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DOCTRINE FOR TODAY

SERIES: THE ARMY'S ELEVEN ARTICLES OF FAITH

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

THE PERSON

'Who is this man?' No question is more central to the Gospels. The question appears throughout the Gospel narratives.

Jesus' enemies asked the question. The Pharisees and teachers of the law who were in Capernaum witnessed Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic man prior to healing him. They began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy?" (Luke 5:17, 21).

Jesus' disciples asked the question. After Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, his disciples 'were terrified and asked each other "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"' (Mark 4:41).

The crowds cramming the Jerusalem streets on the Sunday before Passover asked the question. As the throngs hailed Jesus riding on a donkey, Matthew records: 'When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"' (Matthew 21:10). The crucial turning point of the Gospel story hinges on this question.

About five months before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus sat down with his disciples at the foot of Mount Hermon near Caesarea Philippi. He asked them,

"Who do people say that I am?" After listening to their responses, he turned and asked, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-22). Predictably, Peter answered first, and with the right answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16 *New Living Translation*). From that pivotal moment on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things... (Matthew 16:21).

John makes it clear that resolving the question of Jesus' identity is the primary purpose for writing his Gospel: 'But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (John 20:31).

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focus on his teaching or actions, but on his identity. Jesus' teaching and actions compel us to progress from understanding his teaching to recognising the *essence* of his being – his divinity. In Jesus, divinity takes on humanity; he is 'truly and properly God and truly and properly man'. While other great thinkers and achievers generate an abundance of 'good views', Jesus alone is 'good news'. Jesus is God incarnate.

Jesus was a man like no other. He taught the fatherhood of God and at the same time asserted his equality with God. Jesus maintained that 'all things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son...' (Matthew 11:27).

At the conclusion of the final Passover meal (the *Seder*) with his disciples, Jesus comforts his followers. After declaring, "If you really know me, you will know my Father as well", Philip questioned, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:7-9).

The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (HOD) succinctly answers

the timeless question 'Who is this man?'

'In the person of Jesus Christ the two natures are full and indivisibly united. Jesus in his divine nature is one with God the Father and in his human nature is one with us. Jesus reveals God to us (John 14:9)' (HOD, p 86).

THE DIVINE – TRULY AND PROPERLY GOD

John concisely clarifies the distinctiveness of Jesus: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning' (John 1:1, 2). Underscoring this theological truth, Jesus' own words and actions revealed that he was God.

When the disciples of John the Baptist questioned: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?", Jesus replied: "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (Luke 7:20-22).

Isaiah looked forward to the day of the Messiah's coming: 'In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see' (Isaiah 29:18). Later the prophet

described the year of the Lord's favour: 'The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn' (Isaiah 61:1, 2).

Jesus paused after reading these verses from Isaiah in his home synagogue in Nazareth. He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, sat down and proclaimed, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The *Mashiach* – the Lord's anointed Messiah – the Son of God and Son of Man, had come.

The glory of the celestial God is seen in his Son, the human God-man, Jesus. In the face of Jesus, we experience '...the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6).

THE HUMAN – TRULY AND PROPERLY MAN

Jesus voluntarily and temporarily gave up some of his divine attributes while on earth. This is known as *kenosis*, from the Greek word for emptiness *κένωσις*, *kénōsis*. It refers to the 'self-emptying' of Christ's human