

The Dual Nature of Christ

William Lane Craig

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https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/dr-craig-responds-to-ken-ham/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=LISTEN%20NOW&utm_campaign=Weekly%20Update%20-%20Feb%20Wk%203

SUMMARY

Dr. Craig addresses criticism leveled at him by Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis.

[Note: The following manuscript is taken from a February 8, 2021 podcast, some of which contains casual back-and-forth comments between William Lane Craig and the host, Kevin Harris. Therefore, I have taken the liberty to slightly edit the manuscript for the sake of brevity and greater clarity while retaining the essential points of the exchange. For a full transcript of the interview see https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/dr-craig-responds-to-ken-ham/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=LISTEN%20NOW&utm_campaign=Weekly%20Update%20-%20Feb%20Wk%203. – *Jeffrey Breshears*]

KEVIN HARRIS: Bill, we've been doing these podcasts for a long time, and we've always kept talk of "Young Earth Creationism" and the age of the Earth and the age of the universe at a minimum. The reason being is because you've always held that it is not an essential of the Christian faith, but a peripheral.... We've [also] avoided Ken Ham [of Answers in Genesis] who has made some derogatory remarks toward you in the past, and then he did again recently.... In particular, [Ham] called you arrogant in your handling of God's Word.

DR. CRAIG: Yes. **He accused me of pseudo-intellectual arrogance and mocking God's Word.** I think those are very, very serious charges to level against another person.... **I differentiated between criticizing a person's view and criticizing a person's character.** I certainly think that my views are open game for anyone to criticize, but when it comes to personal attacks on character I think that's a really serious matter because if what he was saying is true I shouldn't be in Christian ministry. As I said, if I believed for a moment that I was arrogant and that God was opposing me as he opposes the proud, I would step back from ministry. On the other hand, I agreed with Ken Ham in the point that **we should never let our affection or respect for another Christian make that person's views immune from criticism.** No matter how much we appreciate another person, if that person is guilty of serious doctrinal

mistakes then we need to identify, to refute, and if possible to correct those mistakes. So **no one's views are immune from criticism.**

KEVIN HARRIS: It's almost a trick question because it puts you in a position to say, "I'm not arrogant! In fact, I'm very humble!..."

Ken Ham encourages his followers to just "Check William Lane Craig by the Scriptures. Check all Christian leaders with what the Bible says." And he offers four Scriptures by which to check your comments. Really, I think that they deal with the incarnation. Is there an accusation here that you are denying that Christ is omniscient?

DR. CRAIG: I think that's right. And that's where the interest in this podcast really lies – not in the debate between Young Earth and Old Earth Creationism, but

it's a debate about the incarnation of Jesus and the two natures of Christ. Ham is convinced that I deny Jesus' omniscience. That would imply if omniscience is an essential property of God (as I believe) that therefore I deny the deity of Christ. So this would indeed be an extremely serious theological error if I were to deny that Jesus is or was omniscient. The basis for his saying this is that when Josh asked me if you could take a time machine and go back to the first century and meet Jesus and ask Jesus, "Is evolution true? Is the theory of evolution true? What would Jesus say?" And my response was that I think he would say, "I don't know what you're talking about. I've never heard of that theory. Explain it to me." And [we] would have a conversation. Well, Ham took that to be a denial of divine omniscience and therefore, by implication, I think, of Christ's deity.

KEVIN HARRIS: [I]t's a tough question, asking, "What would Jesus say to me?" You didn't have a lot of time to think about it. That's a hypothetical.

DR. CRAIG: [Yes] – he sprang it on me just out of the blue.... He springs questions on the interviewee that come out of left field and force you to think on your feet. I've never liked it when politicians say, "Oh, that's a hypothetical" and therefore refuse to answer because hypothetical questions are good questions. Those are important sorts of issues. And so I took the question at face value – if you could go back in time and talk to Jesus, what would he say if you asked him is the theory of evolution true? I feel very confident in my answer that Jesus would say, "I've never heard of that. What are you talking about?"

