

Session 2: The person of Christ – his incarnation and obedient life

Bible reading and opening prayer

Opening prayer:

Bible reading: ^{NIV} **Hebrews 2:5-18**, "It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor ⁸ and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. ¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." ¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Keep Hebrews 2 open. We'll come back to it in a couple of minutes time.

Introduction

Last week saw our need of salvation.

- quick summary / recap.

This session is the first of a few looking at how the work of salvation was accomplished:

- what did God do through the life, death, resurrection, ascension of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The once-for-all, sufficient, perfect work of Christ.

Having looked at that we then will turn to consider how the blessings of salvation are applied to God's people:

- what God does to apply Christ's finished work to God's people across the world and down the ages.

Today we're considering the person of Christ. What is sometimes called "Christology." And especially what's called the "incarnation" and the perfectly obedient life of Christ. We'll consider what that means. And why it matters for our salvation.

1. The incarnation: Jesus is fully God and fully man

In December 2007 a judge in India issued a court summons to help sort out a property dispute. Nothing unusual there. Except that the two individuals summoned were two Hindu gods: Hanuman and Ram. Judge Sunil Kumar Singh sits in a court in the city of Dhanbad in the eastern state of Jharkand. He published the following summons in local newspapers:

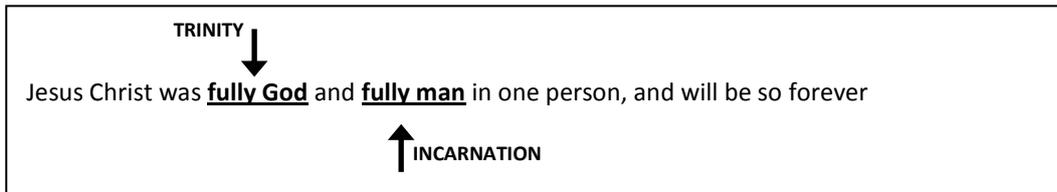
“You failed to appear in court despite notices sent by person and later through registered post. You are hereby directed to appear before the court personally.”

The gods were supposed to turn up in court the following Tuesday. That’s a true story - if the BBC is to be believed. And it makes you both want to laugh AND cry.

The glory of the Christian Gospel – and the glory of Christmas – is that God appeared on earth as man. The Son of God became a Man. He’s not some tinpot deity who can be summoned by a man: what a horrible, blasphemous thought. The Most High God, freely and sovereignly stooped down to us. He didn’t become a statue made by human hands. God the Son became a man.

This is what Xns call the Incarnation. You might have heard the word “incarnation.” It *doesn’t* describe what happens if you crash your car into a tanker full of condensed milk. What does it mean?...

(a) Definition:



Here is one of the greatest mysteries of all times. God the Son took to himself a human nature. God became a man. And in doing so he became “qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient saviour.”¹

We’re carried here to the first Christmas! To the manger. The baby Jesus. What happened in that inn is that God became man. From that moment on “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”² (Wayne Grudem)

Actually, the glory of the incarnation cannot be separated from the glory of the holy Trinity.

- the doctrine of the Trinity tells us that the man Jesus is truly divine. There are 3 persons in the one God. Jesus is God the Son.³
- & the doctrine of the Incarnation tells us that the divine Jesus is truly human. A real man.⁴

This is the full reality of our Saviour! That’s what the arrows on the diagram try to show.

These are deep truths! But be assured: our goal in this session is not to confuse! But to present a faithful description of Christ - who is the God-man.

¹ From the statement of faith of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington DC.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p529.

³ This was the great conclusion of the Council of Nicaea in 325AD, in its battle against those who sought to deny the full *divinity* of Christ. The result was the Nicene Creed, which remains the church’s core summary and defence of Jesus’ divinity.

⁴ This was the great conclusion of the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD, in its battle against those who sought to deny the real *humanity* of Christ. The result was the Chalcedonian Definition, which remains the church’s core summary and defence of Jesus’ humanity and of the relationship between Christ’s divine and human natures.

(b) Bible texts describing the incarnation:

Here are some Bible texts talking of the incarnation:⁵

Hebrews 2 – our Bible reading earlier. If you’ve still got it open notice...

