



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Chapter 6

The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 6.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus, Son of God, Is God

Now we begin a study of the central teaching of Christianity: the doctrine of the Christ, the Messiah – the Anointed One whom God sent to the world to be its Savior. This is the teaching that separates Christians from Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and all the man-made religions of the world. Other religions may say that Jesus as a good teacher or prophet, but only Christians know Jesus to be the unique Son of God, who is eternal and almighty God Himself.

When God announced through His prophets the coming of the Messiah, He indicated that this coming Messiah would Himself be God. For example, Psalm 45 makes a clear distinction between the Anointer, who is God, and the Anointed One, who is also God: **“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions”** (Psalm 45:6-7). Here we see One who is God anointing someone else who is also God, God anointing God, that is, the Father anointing the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. Remember that the meaning of “Christ” and “Messiah” is the same; they both mean “Anointed One”.

Psalm 2 also refers to the Anointed One and calls Him God’s King and the LORD’s Son, begotten of the Father: **“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed”** (Psalm 2:2). **“The LORD...shall speak to them in His wrath...: ‘Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.’ I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’”** (Psalm 2:5-7). The psalm ends with this warning: **“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him”** (Psalm 2:12).

David also referred to the Anointer and the Anointed One in Psalm 110:1: **“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”**

The New Testament says that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of these prophecies in all three of these psalms (2, 45 and 110).

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah made the same claim in their prophecies concerning the Messiah. Isaiah 9:6: **“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** Jeremiah 23:5-6: **“Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which he will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”** Micah 5:2: **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”**

As we saw briefly in lesson 2.7.3.3, there are also many New Testament passages where Jesus is clearly called God. John’s Gospel begins by introducing the Word, who is with God and who is God at the same time: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”** (John 1:1-3). Later in the first chapter this Word is called the true Light coming into

the world and we read: **“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him”** (John 1:10-11). How did He come into the world? John says: **“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). John identifies the Word as the Son of God, begotten of the Father. Finally, John says that this Word is **“Jesus Christ”** (John 1:17), that is, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary, the promised Anointed One, the Christ, the Messiah.

John 10 records for us a conversation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Because of what Jesus said in this conversation, the Jews accused Him of blasphemy and they were preparing to stone Him to death. Jesus asked: **“For which of those works do you stone Me?”** They replied: **“For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God”** (John 10:32-33). What had Jesus said that led them to understand that He was claiming to be God? Jesus always said **“My Father,”** rather than “Our Father.” He said: **“I and My Father are one”** (John 10:30). Jesus showed them they were wrong to call Him a blasphemer because His miracles proved that He was who He claimed to be: **“Believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him”** (John 10:38).

Thomas confessed the truth when he called the risen Christ: **“My Lord and my God”** (John 20:28). The apostle Paul on numerous occasions referred to Jesus as God. In his farewell address to the elders of the Ephesian church Paul said: **“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”** (Acts 20:28). In his letter to the Roman Christians he wrote: **“Of whom (the Jews) are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God”** (Romans 9:5). He wrote to the Colossians: **“In Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”** (Colossians 2:9). He wrote to Titus that we are **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:13).

Peter, John, and the author of the letter to the Hebrews join Paul in this testimony. Peter wrote: **“There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them”** (2 Peter 2:1). John wrote: **“We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life”** (1 John 5:20). The letter to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 45:6-7 and applies the words spoken there to Jesus: **“To the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’”** (Hebrews 1:8).

Even the demons recognized that the Man Jesus was the Son of God. The two demon-possessed men in the country of the Gergesenes greeted Jesus with the words: **“What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”** (Matthew 8:29). Likewise, a man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum cried out to Jesus: **“Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God!”** (Mark 1:24).

Questions

1. How does the doctrine of Christ separate Christians from other religions?
2. How does Psalm 45 teach that Jesus is true God?
3. In Psalm 45, who is the Anointer and who is the Anointed One?
4. What are two other names that mean “the Anointed One”?
5. How do the Old Testament prophecies show us that the Messiah is God?
6. What is the term used for the Son of God in the first chapter of John?
7. What does it mean to become flesh?
8. Why did the Jewish leaders want to stone Jesus?
9. How Jesus’ apostles show that they believed Jesus to be God?
10. How did the demons in Jesus’ time show their fear of Him?
11. Which groups in your locale deny that Jesus is God?
12. Which Bible passages in this section would be most helpful to you in conversations with such persons?
13. Why is it so important to believe that Jesus is true God?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.1.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus Has the Attributes of God

Not only is Jesus directly called God in the sacred Scriptures, but, as we saw in lesson 2.10.1, the Bible also attributes to Jesus various attributes that apply only to God. Therefore, Jesus must be God. Because this truth is so important, we will review some of these attributes again.

Only God is eternal – without beginning and without end. Jesus is eternal, for Paul says of Him: **“He is before all things”** (Colossians 1:17). John says: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God”** (John 1:1-2). That is why John the Baptist said of Jesus: **“It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me... for He was before me”** (John 1:27, 30). When the Jewish leaders ridiculed Jesus’ claim that Abraham saw His day because Jesus was not yet fifty years old, Jesus countered with the astounding reply: **“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”** (John 8:58). In Jesus’ glorious appearance to John on the island of Patmos He said: **“Behold, I am alive forevermore”** (Revelation 1:18).

Only God is omniscient, all-knowing. Jesus is omniscient, for Paul says of Him: **“In whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** (Colossians 2:3). In speaking of Jesus’ second coming, Paul says: **“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts”** (1 Corinthians 4:5). The Gospel of John likewise testifies: **“Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man”** (John 2: 24-25). Peter therefore was not exaggerating when he said to Jesus after His resurrection: **“Lord, You know all things”** (John 21:17).

Only God is omnipotent, all-powerful. Jesus is omnipotent, for He said to His disciples after His resurrection: **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”** (Matthew 28:18). Jesus’ power includes the power to give life to Himself after dying and the power to give eternal life to others as well: **“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”** (John 10:17-18). **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”** (John 10:27-28).

Only God is omnipresent, everywhere present. Jesus is omnipresent, for He said to His disciples after His resurrection: **“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”** (Matthew 28:20). Earlier, He had made them this promise: **“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”** (Matthew 18:20).

Only God is unchangeable. Jesus is unchangeable, for it is written: **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”** (Hebrews 13:8).

Only God is alive in Himself. Jesus Himself said: **“As the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself”** (John 5:26).

In a later lesson we will consider passages that seem to say that Jesus did not have these attributes of God during His earthly life. Such apparent contradictions will be explained by what the Bible teaches us concerning the two states of Jesus’ existence: the state of humiliation and the state of exaltation.