KEVIN HARRIS: ... Let's jump quickly to the second question that Josh asked you. And that is, "If you could go to heaven right now, or the new heaven and new Earth, and ask Jesus, 'Is biological evolution true?' what would he say?"

DR. CRAIG: Now, see, that's a very different question because the first question has to do with **what limitations did Jesus experience during what theologians call his state of humiliation. That is to say, from his conception through his burial Jesus took on the limitations of a finite human nature.** And that's why I answered the question as I did. **But**

when you come to the exalted, risen, ascended Lord in heaven that's a totally different question because those limitations of his state of humiliation may not apply in what's called the state of exaltation. So I said, and I think this is correct, that really what the question is asking is not about Jesus. What it's really saying is: is the theory of evolution true? Because if it is the exalted and ascended Lord would say that it is true. So it's not really a matter of what would Jesus say. The question is really just a roundabout way of saying: is the theory of evolution true?...

KEVIN HARRIS: The differentiation is here, and what you emphasized (and that's why I don't know why there's been any kind of criticism), is the fact that – and I want you to underline it again if you would – Jesus limiting his knowledge or not having access to all of his attributes so that he could be human.

DR. CRAIG: I think that's it exactly. Yes. **Ken Ham has an extremely naive view of the incarnation – one that is not at all orthodox. His view is more akin to Superman disguised as Clark Kent. The human nature of Christ is essentially a disguise that the second person of the Trinity puts on. But, just as Superman is fully conscious of all his powers and ability when he's dressed up as Clark Kent, so the incarnate second person of the Trinity on Ham's view is fully conscious and aware of all of his powers and knowledge. And this is a view that is both unbiblical as well as unorthodox** when judged by the great creeds of Christendom that are universally affirmed by the different confessions of Christendom.

It's unbiblical because the Bible is very clear that in his earthly state Jesus was limited in his conscious knowledge. Luke says of the boy Jesus that Jesus grew in wisdom and in knowledge as well as in favor with God and man. So over his lifetime as Jesus grew up he grew in knowledge, grew in wisdom, and so we should not imagine the monstrosity of the little baby Jesus lying in the manger contemplating the equations of general relativity and quantum mechanics. That is a completely unbiblical view of the consciousness of Jesus. Moreover, I think we all know that when Jesus was asked about the time of his second coming by the disciples his reply was, "Of that day

and hour, no man knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father.”

So clearly Jesus in the Gospels affirms that he did not have conscious knowledge of certain facts. The challenge for the Christian theologian is how to explain the way in which Jesus would lack such conscious knowledge and yet still be omniscient. Well, the way in which orthodox Christology did this was that they affirmed that although Christ is one person he has two natures – a human nature and a divine nature. So at the Council of Chalcedon [451 A.D.] the church fathers affirmed that Jesus is truly man and truly God. And as a true man he had a complete human nature, namely a human body and a human soul (that is to say, a human mind). So in his human nature Jesus’ human mind was limited and finite just as ours was even though in his divine mind (the mind of the Logos, the second person of the Trinity) Jesus was omniscient. So the person is omniscient with respect to his divine nature but he’s not omniscient with respect to his human nature. And that is not... some sort of heretical view. That is Christian orthodoxy!

KEVIN HARRIS: There were hundreds of comments, mostly from Ken Ham’s followers and Answers in Genesis followers. They didn’t get this either, Bill. They were outraged that someone might suggest that Jesus didn’t know something. So they didn’t get it.

DR. CRAIG: Really?... I’m sorry to hear that. It just shows the theological naivete, not to mention biblical naivete, of such persons.

KEVIN HARRIS: Now, when you go to the ascended Lord – where he is today – what do you have there? Do you have Jesus at the right hand of the Father and exalted and fully in control of his omniscience?

DR. CRAIG: I think that here we are launching into Christological speculation. The church doesn’t have an official position on this. One could maintain that with the ascension and exaltation of Christ that even the human nature of Christ becomes omniscient and has full access to the mind of the Logos. Or one could maintain that even in his state of exaltation the natures being distinct from each other are still limited on the

human side. For example, Jesus has a physical, risen, glorious body, and that body is not omnipresent. It is spatially located. It has a certain shape and size. So that would be part of his human nature even in the state of exaltation.