- v9, “Jesus... was made a little lower than the angels.” That’s shorthand for “made man.”
- v14, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity...”
- v17, “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way...”

Hebrews 10:5, “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me,”

John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Philippians 2:7, “but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”⁶

(c) Bible texts describing the humanity of Jesus:

His birth: Galatians 4:4, “when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.”

It was a real birth! Blood, guts, the whole nine yards.

His development:

Luke 2:40, 42, “And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him... And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Human limitations:

Hunger and tiredness, (Matthew 4:2, John 4:6); Grief, (John 11:35, 38); The agonies of Gethsemane, (Mark 14:32-42, Luke 12:50, Hebrews 5:7-10); Suffering and death on the Cross

His hometown reception:

Matthew 13:55-57, “Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.”

So ordinary seemed Jesus, that no-one in his home town thought him any more than a good man.

Jesus REALLY was a man! We’ll see later on why it matters. But just note for a moment that even in Bible times some people doubted it:

2 John 1:7, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.”⁷

Some were saying Jesus wasn’t properly a man.⁸

⁵ See also, for example, 1 Tim. 3:16.

⁶ The so-called “Kenosis” theory of the incarnation is based on a mis-understanding of Philippians 2:7. It holds that Christ emptied himself of his divine attributes. This, however, is not the “emptying” that the verse has in view. Rather, Christ gave up the status and privilege that was his in heaven and became a human servant. The Kenosis theory (Charles Gore *et al*) gives us a Jesus that is less than fully God, and so is to be rejected.

⁷ See also 1 John 4:2-3, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”

⁸ John seems to be aiming these verses against Docetists who claimed Jesus was supernatural (though not properly divine) but only *seemed* to be human. (From the Greek verb *dokeo*, meaning “to seem”).

(d) Bible texts describing the deity of Jesus:

There's so much we could say here. And we're not even going to try to be comprehensive.

Some Bible texts to listen to:

Hebrew 1:3 – "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

Hebrews 1:8 – "of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom."

John 1:1 – "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:18 – "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

And think about Jesus' deeds while on earth: he does all of the things that distinguish the Lord as the true God:

- Jesus is the creator – and he shows the creator's control over creation as he calms storms, heals the sick and raises the dead.
- Jesus reveals God – such that the apostle John can say: No one has ever seen God; but the only God - Jesus – has made him known. When you looked at Jesus, you saw God. [Jn 1:18]
- Jesus rescues – dying on the cross to save people from slavery.
- Jesus even declares the future. On one occasion he perfectly predicts one aspect of his betrayal, and then says to his disciples: I've told you that ahead of time so that when it happens, "you may believe that I AM." - he quotes the OT's name for God - and says, This proves I AM the Lord. [Jn 13:18-19]

And get this: even as a man... even as a baby, Jesus was upholding the universe (Col 1:17). Even as he lay as a helpless babe on that Bethlehem night he was "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:3).

There is huge mystery here. Human nature and divine nature co-existing in one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our little and sinful minds can but scratch at this the greatest of all mysteries.

Let's see what we CAN usefully say about the relationship between Jesus' divine and human natures. It's a bit tricky. But worth spending a couple of minutes on...

(e) The relationship between Jesus' divine and human natures

Here we're standing on the shoulders of a man called Cyril. Cyril of Alexandria to be precise. He was the hero of a great church council that took place in the 451 AD at Chalcedon – near modern-day Istanbul. Cyril and his mates summarised the Bible's teaching about the incarnation, and esp. about the rel. between Jesus' divine and human natures. They had to do it because of many different heresies that were troubling the church.⁹

The "Chalcedonian Definition" may sound like a particularly difficult Judo throw. But for 1500 years it has been accepted as the standard orthodox teaching on the person of Christ.