Questions

1. What attributes of God does the Bible attribute to Jesus?
2. What does John mean when he says that Jesus is before and after?
3. What kind of knowledge does Jesus have about every human being?
4. In what way will Jesus show Himself all-powerful at the end?
5. What promises did Jesus make to His disciples about His presence?
6. Why is Jesus' unchangeability a comforting teaching for Christians?
7. What does it mean to have life in one's self?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.1.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus Does the Works of God

We recognize that there are certain things only God can do. We think of such divine works as creation, preservation, the giving and restoring of life – both physical and spiritual, the administration of final judgment, and the final destruction of Satan and all the forces of evil. In the Scriptures we read of Jesus doing all these divine works, or promising to do them in the future; therefore, we can conclude that Jesus must be God Himself, for no one other than God can do these works.

Jesus was involved in the creation of the world. We read in John 1:3: **“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”** The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth: **“For us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live”** (1 Corinthians 8:6). Likewise, Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae: **“By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him”** (Colossians 1:16). The letter to the Hebrews says that Psalm 102 refers to the Son of God when it says: **“You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands”** (Hebrews 1:10).

Jesus remains involved in the preservation of the world. We read in Colossians 1:17: **“He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”** This means that all things are held together by Him. This is stated also in Hebrews 1:3, where we read that Jesus is at this very moment **“upholding all things by the word of His power.”** Jesus Himself referred to His work of preservation when He told His Jewish accusers: **“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working”** (John 5:17). They accused Him of working on the Sabbath, which contrary to the law. Jesus responded that He has never stopped working, just like His Father. He said: **“The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner”** (John 5:19).

Jesus is also the giver of life, as well as the restorer of life – both physical and spiritual. Jesus continued His discussion with His opponents in John 5 with these words: **“As the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will”** (John 5:21).

Jesus explained that He gives spiritual life to us through His voice, that is, through His word. On last day Jesus will give physical life to all who will have died, but Jesus first talked about spiritual life: **“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself”** (John 5:24-26). In these verses, Jesus is talking about the spiritually dead, not those who have died physically. Spiritually dead people are given new spiritual life by the voice (the word) of Jesus.

In the following verses, Jesus talks about those who have died physical. He says that all those who have died from the beginning of the world to the end of the world will be given physical life through the voice of the Son of God on the last day. **“For the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”** (John 5:28-29).

Jesus later explained who those persons are who have done good and will receive the resurrection of life: **“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:40). All who are in their graves, that is, all who have ever died physically, will rise from the dead on the last day. But only those who have been given spiritual life by hearing Jesus’ words and believing them during their physical life will be raised from the dead to enjoy everlasting life. The others will rise only to be condemned to eternal death.

Already in His earthly ministry Jesus showed His power over death. When He went to the place where His friend Lazarus was buried: **“Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go’”** (John 11:43-44). Jesus foretold that He would even raise Himself from the dead, and this came to pass also. Jesus said: **“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”** (John 10:17-18). Even Thomas was convinced by the risen Jesus that He must be God, and cried out: **“My Lord and my God”** (John 20:28). This same Jesus **“will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself”** (Philippians 3:21). Anyone who can subdue death itself must surely be God.

Yet another work of God that Jesus will do in the future is to judge the world on the last day. Jesus said: **“The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father”** (John 5:22-23). The Father **“has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man”** (John 5:27). When Peter was invited to the home of the Gentile Cornelius, he told Cornelius and his guests **“that it is He (Jesus) who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead”** (Acts 10:42). Therefore, when that last day comes, **“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”** (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Jesus’ return to judge will also be the final fall of Satan. Satan was defeated already when Jesus died and rose again: **“He Himself likewise shared in the same (flesh and blood), that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”** (Hebrews 2:14-15). In this way God’s original promise of the Savior was fulfilled: **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel”** (Genesis 3:15).

The contemporaries of Jesus had no excuse for not recognizing that Jesus is the Son of God – God Himself on earth. Consider the signs and miracles Jesus did before their very eyes. At least 35 of Jesus’ miracles, plus Jesus’ own resurrection, are recorded in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus did no miracles in His childhood or in His young adulthood. There are some false gospels that recount supposed miracles that Jesus did when He was young. But these were never accepted as true accounts by the early church. The Bible clearly says that Jesus’ first miracle was His changing of water into wine at a wedding in Cana when He was about 30 years old: **“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him”** (John 2:11).

Jesus challenged those who spoke against Him: **“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him”** (John 10:37-38). In a similar way Jesus told His own disciples: **“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves”** (John 14:11). Indeed, Jesus’ enemies were without excuse for rejecting Him. Jesus summarized their situation by saying: **“If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause’”** (John 15:24-25).

Besides the miracles recorded in the Bible, Jesus must have done many more, for John writes: **“Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”** (John 20:30-31). While we may not know all the miracles Jesus performed during His ministry, the accounts we have in the Bible are sufficient for us to believe that Jesus is the Christ and have eternal life in His name.

Questions

1. List some of the works of God that Jesus did that prove that He is God.
2. To what extent was Jesus involved in the creation of the world?
3. How is Jesus involved now in the preservation of the world?
4. What is the difference between spiritual life and physical life?
5. How does Jesus give spiritual life to the spiritually dead?
6. How will Jesus give physical life to those who are physically dead?
7. How did Jesus show His power over death during His earthly ministry?
8. How did Jesus show His power over Satan during His earthly ministry?
9. What division will there be when the dead arise on the last day?
10. What kind of bodies will believers have after the resurrection?
11. Why are Jesus' enemies without excuse?
12. List as many of Jesus' 35 miracles as you can.
13. Why did Jesus do all these miracles?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.1.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus Is Given the Honor of God

After Jesus' resurrection from the dead His followers recognized Him to be God and gave Him the same honor as the Father. Jesus Himself said that the Father **"has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father"** (John 5:22-23). In His prayer to the Father on the night before He died, Jesus claimed that He had glory with the Father before the world was made: **"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was"** (John 17:5).

Therefore it is not surprising that the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi: **"God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:9-11). Notice that the Father is glorified when glory is given to the Son.

The letter to the Hebrews says that Psalm 97:7 refers to Jesus when it calls on the angels of God to worship Him: **"Let all the angels of God worship Him"** (Hebrews 1:6). In the vision given to the apostle John on the island of Patmos, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was worshiped by the four living creatures (who represent all of God's creation), and by the twenty-four elders (who represent God's people of all ages). They all **"fell down before the Lamb" and "sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals'"** (Revelation 5:8-9). The living creatures and the elders were then joined by **"many angels around the throne...saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing'"** (Revelation 5:11-12).

There is no doubt that Christians since that time have considered Jesus to be God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to be worshiped and praised and honored as God. The hymns and creeds and council decisions from the very beginning have declared Jesus to be God. The *Apostles' Creed* declares belief in *"Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."* Because of the heresy of Arius and his followers, the *Nicene Creed* (325 and 381 A.D.) goes into greater detail, declaring belief in *"one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."* One of the early songs of the Church was the *Te Deum Laudamus*, in which Jesus is addressed as "the King of glory" and "the everlasting Son of the Father." The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) confessed Jesus to be "truly God." The *Athanasian Creed* describes Jesus as *"the Son uncreated," "the Son infinite," "the Son eternal," "the Son almighty,"* and says: *"The Son is God," "the Son is Lord," "The Son is neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone," "our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man. He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages," "perfect God," "equal to the Father with respect to His divinity."*¹

¹ McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (p. 17). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Martin Luther and his associates agreed with these ancient confessions, hymns, and council decisions and affirmed all of them to be true. Today we also joyfully confess that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Lord, the Son of God, truly God together with the Father and Holy Spirit.

