

Introduction

On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first controlled, powered, and sustained heavier-than-air flight. Wilbur then immediately sent a telegram to his sister that said: **"Have flown for 12 seconds. Will be home for Christmas!"** Well, his sister recognized the enormity of the event. So she rushed the telegram to the editor of the local newspaper and explained it. He replied by promising to print something regarding the boys and on December 19 did just that. It was a headline on the 6th page of the paper that said: **"Wright brothers home for Christmas."** You can see what that editor did. He focused on the wrong thing and missed the most important story of the entire year, and one of the most important in history, as a result.

We don't want that same thing to happen to us when it comes to Christmas. We don't want to miss the importance of it by focusing on the wrong things. We want to focus on the right things instead, one of the most significant of which I'm going to discuss tonight.

Like Us

That one is found in verses 6-8. Notice what Paul says about Jesus. He was **"made in the likeness of men"** and was **"found in appearance as a man."** What that means is this. He became like us in the essential aspects of our humanity.

First, He became like us in our physical make up. Consider these facts. Our kidneys filter 100,000 gallons of a blood every year. We shed, every year, 9 pounds of dead skin flakes, 30,000 hairs, and over 2 inches of fingernail clippings. Our eyes make 50 tiny flickering movements every second, which enables us to see. And finally, the DNA in just one of our cells, stretched out, would be 6½ long. That is what's true of our bodies and here's what I want you to see. It was true of Jesus' body as well. His kidneys filtered 100,000 gallons of blood every year. His eyes made 50 tiny flickering movements per second, and so on.

His body, in its organic nature and function, was just like ours.

Jesus became like us in a second essential aspect of our humanity – in our psychological makeup.

Our psychological life, for our purposes tonight, is made up of three inner dimensions. The first is our mind and its thoughts. By thoughts, I mean memories, perceptions, beliefs, and what we refer to when we say we're thinking of something. The second is our mind and its feelings. By feelings, I mean sensations, desires, and emotions. And finally, the third is our heart. By heart, I mean our volitional processes, our capacity to choose, to originate things. That's our psychological life. We think, feel, and choose.

And so did Jesus. We have fond childhood memories, for instance, and so did He. We believe something about taxes and so did He. We have our favorite foods and so did He. We get a kick out of small children and so did He. We choose to marry or not to marry and so did He. We choose to return evil or good for evil and so did He, and on it goes. You get the idea. We think, feel, and choose and so did Jesus.

That then is the message of Philippians 2:6-8 and Christmas itself. Jesus became like us in the essential aspects of our humanity – in our physical and psychological makeup.

Like Him

But why did he? That's the million-dollar question. The answer is "that we might become like Him." That is the central message of Christmas. Jesus became like us so that we might become like Him.

I identified two ways that He was like us. But there was one way that He was unlike us – in disposition. Because the Holy Spirit conceived Him, He was born with a righteous disposition. All of His habits, thoughts, feelings, and choices, therefore, were selfless and good.

But you and I were born with a sinful disposition. We inherited it from our parents. Our habits, thoughts, feelings, and choices, therefore, are consistently selfish and bad. Why do we get defensive and angry, for

instance, when we're criticized? Or why are we so quick to gossip and attack reputations? Or why do we feel jealous when our competitor succeeds? It's because of the sinful disposition with which we're born.

Now, Father God doesn't condemn us for having that. That's because it isn't our fault that we do. But He does condemn us for rejecting His deliverance from it. That deliverance is Jesus.

At Christmas time one year, a television interviewer walked the streets of Tokyo and asked people this question, **"What is the meaning of Christmas?"** One young woman, according to the interviewer replied, **"I don't know. Is that the day that Jesus died?"**

The answer is "no" – and "yes." It's "no" in that He was born on Christmas. It's "yes" in that the reason he was born was to die and rise from the dead. According to verses 6-8, Christmas and Easter are intertwined. They're part and parcel of the same thing, God's deliverance from our sinful disposition.

That's His deliverance and we need to receive it. We receive it in a definite way. We decide to follow Jesus. We make the decision to be with Him in order to learn and do all that He says. We then arrange our affairs around carrying that decision out. Because Jesus did was born, died, and arose, He can and will do something to us, through the Holy Spirit, if we decide to follow Him. He can and will slowly but surely change us into something else.

There's an old joke that asks, **"When is a door not a door?"** Does anyone know the answer? The answer is when it's "ajar." Do you get it? It's a play on words. A door is no longer a door, in other words, when it's something else.

Along those same lines, let me ask you. When is a gossip not a gossip? Or when is a crank not a crank? Or when is a materialist not a materialist? Or when is a worrywart not a worrywart? The answer is "when he is something else."

When is a crank not a crank, for instance? It isn't just when he no longer complains. Even if he no longer complains (because he's knows it

annoying and wrong), he may still feel like complaining. Thus, he's still a crank at heart. It's when he consistently feels like praising, rejoicing, and thanking, not complaining, that he's no longer a crank. He is, at that point, something else.

That illustrates what the Holy Spirit does when we decide to follow Jesus. He transforms us. Our bodily habits, thoughts, feelings, and choices become less and less selfish and bad and more and more selfless and good. The Holy Spirit, in other words, slowly but surely changes us into something else, or actually someone else, one who is like Jesus.

Conclusion

One of the things people talk about this time of year is finding the real meaning of Christmas. You now **know** what the real meaning of Christmas is. It's that Jesus became like us so that we could become like Him. So, choose this very night to follow Him. Make and carry out the decision to be with Him in order to learn and do all that He says. You'll not only **know** but **find** the real meaning of Christmas if you do.