What do we learn from it? *Negatively...*

- **No mixing of the natures:** Christ was not some hybrid in which the divine and human natures were mixed. If he were, he would neither be truly God nor truly man. [cp. Monophysitism.]
- **No dividing of the natures:** if the natures were divided or separated you get a divided Jesus who only has the appearance of unity. [cp. Nestorianism.]
- **No change in God:** God the Son took on a humanity he didn't have before. Yet, since God cannot change we must affirm that He did not change.¹⁰

⁹ Chalcedon principally sought to refute Monophysitism or Eutychianism (which asserted that Christ had only one nature) and Nestorianism (which divided the natures and claimed that Christ only appeared to be one person).

¹⁰ Grudem, p563, writes: "remaining what he was, he became what he was not."

And what do we learn *positively*?

- **Christ has two natures in one person**

This means that we may attribute certain things to a particular nature. For example,

- Romans 1:3 says that Jesus was “descended from David *according to the flesh*,” thereby speaking of his human nature.
- When Jesus calms a storm with a word, he does so *according to his divinity*.
- Or consider this question: When Jesus began his teaching ministry in about 30AD, how old was he? Luke 3:23 says he was about 30 years old. But John 1:1 says that the Word was with God in the beginning – he is eternal. One refers to his human nature. One refers to his divine nature.

But it isn't a nature that does anything. It is a person. In whom is united [in hypostatic union] a divine and a human nature. It isn't the human nature who walks, breathes, speaks, dies. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. So we say things like:

- On the cross, God the Son died – according to his human nature.
- In the manger, God the eternal Son (who had no beginning) began – according to his human nature.

That is a hard thing to get our heads around! But it does fit with the way Scripture presents the person of Christ to us. We DON'T see a schizophrenic Jesus, who flicks a switch and suddenly does stuff as God, and then flicks another switch and does stuff as a man. Rather, we see the single person of Jesus in action. For example:

- in Matthew 8 we read of Jesus tired, sleeping in a boat – Jesus the man. But a moment later when the disciples wake him he speaks a word of command and the storm ceases – Jesus, fully God. Seamlessly presented to us in the Gospels.

Some of what we've said is pretty difficult. What's the point in getting bogged down in such detail? Bluntly, what is the point of the incarnation? What's the “*so what?*” of the incarnation?

We're going to see in our final minutes that it is absolutely VITAL FOR OUR SALVATION that Christ is perfect God and perfect Man. →

2. Why Christ had to be fully man

Here's the summary up front:

God the Son had to become a man in order to be the sinless head and saviour of a new human race.

Back to Hebrews 2 where we started off. We learn that...

(a) He is the proper man who rules under God (Hebrews 2:5-9)

Stick on the Bible DVD and rewind to the garden of Eden. God made humans to rule the world under him. That's the point of Psalm 8, which is quoted here. Humans were built to rule over God's creation – over the herds, the fish, the birds, etc. Being in God's image and showing the glory of God meant ruling God's creation.

But if we fast forward to the Fall and to the fallen world we live in we find this: Man's sin means we no longer rule the creation as God's kings. We are corrupted. And creation is twisted out of joint.

But understand this: it is still God's will to have a man ruling this world – a human king.¹¹ Sin won't stop God's plan. In fact, it will only bring God more glory. Because Hebrews 2 says that the real man who rules the world is Jesus. He is the proper man. He is the 2nd Adam. He is the glorious king.

Follow thru the argument with me...

- Verse 5: "It is not to angels that God has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking..."
The "world to come" is what Hebrews calls the "world-under-King-Jesus." It's a future kingdom. But it's started now. Christians already live in the world to come. That world is subjected to King Jesus.
- Verse 8:
"In putting everything under Jesus, God left nothing that is not subject to him" ...
Everything under the rule of King Jesus: every part of his creation: the birds, the beasts, humanity. Every single human being: young, old, rich, poor, western, Eastern, African.
Enemy as well as friend: Richard Dawkins, Phillip Pullman. Moslems, Hindus, Atheists, Agnostics.
Maybe you have footstool at home. Hebrews says Jesus has a footstool: he rests his feet on the bodies of his enemies.
Nothing not subject to Jesus. Nothing not under the rule of King Jesus.
- But v8 goes to say that there's a problem:
"Yet at present we do not SEE everything subject to him."
It's THIS that is troubling the Hebrew Xns. There are countless folk who reject the rule of Jesus. Who resist and mock. Who persecute the people of God. What of that?
- But in the meanwhile, v9 says this:
"But we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death."
The man who died and rose again – to Him God has given the highest name and highest throne. Jesus the man is glorious king – ruling obediently under God.