Questions

1. How did Jesus Himself claim to be worthy of being honored as God?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is called Lord?
3. How was Jesus honored in the vision given to the apostle John?
4. Which creeds, songs, and council decisions declared Jesus to be God?
5. What did Martin Luther and his associates think of these ancient writings about Jesus?
6. What do the leaders in your part of the world say about Jesus?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 6.1.4 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Many Reject the Deity of Jesus

The deity of Jesus of Nazareth has been denied by a large number of false teachers from the early days of the Church even to the present time. The Ebionites claimed that Jesus was the human son of Joseph and Mary, and that the Holy Spirit came on Him for the first time at His baptism. An early teacher, Paul of Samosata, was willing to give Jesus the name of God but he did not understand this to mean that Jesus was God in Himself.

The most influential denier of the full deity of Jesus in the early Church was Arius, who claimed that Jesus, the Son of God, was a created being and not eternal with the Father. In his opinion, Jesus was the first creature that God made, and Jesus then assisted God in making the other creatures. In particular, Arius denied that Jesus is eternal. Instead he claimed: "There was a time when Jesus was not." Athanasius opposed Arius' views vigorously, and the Nicene Council of 325 condemned the views of Arius. Nevertheless, there were many years in which Arianism was the teaching of the majority of "Christian" churches, before the true teaching of Jesus as true God again began to prevail.

At the time of the Reformation there were a few teachers who denied the deity of Jesus. Among them was a heretic named Servetus, who was put to death in Geneva, Switzerland, because of his false teaching. The Socinians believed that Jesus was only a gifted man. Unitarians in the United States, like Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1892), denied the deity of Jesus. Jehovah's Witnesses have always denied the deity of Jesus. They have even produced their own Bible, which changes the passages that most clearly teach that Jesus is God. Many Christians have been deceived by their lies and their aggressive tactics.

The Unitarian Church today is not a large group, but their views about Jesus are taught in many of the Protestant seminaries throughout the world and by many of the Protestant preachers in the world as well. Many religious lodges, such as the Masons, deny the deity of Jesus. Georgia Harkness, a Methodist theologian, affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God, but claimed that this does not mean that Jesus was or is God. G. Curtis Jones of the group known as the Disciples of Christ said: "Disciples in general have never been able to accept the idea of Jesus being God."

There are some who call themselves Lutheran who deny the deity of Jesus also. In fact, a textbook used in many Lutheran seminaries today declares that the deity of Jesus is not taught in the Bible. It claims that it is a teaching that Christians introduced many years after the time of Jesus and His apostles. Paul Jersild, an American Lutheran seminary teacher, wrote: "Theologians today are concerned to interpret the divinity of Jesus in a manner which avoids turning him into a bizarre mythological creature who contains both a divine nature and a human nature." In other words, such teachers want to talk about Jesus as being divine in some way without saying that Jesus is true God in every way.

Popular depictions of Jesus in musicals or movies often do not portray Jesus as God. Some examples of this would be the musical known as "Jesus Christ, Superstar" and the movie known as "The Last Temptation of Christ." No doubt there are many others. We need to be on the alert lest we are influenced by these faulty views and lead others to have these faulty views of who Jesus is.

Questions

1. Name some of the individuals and groups who have denied the deity of Jesus.
2. Who was the most influential denier of Jesus' deity in the early Church?
3. Should Servetus have been put to death for denying Jesus' deity? Explain your answer.
4. What is wrong with the views of Paul Jersild?
5. Give some examples of popular movies in your locale that deny Jesus' deity, if you can.
6. Which so-called "Christian" groups in your locale deny that Jesus is God?
7. What evidence from the Bible would you use to discuss Jesus' deity with a Jehovah's Witness?
8. Why is it especially important that Christian seminaries teach the truth that Jesus is true God?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus, Who Is True God, Is Also True Man

It is essential for our salvation that Jesus is God. If Jesus were not God, then He could not be our Savior. Only the blood of One who is God has sufficient value to redeem sinners. That is why Jesus' apostle John writes: **"The blood of Jesus Christ His (God's) Son cleanses us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7). But it is just as essential for our salvation that Jesus is truly human, that He is true man. For God as God does not have any blood, nor can He die for our redemption.

God reveals in Scripture that Jesus is both true God and true man. From the very beginning God said the coming Savior would be human. The first promise of the Savior in Genesis 3:15 calls Him the Seed of the woman, Eve, and foretells that in the process of crushing the serpent's head He will have His own heel bruised. The promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and later to David and his sons, always portrayed the Messiah as a human descendant of the patriarchs – as the Son of David. Isaiah and Micah described Him as One born of a virgin, as a Son of David born in Bethlehem, as a King ruling among men.

When the angel Gabriel was sent to the Mary in Nazareth, he informed her that she would conceive in her womb and bring forth a Son. There is nothing in Scripture to indicate that Mary's pregnancy was different from the pregnancy of other women, or that Jesus' birth was different from other human births, outside of the fact that Mary was a virgin and remained a virgin until the time of Jesus' birth.

The fact that Jesus was (and is) a true human being is taught in many places in Scripture. The apostle Paul wrote to his assistant Timothy: **"There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"** (1 Timothy 2:5). When Paul compared Adam with Jesus, he called both of them men, saying: **"The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man"** (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). In a similar comparison between Adam and Jesus in his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul states: **"As through one man's offense judgment came to all men resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous"** (Romans 5:18-19).

In an exchange with His enemies, Jesus once said: **"You seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God"** (John 8:40). In fact, Jesus' favorite name for Himself was **"Son of Man,"** an expression that He uses 82 times in all. This name was first used in a prophecy of Daniel (Daniel 7:13). Jesus then applied this name to Himself. For example, Jesus said of Himself: **"The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"** (Matthew 8:20). At another time Jesus said: **"The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them"** (Luke 9:56).

As a true human being, Jesus has both a human body and a human soul/spirit with a human will. Having a human body and soul, Jesus was able to die as humans die, that is, His spirit/soul depart from His body. Jesus said: **"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"** (Matthew 20:28). The apostle Peter wrote that Jesus **"Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree"** (1 Peter 2:24). In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus referred to His soul, saying

to the three disciples near Him: **“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death”** (Matthew 26:38). Jesus spoke of Himself as having a will, just like other human beings, as He then prayed: **“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will”** (Matthew 26:39). Jesus’ physical death is described in the same way as other human deaths. **“He said, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit’”** (Luke 23:46). This indicates that at His death, His spirit left His body. In His resurrection from the dead the body and soul of Jesus were reunited, for on the night of His resurrection Jesus said to his amazed disciples: **“Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have”** (Luke 24:39).

