work of creation.
 - Forgiving sins (Mark 2:5–7), backed up by healing a paralyzed man with a simple command (2:8–12); see also Luke 7:47–49.

- Calming a storm by telling it to shut up (Mark 4:39); other miracles performed in ways that implicitly manifested his deity (cf. John 2:11; e.g., Mark 6:30–52).
- Conquering death by his own death and resurrection (note esp. John 2:19–22; 10:17–18; Acts 2:24).
- Judging all people (Matt. 25:31–46; John 5:22–29; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:5–20).
- **Seat:**
 - Jesus sits on God’s throne alongside the Father (Mark 14:62; Acts 2:33–34; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3–6; 1 Peter 3:22; Rev. 22:1–3; cf. Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13–14).
 - Jesus rules over all existence from God’s throne forever (Matt. 28:18; Luke 1:33; Phil. 2:10; Heb. 1:8).

Jesus Is Truly Human and Truly God in One Person

We have seen explicit statements in the New Testament that Jesus was and is *human* (Acts 2:22; Rom. 5:15; etc.) as well as equally explicit statements that he was and is *God* (John 20:28; Titus 2:13; etc.).

Beyond such explicit statements, we have seen rich, extensive evidence for both Jesus’ full humanity and his full deity, particularly his possessing divine attributes and the ability to perform divine deeds.

Critics of Christianity often allege that these two aspects of New Testament teaching about Jesus are contradictory. Such a criticism might have some merit if these two seemingly incompatible teachings were found in *different* New Testament writings, e.g., if Mark presented Jesus as (simply) human and John presented Jesus as (simply) divine. However, we actually find both human and divine aspects in the *same* writings.

Most significantly, at least three New Testament authors directly teach (in different, independent ways) that Jesus was a divine person who *became* human. We find this idea in all four of our main Christological texts:

- **John 1:1, 14:** “The Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh.” See also John’s statement that Jesus Christ “came in the flesh” (1 John 4:2). The words “in the flesh” translated into Latin are *in carne*, from which we derive the term *incarnation*.
- **Philippians 2:5b–7:** “Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God . . . emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, coming to be in the likeness of human beings” (literal translation).
- **Colossians 1:18–19:** “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell” (literal translation). Cf. 2:9, “For in him dwells all the fullness of the deity bodily,” which, like 1:19, makes it explicit that the Son did not cease to be divine when he took on our human, “bodily” nature.
- **Hebrews 1:1–2, 8, 10:** “. . . in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. . . . But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. . .’ and ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning. . .’” (cf. 2:14–17, where Jesus “partook” of “flesh and blood” in order “to be made like his brothers in every respect”).

Some claim that what the New Testament says about Jesus is contradictory, but it is highly implausible that three different authors *independently* presented the *same* contradiction. What's more, as we'll see, the pattern shows that the tension is *systemic* throughout the New Testament.

Many critics cut through the problem by arguing for a Christology in which Jesus was human but not divine, despite the many texts that indicate he is. But this view requires extreme exegetical gymnastics.

Evangelicals conclude that the apparent contradictions are *paradoxes* arising from the fact that the infinite Son humbled himself to share in our finite humanity. [A *paradox* affirms two claims that may seem contradictory—and that may even be beyond our ability to harmonize fully—and yet are both true.] This approach is by far the best, since:

- It accepts the direct teaching of this explanation in the main Christological texts.
- It is the historic Christian position.
- It requires no exegetical gymnastics be performed on texts pertaining to either Christ's humanity or deity.

At the end of the day, the text forces us into the realm of paradox. Consider the following:

- God is not a man (Num. 23:19), but Christ is a man (1 Tim. 2:5).
Yet he is also God (Titus 2:13, etc.).
- God is eternal (Ps. 90:2), but Jesus was born (Matt. 1:18).
Yet he existed before creation (John 1:1–2; 17:5; Col. 1:17).
- God is immutable (Ps. 102:26–27), but Jesus grew (Luke 2:40, 52).
Yet the Son is immutable (Heb. 1:11–12; cf. 13:8).
- God is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7–10), but Jesus was one place at a time (Matt. 4:18).
Yet Jesus could heal someone at a distance (Matt. 8:5–13; cf. Matt. 18:20; 28:20).
- God knows everything (Isa. 41:22–23), but Jesus didn't know the day or hour of his return (Mark 13:32).
Yet Christ knows all things—even what's in people's hearts (John 16:30; Rev. 2:23).
- God is immortal—he cannot die (1 Tim. 1:17), but Jesus died (John 19:33).
Yet Jesus could not have his life taken from him but laid it down (John 10:17–18).
- God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), but Jesus was tempted (Heb. 4:15).
Yet Jesus never sinned (Heb. 4:15), unlike everyone else (Rom. 3:23).
- All belongs to God and no one gave it to him (Job 41:11); but God gave Jesus his authority (Matt. 28:18).
Yet Jesus had all authority everywhere (Matt. 28:18). [Remember, God the Son humbled himself to save us (Matt. 20:28), depending on the Father to exalt him *as the God-man*.]