Link:

BUT: Jesus the man has a special glory. A glory that could never have been Adam's – even if Adam had not fell.

(b) He adopts people into his new human race (Hebrews 2:10-13)

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Read Hebrews 2:10-18.

- Look at vv10-11. From these verses what do Jesus and Christians have in common? Why is this such good news?
- Look at vv14-18. From these verses what does Jesus' humanity enable him to do.
- Is there anything new here that strikes you? What particularly moves you to praise and thank Jesus?

This is Jesus' special glory: that he's taken wretched and sinful humans – and out of them he's created God's glorious family. Let's see that in the Bible...

- End of v9: Jesus died "... so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone."
As Jesus the man dies on the cross, he tastes death "for everyone." That little word "for" is a wonderful word. It says: on behalf of, in place of, instead of.

¹¹ It is this Biblical truth which C.S. Lewis picks up in the Chronicles of Narnia: the land of Narnia is only a happy and healthy place when there is a son of Adam upon the throne.

- God imposed "Death" on humans because of sin. It's a punishment.
- But as Jesus the man dies on the cross, he tastes death so that I need not. For Christian people physical death is deeply unpleasant. But we are spared spiritual death (what the Bible elsewhere calls the second death). Why? Because of what Jesus has done.

But do you notice: God's people aren't just spared death. We're not just saved from a bad thing. Something wonderful happens: Jesus makes them into God's glorious family. Let's look at this family in the next few verses. If you trust the Lord Jesus, then you're in this family. If you don't, you're not:

- v10, because of the Cross, Jesus brings "many sons to glory." Gentlemen, you are sons of God. Ladies, each of you also is a son of God! That's not sexist. You're a son because you're united to THE Son, the Lord Jesus.
- v11, "Both Jesus who makes men holy, and those who are holy are of the same family." Yes, Xns are *adopted* into the family of God. We're not there naturally. But because of the Cross, we are in the same family as Jesus. That's who you are.
- end of v11, "So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." You have an elder brother, whose name is Jesus. He knows all about you. In this family more than any other family there are no secrets. And yet he's not ashamed of you.
- v12, Jesus says: "I'll declare your name O God to my brothers, in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

Picture the scene: a huge gathering of God's special children. A vast innumerable congregation. Like this – but massive. That's what's going to happen in glory. That's what the gathering of God's church here and now is a picture of. And the preacher is Jesus – he's declaring God's name. The choir is Jesus – singing the praises of his heavenly Father (that'll be quite a song). But the big deal for now is this: this heavenly joyful holy gathering – we are there. And Jesus is not ashamed that we're there. He's not wishing that grubby Andrew Grey was somewhere else. Because Jesus is with his brothers.

- end of v13, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." If Jesus died for you, then you are a child of God.

Amazing! Glorious! When Jesus dies for someone, he brings them into his glorious family. And you see why it is glorious? Because we are WITH THE GLORIOUS REIGNING KING. Because we are IN THE GLORIOUS KING. He's our glorious captain, leader, representative, king, family head. A giant! Like the giant Adam, but better.¹² [See here also Romans 5:18-19, 1 Cor 15:45-47].

By the way, this is why Jesus was born by a **Virgin Birth**. He was the start of something new. The head of a new humanity. And so he was born in such a way that he was not "in Adam", he was not stained with original sin. [Bible texts on the virgin birth: Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-56, 2:4-7]

That's why the Gospels take such pains to show **Christ's obedience in the face of temptation**. Unlike Adam, unlike Israel he did not fall. Tempted by the devil. Tempted in Gethsemane not to go to the Cross. [See Matt 4:1-11, Luke 22:28, Matt 16:23, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.]

But he withstood. He was obedient to his heavenly Father. Unlike Adam. Unlike Israel. [On the sinlessness of Jesus see Hebrews 4:15, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22, James 1:13.]