As we read about Jesus’ activity in the four Gospels, it becomes clear that Jesus was just as human as we are. He experienced sorrow and deep distress (Matthew 26:37). **“He was hungry”** (Luke 4:2) in the wilderness when He ate nothing and Satan tempted Him to sin. He ate and drank, even **“with tax collectors and sinners”** (Luke 5:30). **“He fell asleep”** (Luke 8:23) as He and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat. When Jesus and His disciples walked to a city in Samaria, John records that He was **“wearied from His journey”** (John 4:6). When Jesus went to the grave of His friend Lazarus, **“Jesus wept”** (John 11:35). And when Jesus was hanging on the cross, He said: **“I thirst”** (John 19:28).

Questions

1. Why is it so important to believe that Jesus is true God?
2. Why is it so important to believe that Jesus is true man?
3. List some Old Testament prophecies that foretell that the Savior would be a man.
4. What does it mean that Jesus is the Seed of the woman?
5. What is meant by the bruising of the head and the bruising of the heel?
6. How does the comparison between Adam and Jesus show that Jesus is human?
7. What was Jesus’ favorite name for Himself?
8. What the evidence is there that Jesus had both body and soul, as other humans have?
9. How is Jesus’ death described in the four Gospels?
10. What are some of the human activities that Jesus did or experienced just like every person?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 6.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

He Who Has Always Been God Became Man – Incarnation

Since Jesus is God, He is eternal, just as His Father is eternal. Therefore, we must say that Jesus as God was begotten of the Father from eternity. There was no time when there was no Jesus as Son of God. But there was a definite beginning to Jesus as human – as a man. There was no human Jesus until He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. About nine months later the Son of God was born of the virgin Mary. Thus, He who has always been God became man at a definite point of time in history and is now the God-man, Jesus, the Christ. He was always God, but He became human. His becoming human is called the incarnation.

All of the facts of the above paragraph are spelled out clearly in Scripture. The incarnation is most clearly taught in the first chapter of John's Gospel. We are introduced to the eternal Son of God in the first verses: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God"** (John 1:1-2). Then later in the chapter John tells us: **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"** (John 1:14). The Word's becoming flesh is the incarnation.

The details of Jesus' incarnation are presented in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The first chapter of Luke tells us that God sent His angel Gabriel to tell the virgin girl Mary of Nazareth that she was God's choice to be the mother of the Son of God: **"You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest"** (Luke 1:31-32). Moreover, Gabriel told her that this boy would not have a human father. Instead He would have a unique conception: **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God... For with God nothing will be impossible"** (Luke 1:35,37).

Even though Jesus had no human father, God provided a husband for Mary in the person of Joseph, a carpenter to whom Mary had been promised through a betrothal. But the marriage was not consummated by a sexual union until after Jesus was born. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that when Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant even though he had not been with her, he **"was minded to put her away secretly"** (Matthew 1:19). He felt he could not take her as his wife since this child to be born of her was obviously not his. But God revealed to him the truth about this baby's conception and instructed him in a dream: **"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins"** (Matthew 1:20-21).

Thus, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary were both present. The actual birth of Jesus is described in very few words: **"So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn"** (Luke 2:6-7). He who had always been God was now also fully human – true God and true man in one person. The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies, such as Genesis 3:15, Genesis 22:18, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Micah 5:2, and Jeremiah 23:5.

There are two genealogies, or lists of Jesus' human ancestors: one in the Gospels of Matthew and one in the Gospel of Luke. These two differ from each other. The most likely explanation is that Matthew presents Jesus' legal ancestry through Joseph, while Luke traces Jesus' physical ancestry through His mother Mary. Matthew begins with Abraham and ends with Joseph, Jesus' legal father. Joseph was the legal descendant of King David. Luke, on the other hand, goes all the way back to God and Adam and traces Jesus' physical ancestry through His mother Mary. Mary was also of the family of David. It seems the best way to understand Luke 3:23 is as follows: **"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, (being as was supposed the son of Joseph) [but in reality] the son of Heli."** In other words, Jesus was not the physical son of Joseph, but He was the physical son of Heli, who was the father of Mary, not the father of Joseph. The father of Joseph was Jacob, according to Matthew 1:16. We can rightly say that the humanity of Jesus was created by God when God created Adam in the beginning, because all of humanity was created when God created Adam, the father of us all. And remember: Eve also came from Adam.

There are other references to Jesus' incarnation in the writings of the apostles. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord **"was born of the seed of David according to the flesh"** (Romans 1:3). Likewise, in speaking of the Israelites, Paul says: **"From whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God"** (Romans 9:5). Thus, Jesus is eternal God, but His humanity came from God through the Israelites. Jesus was born a Jew – an Israelite.

In writing to the Galatian Christians, Paul summed up the miracle of the incarnation in these few words: **"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman"** (Galatians 4:4). The letter to the Hebrews tells us not only that the Son of God became true man, but also gives the reason for He became man, namely, that He might die and thus defeat Satan: **"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"** (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Since Jesus was a true human being, He experienced in His being the same things we experience. But there was one major difference between Jesus and us. The apostle John wrote: **"He is pure... In Him there is no sin"** (1 John 3:3, 5). The apostle Peter wrote that Jesus **"committed no sin"** (1 Peter 2:22), and that we were redeemed **"with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (1 Peter 1:19). At the same time, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus was tempted to sin but did not sin: **"In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted"** (Hebrews 2:18). **"We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"** (Hebrews 4:15). So, Jesus **"is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"** (Hebrews 7:26).

When Jesus was tempted by Satan at the beginning of His ministry, He fended off all these temptations by using the weapons God provides in His Word (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). He was the **"Holy One"** (Luke 1:35) already in Mary's womb, and He remained the Holy One throughout His life and death. He challenged His enemies to find Him guilty of sin, but they were unable to do so. Jesus asked them, **"Which of you convicts Me of sin?"** (John 8:46), but no one came forward to convict Him. Even when He was on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin and before Pontius Pilate, no one came forward to charge Him with any real sin. He remained untainted by sin throughout His life. When He suffered and died, this was not because of His own sin, but because our sin was transferred to Him. **"For He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

There have been false teachers who deny that Jesus is true God. There have been false teachers who deny that Jesus is true man. In the early days of the church, the Gnostics taught that physical matter is evil, and that therefore, the holy God could not become human or share His being in any way with the evil matter of humanity. The Docetists taught that the body of Jesus was not real, but only a phantom, and they taught that certainly anyone who is truly God could not possibly suffer or die.