KEVIN HARRIS: OK. Now, some of the Scriptures I’m looking at here that Ken Ham said to check you by and everybody else by. As I’m looking here, there’s the Colossians verse that says all the wisdom and knowledge. Let me just read the verse: “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3). He’s taking that to [mean] that Jesus has all wisdom and has all knowledge. What? In his incarnation?

DR. CRAIG: That’s the question, isn’t it? We would all agree, as I say, that Jesus is omniscient being the second person of the Trinity. **But the question is: Did he exhibit all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in his human nature during his state of humiliation? And [the Colossians passage] doesn’t speak to that.**

KEVIN HARRIS: “But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, ‘Why do you question in your hearts?’” (Luke 5:22). He goes on, but he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with a withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. And then Matthew, “Knowing their thoughts he said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste’ and so on. So **Jesus, apparently, did have some abilities and access to his omniscience because he was able to perceive what their thoughts were.**

DR. CRAIG: **Yes, if you take these in a very strong sense it would attribute a sort of clairvoyant knowledge to Jesus on occasion. But it’s a huge extrapolation from that to say that Jesus was therefore omniscient during his state of humiliation and knew all things. That is explicitly contradicted by Scripture when it says that he increased in knowledge and wisdom and says that**

he did not know the date of his second coming. Even if, on occasion, he exhibited clairvoyant knowledge of others' thoughts.

KEVIN HARRIS: Here's some of the comments on Ken Ham's Facebook page where he discussed and posted these four Scriptures. Lucas says, "Craig has brought many to Christ and been a bulwark between Christians and doubts. Ham has done the opposite."

DR. CRAIG: That's the sort of comment that I think is illegitimate. It doesn't matter how many people I've brought to Christ or what I've accomplished. If my views are theologically incorrect then those views need to be criticized and refuted. That's why I said before that I agree with Ken Ham that we must never let our affection or appreciation of a certain person make us think that his views are immune from examination and criticism. None of us is immune to criticism because none of us is immune to error. So the question is: Have I committed a theological error in this regard? And my claim is that far from it, it is I who am expounding biblical and creedal orthodoxy, and it's actually Ken who is making a serious theological mistake here.

KEVIN HARRIS: Jess had said, "Ken, your speech is simply unfounded. There is absolutely nothing biblically problematic about Craig's statements. You should first see or better understand his published work before attempting to exhibit it as contrary to God's Word."

DR. CRAIG: Yes. I wish more people would read my published work because I go into considerable detail. For example, in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, I lay out a model of the incarnation that I think makes good sense of both the biblical data as well as defending that Christ had two complete natures: one human and one divine.

KEVIN HARRIS: Chandler says, "To be fair, Ken, no one including WLC is challenging the authority of the Bible here. They are challenging your [interpretation]. Believing that your interpretation of Genesis is on par with Genesis itself is essentially blasphemous. People have had many different interpretations of Genesis throughout church history, and, no, they did not

originate after Darwin since the early church had many different interpretations of Genesis many years before modern science that doesn't fit a Young Earth Creationist model."

DR. CRAIG: The problem here is throwing around this kind of inflammatory word like "blasphemous." That is too strong. I think he could make his point effectively by saying the **church fathers like Origen and Augustine held to non-literalistic interpretations of Genesis chapter 1 1,500 years before Darwin and that therefore a non-literalistic interpretation in no way represents... a retreat in the face of modern evolutionary science...**

I'd like our listeners to take away a Christological lesson here about the nature of the incarnation and **how Jesus exemplified fully two complete natures – a divine nature in which he was omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, ethically and morally perfect, and a human nature in which he was mortal, limited in knowledge, limited in power, located in a specific spatial location in which he grew in moral perfection through what he suffered** (according to the author of Hebrews). That's the lesson I think that our viewers need to take away from this – we need to have a genuine and serious doctrine of the incarnation which takes seriously Jesus' full human nature.