¹² Key texts on Christ as 2nd Adam are: Romans 5:18-19, 1 Cor 15:45-47 and Hebrews 2:10. The word "AUTHOR/PIONEER" is the Greek word *archegos*. It conveys idea of someone who is first to do something and by fact of doing it opens up the way for others to participate in what he has done. This, Sinclair Ferguson comments, is the "Hebrews" way of articulating the doctrine of Christ as second Adam. On 1 Corinthians 15:44b ("If there is a natural body there is also a spiritual body) Ferguson comments that it was never intended that Adam's final destiny was to be "man of the dust." Had he been obedient he would have been transformed and the entire creation with him. This happens, however, not through the first Adam but through the second. On Christ as Perfect Man see Sinclair Ferguson's addresses at the 2001 Evangelical Ministry Assembly.

Praise be to Jesus!

Link:

But before we finish, our passage has a final glorious truth to teach us about the incarnation.

How can *sinners like you and me* be in the family of God?

How can Jesus be “brother” to someone *like me*?

(c) Jesus the man is our sufficient and sympathetic saviour (Hebrews 2:10, 14-18)

If Jesus was to found a new glorious family of God, Jesus had to become a man. Why? Because sin had to be punished in the same nature in which it had been committed. Sin was committed by a man, and must be punished in a man.

And so, God the Son had to become a man. But it was not enough for him to simply to live a perfect life. The incarnation *alone* was not enough. For a holy God to bring dirty people into his family, Jesus the man had to die.

Look at v10: “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

We learn here that Jesus was made perfect through suffering. What does that mean? It’s NOT that he was imperfect – for he is wholly “without sin” (4:15). The point’s this: until he became a man and died as a man, Jesus is not the saviour I need. Only through his sufferings – through his obedient life and obedient death – does he become the perfect and sufficient saviour. We’ll think in more detail in weeks to come about we benefit from his obedience.¹³

Look at it the other way round: if Jesus had called on 12 legions of angels to rescue him, rather than going to the Cross, he would not have been perfected as saviour. (Matt 26:53).

BUT, v14 is true! And we give thanks to God! “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his DEATH he might destroy him who holds the power of death.”

The keywords there: “By His Death.” Jesus was born on earth to die. So Christmas isn’t for the children. Or it isn’t *just* for the children. The babe in the manger was born to die. Amid the tinsel and nativity plays, let’s not forget it. The shadow of the Cross is there in the stable. It’s no accident the magi brought him Myrrh, to anoint his corpse.

For **** Jesus was made like us so that he could die for us**** - as a perfect, sacrifice (Heb 9:14).

And because a man, he is a sympathetic saviour. Raised from the dead he ever lives as our great high priest.¹⁴

- 2:18, he understands temptation and will give us help when we ask.
- 4:15, he is able to sympathise with our weakness.

Briefly, before we finish, let’s consider...

¹³ The tradition of Reformed theology distinguishes between Christ’s active obedience (his perfect, law-keeping, sinless life) and his passive obedience (his sin-bearing death upon the Cross). When united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, the Christian’s sins are paid for by Christ and Christ’s perfect righteousness becomes the Christian’s.

¹⁴ The Lord Jesus Christ is forever the God-Man. He did not temporarily become man. Instead, his divine nature was permanently united to his human nature. This seems to be one of the implications of the Ascension. The disciples are told that “this same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).” After his death and resurrection we see Jesus still incarnate (eg. eating in Luke 24:39-42). And in Revelation 1:13-17 we glimpse in heaven the physical body of Jesus, though no longer robed in humility but in glory.

3. Why Christ had to be fully God¹⁵

(a) a divine priest, so he can save forever

Hebrews 7:23-25, "Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

We need a priest who can raise himself from the dead and continue as our priest forever. Part of his "perfect" salvation is that it never needs to be repeated or supplemented. He "lives forever" and so has a permanent priesthood.

(b) God the Son, so that we might become sons in Him.

The highest blessing of the Christian faith is adoption. We are made "sons" of God. By the work of THE Son, God the Son. We read of this in Hebrews 2:10 ("In bringing many sons to glory") and in Romans 8:14, 17.