Questions

1. What does the term incarnation mean?
2. In what sense can we say that Jesus had no beginning?
3. In what sense can we say that Jesus was of a certain age?
4. What did Gabriel tell Mary about the baby that was to be born of her?
5. What did the angel tell Joseph about Mary's baby?
6. What was Joseph's role in the birth of Jesus?
7. Why is it important to teach that Jesus was born of a virgin?
8. What is the difference between Jesus' genealogies in Matthew and Luke?
9. Why is it important to teach that Jesus was born as a Jew?
10. Why did Jesus have to become human in order to save us?
11. What was the main way that Jesus' life on earth was different from ours?
12. What did Satan attempt to do at the beginning of Jesus' ministry?
13. If Jesus had no sin, why did He die?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.4 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Union of Jesus' Two Natures in One Person

Jesus has a human nature and a divine nature. He is both God and man. But He is not two persons; He does not have two personalities. The person of the Son of God, who is eternal, has now taken on human nature, but He is the same person as before. **“The Word became flesh”** (John 1:14). For this reason, the angel Gabriel told Mary: **“That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God”** (Luke 1:35). And Mary’s cousin Elizabeth called Mary **“the mother of my Lord”** (Luke 1:43). So, it is correct to give Mary the title “mother of God”, for He who was in her womb from conception was true God. The angel announced to the Bethlehem shepherds at the birth of Jesus: **“There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”** (Luke 2:11). We do not know how soon Jesus realized that He was the Son of God, but we do know that by the age of twelve Jesus was fully aware of the fact that God was His Father in a very special sense (Luke 2:49).

The apostle John fought against false teachers who denied that the Son of God had assumed human flesh and blood. That is why he established this truth as a way to separate true teachers from false teachers: **“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God”** (1 John 4:2-3). The apostle Paul’s words concerning Jesus have been true from the moment of His conception: **“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”** (Colossians 2:9).

The incarnation of the Son of God brought about a union of Jesus’ divine nature and Jesus’ human nature in one Person. The human nature retains all the characteristics of humanity, and the divine nature retains all the characteristics of deity. Yet there is only one Person, one personality, the God-man Jesus, the Christ. From the moment of His conception in Mary’s womb, the human and divine natures are united in such a way that they cannot ever be divided. When Jesus died, the Son of God died. The divine nature shared in the death of Jesus, even though God as God cannot die. This is all-important to us, because **“We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son”** (Romans 5:10), that is, the death of the Son of God. Many who knew Jesus on earth did not recognize Him as the Son of God, but His disciples knew who He was. Peter confessed for them all: **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”** (Matthew 16:16).

The beginning of the personal union between human and divine natures can be described in different ways. We can say that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb. We can say the eternal Son of God became flesh. The deity assumed humanity. Before this union the Son of God was the eternal Word *without flesh*. After the incarnation the Son of God was and is the eternal Word *in flesh*, permanently. **“The Word became flesh”** (John 1:14). In the Old Testament, the Son of God sometimes appeared in human form, for example, when He visited Abraham. This was not incarnation, however. It was not the beginning of a permanent union between divine and human natures. The Angel (or Messenger) of God in Old Testament was still “the Word without Flesh”; His taking on of an earthly body was only temporary.

Man did not become God, but God became man. This is one of the greatest miracles of all. It is far beyond our understanding or ability to explain. **“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh”** (1 Timothy 3:16). In an attempt to explain this mystery, some of the early church fathers said it was like iron glowing with fire, or like the union of body and soul in a human being.

There are other unions described in the Bible, but none of them are identical to the personal union of the two natures in Jesus. For example, there is the general union that God has with all created beings: **“He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being”** (Acts 17:27-28). There is also the so-called mystic union between God and all those who believe in Jesus. Peter says that in some way believers in Jesus become **“partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”** (2 Peter 1:4). On the night before His death Jesus said to His disciples: **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”** (John 14:23). Then too there is the sacramental union between the earthly elements in the Lord’s Supper and the body and blood of Christ. Paul writes: **“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”** (1 Corinthians 10:16).

In the history of the church there have been two individuals in particular who went to one extreme or the other in explaining the personal union of the two natures of Jesus. Nestorius taught that there are two separate persons in the incarnate Christ: the divine person and the human person. He was particularly opposed to the saying that Mary was the mother of God. He insisted that Mary was the mother of the human nature and person, but not of the Son of God. But this divided the natures into two persons. The Baby born to Mary was indeed the Son of God, and therefore, in that sense, Mary was indeed the mother of Him who is God. The Nestorian Church survives to this day as the remains of the Church of the East, the Assyrian Christians.

The teacher with the extreme view on the other side was Eutyches. He taught that Jesus had only one nature, the divine nature, and that the human nature was absorbed by the divine nature. This created a new type of nature that was a combination of the two. His followers were called Monophysites (one nature). His teachings survive among the Copts in Egypt, the Jacobites in Syria, and the Armenians.

The early Christians rejected both of these false teachers and their teachings, and our Lutheran fathers rejected them also. The Council of Chalcedon of 451 A.D. condemned both Nestorianism and Eutychianism, and summarized the true teaching with four terms: Jesus has both the divine and human natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.

Eutyches was guilty of confusion. He confused the two natures. He was also guilty of change, saying that the human nature changed into the divine nature.

Nestorius was guilty of division. He divided the two natures into two persons. He was also guilty of separation. He separated the two natures so that each of them could be in two different places. John Calvin and his followers teach a similar division. They still teach today that Jesus’ human nature ascended to heaven and is thus in a separate place from His divine nature. Jesus’ divine nature can still be with us on earth, but His human nature is limited to a place in heaven. Following this thought, Calvinists and other Reformed groups wrongly teach that Jesus’ body and blood cannot really be present in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, because Jesus’ body ascended to heaven. We will discuss this in greater detail in a future lesson.

Questions

1. What does it mean that Jesus' two natures are united in one person?
2. In what sense is it correct to say that Mary is the mother of God?
3. Show that by the age of 12 Jesus knew that He was the Son of God.
4. Why is it important to know that Jesus' divine nature shared in His death?
5. What is the difference between the Word *without flesh* and the Word *in flesh*?
6. What are three unions mentioned in Scripture that are not the same as the personal union of the two natures in Christ?
7. What was the false teaching of Nestorius?
8. What was the false teaching of Eutyches?
9. What happened at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.?
10. In what way do present-day Calvinists divide the two natures of Christ?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.5 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Sharing of the Two Natures within the One Person

We will now examine the way Scripture speaks about the two natures of Christ in the one person and how these two natures work together. What does the human nature share with the divine nature, and what does the divine nature share with the human nature? We can use the words “permeation” and “interpenetration” to describe this sharing. The basic teaching is stated in John 1:14: **“The Word became flesh.”**

It is true that the human nature and the divine nature are so different and distinct from each other that it is difficult to think of any kind of sharing between them. And yet, because **“the Word became flesh,”** there is a sharing of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, but only in the person of Jesus Christ. In Psalm 110:1 it is written: **“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”** This is a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. The Son is the promised Messiah, a Man born of woman. And yet He sits at God’s right hand, sharing in the glory and authority of His Father.

Jesus referred to Psalm 110:1 in an interchange with the Pharisees on Tuesday of Holy Week: **“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him “Lord,” saying: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”? If David then calls Him “Lord,” how is He His Son?’”** (Matthew 22:41-45) The Pharisees could not answer Jesus, but we can, since we know that Jesus has a human nature as the Son of David but also a divine nature as David’s Lord and God. Therefore, even though the natures of God and man are distinct from each other, they are joined in the person of Jesus in such a way that we can say that God is man in the person of Jesus Christ.