(c) an effective mediator in the presence of God (eg. Hebrews 9:24)

Hebrews 9:24, "For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."

A man could be mediator in the earthly tabernacle or temple. But the heavenly sanctuary, the very presence of God, requires the GOD-man to be mediator or Go-Between.

(d) That His sacrifice might be of infinite worth

On the Cross, God the Son died according to his human nature. But: GOD the Son died, according to his human nature. The blood of God was shed (Acts 20:28, the blood of God). A man could not atone for the sins of the world. Only the God-Man could.

It's been summarised like this, in the words of the Synod of Dort:

"This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person who submitted to it was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit." (Canons of Dort 1618-19, second head of doctrine article 4).¹⁶

Questions?

Pray:

Next week: The atonement. What happened when Jesus died.

¹⁵ An additional reason why Christ had to be fully God concerns the atonement, and is discussed in the session covering the atonement. Briefly we note: had Christ not been fully God, God the Father would have compromised his perfect justice by punishing an innocent (albeit willing) man. Rather, God punishes God (in his humanity); the atonement sees God propitiate God.

¹⁶ The Synod of Dort is the name given to a group of theologians summoned to meet at Dort or Dordrecht in Holland. They met primarily to refute the heresy of Arminianism which was increasingly troubling the church at the start of the 17th century. The Canons of Dort was the body of teaching which they produced. Most famously, they refute five tenets of Arminianism with what subsequent generations have come to call the Five Points of Calvinism, which are in English summarised by the acronym "TULIP": total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints.

A hymn by Martin Luther on the incarnation: All Praise to Thee, Eternal God

1. All praise to Thee, eternal God,
Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood,
Dost take a manger for Thy throne,
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.
Hallelujah!

2. Once did the skies before Thee bow;
A virgin's arms contain Thee now,
While angels, who in Thee rejoice,
Now listen for Thine infant voice.
Hallelujah!

3. A little Child, Thou art our Guest
That weary ones in Thee may rest;
Forlorn and lowly is Thy birth
That we may rise to heaven from earth.
Hallelujah!

4. Thou comest in the darksome night
To make us children of the light,
To make us in the realms divine,
Like Thine own angels, round Thee shine.
Hallelujah!

5. All this for us Thy love hath done;
By This to Thee our love is won;
For this our joyful songs we raise
And shout our thanks in ceaseless praise.
Hallelujah!

Hymn #80 from The Handbook to The
Lutheran Hymnal.

Text: John 1:14

Author: Martin Luther, 1524, cento

Translated by: unknown, 1858

Titled: Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ

Based on Latin sequence, 11th century,
German, st. 1, 1370

CHALCEDON, the 39 ARTICLES, & the WESTMINSTER CONFESSION on the PERSON OF CHRIST

The Definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD): "Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

39 Articles of Religion, article 2: "Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man." "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men."

Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.2 "The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man."

Miscellaneous notes from J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*

Incarnation: God sent his Son, to save us

John 1:14

Trinity and incarnation belong together.

- Trinity says the man Jesus is truly divine (cf. Nicaea, 325AD)
- Incarnation says that the divine Jesus is truly human. (cf. Chalcedon, 451 AD)
- = the full reality of our saviour.

Amazing that the NT writers – 8 of 9 being Jewish – should teach the incarnation, being so clear that there is only one God and that no human is divine. But all teach that Jesus is God's Messiah, the Spirit anointed son of David promised in the OT, prophet, priest and king.

John's Gospel:

- eternal Word... becomes flesh. Jn 1.

Hebrews:

- perfection of Christ's high priesthood based on full deity (1:3,6,8-12) and on full humanity (ch 2). Perfect high priesthood relies on "the conjunction of an endless, unfailing divine life with a full human experience of temptation, pressure, and pain (2:14-17, 4:14-5:2, 7:13-28, 12:2-3).

Two natures: Jesus Christ is fully human

2 John 7 – "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist."

John condemns those who deny Jesus came in the flesh – 1 Jn 4:2-3, 2 John 7. These verses aimed at Docetists: Jesus was supernatural (tho not properly God) & only seemed to be human.