The human nature is so different from the divine nature that we cannot say of any human that he is God. And yet we can say of the Man Jesus Christ: **“This Man, and this Man only, is God.”** **“The Word became flesh”** (John 1:14). This is the way Scripture speaks. In Isaiah 9:6 we are told that **“a Child is born...a Son is given,”** and then we are told that His name is **“Mighty God.”** Likewise, in Jeremiah 23:5-6 we are told that David will have a Branch, that is, a Son, whose name is **“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”** This human Son of David is at the same time the Lord of David. This Man is God. Thus, the Child born to Mary is **“Immanuel...God with us”** (Matthew 1:23).

We cannot say that the human nature becomes the divine nature, or that the divine nature becomes the human nature. Each nature retains its own characteristics. And yet we can say (with reference to Jesus only) that God has become man in the person of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ, the Man, truly is God. In the days before the incarnation, the Son of God or the Word was *without flesh*. But in the incarnation, **“the Word became flesh”** and so forever after that incarnation the Son of God – the Word of God – is *in flesh* and the Word does not ever revert back to being without flesh. In other words, ever since the incarnation, Jesus is both God and man, and there can be no separation of the human nature from the divine nature in Him. He is the God-man – true God and true man – with His two natures being inseparable from each other.

Believers in Jesus are also children of God, but only Jesus is the *natural* Son of God, that is, the Son of God (and true God) from the moment of His conception. We become children of God by adoption. It is written that God **“chose us in Him (Jesus) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself”** (Ephesians 1:4-5). **“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”** (Galatians 4:4-5).

Questions

1. In what ways are human nature and divine nature different from each other?
2. In what person are human nature and divine nature found together?
3. Explain the riddle of David's Son and David's Lord.
4. What names are given to Jesus to show that He is truly God?
5. Why would it be wrong to say that Jesus today is “without flesh”?
6. What is the difference between being a natural son of God and an adopted son of God?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.5.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Sharing of Attributes: *In the Person of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' divine nature does not change into His human nature. His human nature does not change into His divine nature. Both natures remain intact with all of their attributes and characteristics. But because "**the Word became flesh**" (John 1:14), each nature shares or becomes a participant in the attributes of the other nature. This is clear from the way the Scriptures speak about the natures and their attributes.

What are the attributes of the divine nature? What are the attributes of the human nature? One of our Lutheran confessions, the *Formula of Concord*, gives this summary: "*To be almighty, eternal, infinite, and present everywhere at the same time naturally, and to know all things, are essential characteristics of the divine nature, which will never in all eternity become essential characteristics of the human nature*" "*To be a bodily creature, to be flesh and blood, to be finite and circumscribed, to suffer and die, to ascend and descend, to move from one place to another, to suffer from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and the like are characteristics of the human nature, which will never become characteristics of the divine nature*" (*Book of Concord*, Kolb-Wengert Edition p. 617).

For purposes of study, the Scripture passages that speak about this sharing of attributes have historically been divided into three classes:

1. Personal: the divine and human natures share attributes in the person of Jesus Christ. This type of sharing has given the Latin name *genus idiomaticum*.
2. Of Majesty: the attributes of Jesus' divine nature (His majesty) are given to Jesus' human nature. This type of sharing has been given the Latin name *genus majesticum*.
3. In Work: both the Jesus' divine and human natures participate in Jesus' work of salvation. This type of sharing has been given the Latin name *genus apotelesmaticum*.

In the first class, the sharing of attributes in the person of Jesus, there are six different ways in which Scripture speaks of the various attributes of the two natures:

1. The subject is the person of Christ and the predicate is the divine nature, that is, the person of Christ is described as having divine attributes. These verses show that the person of Jesus Christ has a divine nature with divine attributes. For example:
 - **Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.** (Romans 9:5).
 - **Christ...is...mighty in you... He lives by the power of God.** (2 Corinthians 13:3-4)
 - **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.** (Hebrews 13:8)
2. The subject is the person of Christ and the predicate is the human nature, that is, the person of Christ is described as having human attributes. These verses show that the person of Jesus Christ has a human nature with human attributes. For example:
 - **From whom (the Israelites), according to the flesh, Christ came.** (Romans 9:5)
 - **Christ... was crucified in weakness.** (2 Corinthians 13:3-4)
 - **Christ also suffered for us.** (1 Peter 2:21)
 - **Christ... Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree** (1 Peter 2:21, 24)

3. The subject is the divine nature and the predicate is the human nature, that is, the divine nature is described as having human attributes. These verses show that Jesus' divine nature shares in the attributes of Jesus' human nature. For example:
 - **You... killed the Prince of life** (Acts 3:14-15).
 - **Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.** (Acts 20:28)
 - **Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.** (1 Corinthians 2:8)
 - **I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.** (Galatians 2:20)
4. The subject is the divine nature and the predicate is the divine nature, that is, the divine nature is described as having divine attributes. These verses show that Jesus' divine nature did not change in the incarnation, but still has all the same divine attributes. For example:
 - **The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.** (John 1:18)
 - **Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.** (John 8:36).
5. The subject is the human nature and the predicate is the divine nature, that is, the human nature is described as having divine attributes. These verses show that Jesus' human nature shares in the attributes of Jesus' divine nature. For example:
 - **What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?** (John 6:62)
 - **Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'** (John 8:57-58)
 - **The second Man is the Lord from heaven.** (1 Corinthians 15:47).
6. The subject is the human nature and the predicate is the human nature, that is the human nature is described as having human attributes. These verses show that Jesus' human nature did not change in the incarnation, but still has all the same human attributes. For example:
 - **Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.** (Matthew 17:12).
 - **And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.** (Mark 8:31)

God as God cannot suffer or be crucified or die. Yet when God became human in the person of Jesus Christ, He did indeed suffer; He was crucified; He died. Acts 3:15 says that the Prince of life was killed, and so the divine nature shares in the action of being killed in the person of Jesus. Without the personal union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ this would be impossible.

Ulrich Zwingli was a church leader in Switzerland at the time of Martin Luther. His theory was that when the Bible says that the Prince of life was killed, the divine subject (the Prince of life) needs to be changed into a human subject, such as Son of David, so that the human predicate (attribute) was ascribed to the human subject. But as we have seen, that is not the way the Bible presents this truth. Martin Luther maintained that if the divine nature did not share in Jesus' death, Jesus' death would have no value for us. No mere man can redeem us. We need a Savior who is both God and man. We need a Savior in which both natures share in His suffering and death.

Reformed teachers tend to follow in Zwingli's footsteps. They are in danger of splitting the one person of Christ into two persons: the human person and the divine person. Because they do not understand how the two natures of Jesus share attributes, they teach that Jesus cannot give us His body and blood in the Lord's Supper, because Jesus' human nature is in heaven and not on earth. They teach instead that Christ is present *spiritually*, as God, in the Lord's Supper, but not as man. This, in effect, separates the two natures into two separate entities: the bodily Christ in heaven and the spiritual Christ on earth.

Questions

1. List some of the characteristics of the divine nature.
2. List some of the characteristics of the human nature.
3. What are the six ways in which the Bible speaks of the relationship between the divine nature and the human nature?
4. Why is it so important to know that the Son of God gave Himself for you?
5. Since man as man cannot raise Himself from the dead, how could Jesus raise Himself from the dead?
6. Since God as God cannot suffer or die, how could Jesus suffer and die?
7. What was the theory of Ulrich Zwingli with regard to the two natures?
8. Why did Martin Luther object to the teaching of Zwingli?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.5.2.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Sharing of Attributes: of Majesty – Omnipotence and Omniscience

Because of the false teachings of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and others, the early Christians were driven to study very carefully all the Bible passages that talk about Jesus and His work. They noticed that there were some passages that speak of Jesus being given certain qualities and characteristics. Since Jesus as God cannot be given anything, because as God He already has everything, they recognized that these various divine qualities were being given or being shared with Jesus' human nature. This is what is meant by the *genus majesticum*, the sharing of majesty.

For example, John 1:1-2 tells us that Jesus as God has all the characteristics of deity from eternity: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."** But in many places the Scriptures speak of Jesus being given such divine characteristics as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and divine honor. These passages must therefore mean that these divine characteristics are being given to Jesus as man. The majesty of Jesus' divine nature is thus shared with Jesus' human nature.

In Psalm 45 the Son of God is described as being given certain things by God: grace, a blessing, an anointing: **"Grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever... Therefore God has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions"** (Psalm 45:2, 7). Jesus once told His disciples: **"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father"** (Matthew 11:27). John the Baptist testified concerning Jesus: **"He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand"** (John 3:34-35).

On the other hand, the Bible never speaks of human qualities being given to the divine nature in order to give the divine nature greater glory or to enhance the divine nature. The divine nature cannot be enriched by any characteristic or attribute of the human nature. The Bible clearly teaches: **"I am the LORD, I do not change"** (Malachi 3:6). The divine nature cannot be enhanced by receiving anything from the human nature, but the human nature, however, can be enhanced by receiving something from the divine nature. The divine nature has divine characteristics because it is divine. The human nature, on the other hand, has divine characteristics as a gift. **"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father"** (Matthew 11:27).

This sharing of divine characteristics with Jesus' human nature began already with His conception. That is when **"the Word became flesh"** (John 1:14). But although the human nature possessed these divine attributes as a gift from the time of Jesus' conception, these attributes and characteristics were not always used during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. We will discuss this more fully when we speak of the two states of Jesus' existence: His state of humiliation and His state of exaltation. At this point we shall only print the passage that teaches these two states in Jesus' life: **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:5-11).

One divine characteristic that was and is shared with Jesus' human nature is omnipotence or almighty power. Jesus, as man, was given this almighty power when He was conceived, but He voluntarily gave up the use of this power in order to be our Savior. For example, Jesus' human nature, although possessing omnipotence, gave up its use in the Garden of Gethsemane, for the Bible says: **"Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him"** (Luke 22:43). Later that night Jesus seemed powerless when **"the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him"** (John 18:12). The very next day Jesus seemed to be totally helpless, for **"when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him"** (Luke 23:33). Ordinarily Jesus did not use His omnipotence – His almighty power. We read, for example, that Jesus was **"wearied from His journey"** (John 4:6) when He and His disciples came to Sychar and Jacob's well.

Nevertheless, Jesus' human nature was given omnipotence at His conception, and there were times when He used it. This use of omnipotence began at a wedding in Cana when Jesus changed ordinary water into excellent wine: **"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him"** (John 2:11). It was during Jesus' state of humiliation that John the Baptist said of Jesus: **"The Father... has given all things into His hand"** (John 3:35). Jesus Himself said: **"He has granted the Son to have life in Himself"** (John 5:26).

After Jesus rose from the dead, He made full use of the omnipotence given to His human nature. He said to His disciples: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"** (Matthew 28:18). The apostle Paul asserted: **"He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church"** (Ephesians 1:22). The omnipotence given to the Son of Man was foretold the prophet Daniel: **"Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed"** (Daniel 7:14).

Another divine characteristic that was and is shared with Jesus' human nature is omniscience, that is, knowing all things. Although omniscience was given to Jesus' human nature at His conception, He refrained from using it for the most part during His state of humiliation. As Jesus grew up, He learned things just like any other child, as the Bible says: **"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"** (Luke 2:52). His family's neighbors in Nazareth had no idea who Jesus was because He did not display His omniscience or any of His divine characteristics as He was growing up. When He began to teach in the synagogues, they were amazed and said to one another: **"Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simeon? And are not His sisters here with us?"** (Mark 6:2-3). During His state of humiliation Jesus made only rare use of His omniscience. For example, in speaking of the day of judgment, He said to His disciples: **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"** (Mark 13:32).

Nevertheless, there were times during His state of humiliation when Jesus used the omniscience that was given to His human nature. When the four men brought a paralyzed man lying on a bed to Jesus, **"Jesus saw their faith"** (Matthew 9:2). When the Pharisees were thinking in their minds that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy because He had forgiven the paralyzed man, **"Jesus perceived their thoughts"** (Luke 5:22). In fact, every time Jesus proclaimed a Word from God to the people without quoting the Old Testament to prove what He was saying, He was revealing His omniscience, for we are told: **"The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him"** (John 1:18). Jesus revealed the thoughts of God because He knew what no one else knew, as it was given to Him.

Jesus knew Nathanael before He ever met him, saying to him when He saw him for the first time: **"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit,"** and a bit later: **"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you"** (John 1:47-48). This was enough to convince Nathanael that Jesus was the Son of God and the King of Israel. When Jesus was in Jerusalem, many were impressed by His miracles, but John commented: **"Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all**

men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25). In a conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, Jesus surprised her by saying: **“You have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband”** (John 4:18). This led the woman to say to the townspeople: **“Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”** (John 4:29).

Our human minds find it difficult to understand how a person can be given omniscience and then not use it. We cannot understand how he could say that there are things he does not know. But we must accept every statement of God’s Word, even though we cannot fully understand it.

Questions

1. What led the early Christians to study all the passages about Jesus so carefully?
2. Why do the passages that speak of divine characteristics being given to Jesus indicate that His divine nature is sharing things with the human?
3. When did Jesus’ human nature receive the divine nature’s omnipotence?
4. How often did Jesus use His divine omnipotence during His state of humiliation?
5. Give some evidence that Jesus did not always use His omnipotence.
6. Give some evidence that Jesus sometimes did use His omnipotence.
7. What is true of Jesus’ omnipotence in His state of exaltation?
8. When was divine omniscience first shared with Jesus’ human nature?
9. Give evidence that Jesus did not always use His omniscience.
10. Give evidence that Jesus sometimes did use His omniscience.
11. Why is it important to accept God’s Word even if we don’t fully understand it?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.5.2.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Sharing of Attributes: of Majesty – Omnipresence and Divine Honor

Another divine characteristic shared with Jesus' human nature is omnipresence – being everywhere at once. This truth is especially difficult for the human mind to grasp, and there have been many Bible students through the years, and still today, who reject it. In fact, one of the main arguments of those who deny the real presence of Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper is that Jesus' human body ascended to heaven and, therefore, cannot be present in all the various places on earth where the Lord's Supper is celebrated.