Human experiences of Jesus:

- human limitations: hunger Matt 4:2, weariness John 4:6, ignorance of fact Lk 8:45-47, human pain, weeping at Laz's grave John 11:35,38, agonising in Gethsemane Mark 14:32-42 cf Lk 12:50 & Heb 5:7-10, suffering on the cross

Hebrews stresses that had he not thus experienced human pressures he would not be qualified to help us as we go through these things

- Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16, 5:2, 7-9

But he is. His human experience guarantees that in every moment of demand and pressure we may go to him.

Inc. means that "the Son of God lived his divine-human life in and through his human mind and body at every point, maximising his identification and empathy with those he had come to save."

Not that his two natures were like alternating electrical circuits. He is and endured everything, including his sufferings on the cross, in the unity of his divine-human person (ie. as the Son of God who had taken to himself all human powers of acting, reacting, and experiencing, in their unfallen form.

Jesus unfallen – w/o sin. But was tempted. Matt 4:1-11, Luk 22:28, Matt 16:23, his prayer in Gethsemane. From Geth we infer that his struggles were sometimes more acute and agonising than any we ever know. As a result, Heb 2:18, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Virgin birth: Jesus Xt was born by miracle

Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-56, 2:4-7.

Miraculous conception of Jesus. Entirely unchallenged until C19th liberals challenged all miraculous. But Virgin Birth meshes harmoniously with whole NT message: after all he did miracles, rose miraculously from the dead etc etc.

Natural that God the Son should enter incarnate life in a way that proclaimed his glorious role. Plus: while we can't say for sure that a divine person couldn't have entered the world in any other way or that sinless humanity couldn't have been produced in any other way, the virgin birth is fitting:

- the way that one NOT "in Adam" was born. The head of a new human race.

Sinlessness: Jesus Christ was entirely free from sin

1 Pet 2:22, Jn 8:46, 2 Cor 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, 7:26, 1 Pet 2:22, 1 Jn 3:5.

Free from sin. Not only never disobeyed his Father, but he loved God's law and found wholehearted joy in keeping it. In fallen humans there is always some reluctance to obey God. But Jesus' moral nature was unfallen, as was Adam's prior to his sin, and in Jesus was no inclination away from God. He loved the Father with heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Jesus sinlessness was necessary for our salvation. His blood was "precious" because he was a "lamb w/o blemish or defect" (1 Pet 1:19). "His active obedience (perfect lifelong conformity to God's law for mankind, and to his revealed will for the Messiah) qualified Jesus to become our Saviour by dying for us on the cross. Jesus' passive obedience (enduring the penalty of God's broken law as our sinless substitute) crowned his active obedience to secure the pardon and acceptance of those who put their faith in him (Rom. 5:18-19, 2 Cor 5:18-21, Phil 2:8, Heb 10:5-10).

Obedience: Jesus Christ fulfilled his Father's redemptive will

John 5:19

Humility in scripture means, not pretending to be worthless, but knowing and keeping the place God has appointed for one. Thus Jesus is "humble in heart", Matt 11:29 = following the Father's plan for his earthly life. This fits with the Son's eternal obedience to his Father.

Westminster Confession on the Covenant of Redemption = the Father's will for the Son which the Son delighted to obey. (VIII.1):

It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Savior of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

This plan in 2 stages:

- the Son's humiliation = letting go of glory and becoming a man; his sinbearing death.
- His Exaltation and heavenly reign, sending the HS and applying to us the redemption that by dying he won for us.

"In all of this the Son is obeying the Father in true humility, living out a natural, voluntary, and joyful subordination. Meanwhile, the Father's aim of having the Son worshiped and glorified equally with himself is steadily being fulfilled."

Vocation: Jesus Christ's mission was revealed at his baptism

"His baptism proclaimed that he had come to take the sinner's place under God's penal judgment. This is the sense in which he was baptised "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt 3:15, cf Isa 53:11).

Descending of Spirit as dove at baptism

- not that he had not previously been Spirit-filled
- but that he was now marked out as the Spirit-baptiser who would bring in the age of the Spirit. (Jn 1:32-33).