During Jesus' state of humiliation, He gave the appearance of being only in one place at a time, just as all of us are only in one place at a time. When a great storm arose on the sea and Jesus' disciples were alarmed, Jesus was in a definite place: He was asleep in the boat. That is where they woke Him up, and that is where He stood up and He quieted the winds and the waves (Matthew 8:23-27). When the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years wanted to be healed by Jesus, she walked up to Him and touched His clothes, and she was healed. She knew where Jesus was, and she went to Him (Matthew 9:20-22). When Jesus was a baby, He was also in a definite place: Mary **"wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger"** (Luke 2:7). When Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph and Mary did not know where He was, but **"after three days they found Him in the temple"** (Luke 2:46). The four Gospels clearly spell out where Jesus was during His arrest, His trials before the Jews and Pontius Pilate, and at His crucifixion.

Yet even during His state of humiliation there are indications that Jesus was not limited to a definite location. For example, when the people of His hometown of Nazareth threatened to throw Him off a cliff, the Bible says: **"Passing through the midst of them, He went His way"** (Luke 4:30). At a later time, when Jesus' enemies had already picked up stones to throw at Him and kill Him, the Bible account says: **"Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by"** (John 8:59).

After Jesus rose from the dead, He was in His state of exaltation; He could be anywhere He wanted to be, without being limited by walls or distance. The angels did not roll the stone away from Jesus' tomb so that He could escape, but so that the women and His disciples could see that the tomb was empty. On the evening of the day of His resurrection, we read: **"when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst"** (John 20:19). Jesus showed up here and there and then just as suddenly vanished from their sight.

In His state of exaltation, Jesus now fully exercises His omnipresence – not only as God but as man, because Jesus' divine nature and His human nature cannot be separated from each other. Wherever Jesus is, He is the God-man – fully God and fully human. Jesus' human nature is present everywhere His divine nature is present. Jesus assured His followers: **"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"** (Matthew 18:20). After His resurrection He repeated this promise: **"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20).

Those who deny this truth point to Jesus' ascension to heaven. They say that Jesus being at the right hand of God is evidence that Jesus' human body cannot possibly be present on earth at the present time. But the Bible presents Jesus' ascension and His sitting at the right hand of God in an entirely

different way. This is what Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus: God **“raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under his feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”** (Ephesians 1:20-23). In the same letter Paul wrote: He **“ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things”** (Ephesians 4:10). Jesus ascended to heaven not only as God, but also as man. So He fills all things both as God and as man. His human nature shares in this divine characteristic of being everywhere at all times, ruling over all things for the good of His Church and sharing in the glory and authority of God in every way. God’s right hand is not a physical place in heaven, but it is everywhere, as these passages clearly indicate.

That is why Peter said on Pentecost: **“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear”** (Acts 2:32-33). Not many days later Peter repeated this testimony: **“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins”** (Acts 5:30-31). Being at the right hand of God implies that there are no limitations of any kind on Jesus now. He can do what He wants, and He can be wherever He wants. He fills all things and so He is omnipresent, not only as God but also as man, for the disciples saw the Man Jesus ascending to heaven.

The letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus, **“when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”** (Hebrews 1:3). **“We have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God”** (Hebrews 4:14). It is true that we now ordinarily do not see Jesus, but that does not mean He is not present. He appeared to Paul several times after His ascension, and He also appeared visibly to John on the island of Patmos. Peter wrote that we love Him even though we do not see Him, and: **“Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory”** (1 Peter 1:8).

But we will see Jesus’ presence again when He returns to judge the world. At His ascension the angels said: **“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven”** (Acts 1:11).

Since Jesus’ human nature shares in the divine characteristics of omnipresence, as well as omniscience and omnipotence, there is no reason to deny that Jesus can give His body and blood to us in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. We do not want to lock up Jesus’ human nature in heaven and separate it from His Church. We do not want to prevent Him from being wherever He wants to be and doing whatever He wants to do. If He wants to give us His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, there is nothing to prevent Him from doing that. We shall discuss this further when we study what the Bible says about the Lord’s Supper.

Since these various divine characteristics are shared with Jesus’ human nature, does this mean that divine honor should be given to Jesus’ human nature as well? The Old Testament prophets insisted that the LORD (JHVH) God is the only One who should receive such honor and worship. Isaiah said: **“I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another”** (Isaiah 42:8).

But such divine honor is also given to Jesus in His human nature. We cannot separate Jesus’ human nature from Jesus’ divine nature in such a way that we honor only His divine nature when we honor Him. **“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Philippians 2:9-11). Surely when we honor Jesus, the God-man, we are honoring Him as both God and man; His human nature shares in the honor and worship. We are not worshipping His human nature as something separate from His divine nature, but as being joined to it

in one Person. We worship the whole Person of Jesus. The angels in heaven praise Him: **“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing... Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever”** (Revelation 5:12-13).

Questions

1. Why do so many reject the teaching that omnipresence is shared with Jesus' human nature?
2. How did Jesus hide His omnipresence during His state of humiliation?
3. What are some passages in the Gospels that put Jesus in a specific place.
4. Why did the angels roll away the stone from the entrance to Jesus' tomb?
5. Where did Jesus promise to be in the future?
6. Where is Jesus present with us today?
7. Jesus has ascended to heaven, so where is He now?
8. Where is God's right hand?
9. What does it mean that Jesus is sitting at God's right hand?
10. In what way will Jesus return on the Last Day?
11. Why is Jesus able to give us His body and blood in the Lord's Supper?
12. How does Jesus' human nature share in the glory given to Him as God?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.5.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Sharing of Attributes: *in Work*

In this lesson we look at some Bible passages that present Jesus' official acts or actions as the action of one Person, with each nature contributing its own characteristics to the action. We begin with the very first Gospel promise in Genesis 3:15: **"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."** The speaker is God, and He is speaking to the serpent, that is, to the devil who has used the serpent for his evil purposes. Jesus is the woman's Seed who shall bruise or crush Satan's head while having His own heel bruised. The action is the crushing of Satan. We see the human nature in the fact that this Person who crushes Satan is a human being born of a woman, who will have His heel bruised. But the divine nature is involved also, because no human being can possibly take on Satan and win the battle. The apostle Paul wrote regarding the devil and all his hosts: **"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"** (Ephesians 6:12). Human nature, acting by itself, could not hope to defeat Satan. But Jesus' human nature was necessary in order for Him to be the woman's Seed and to have His heel bruised, that is, to be put to death in order to take away Satan's power. **"It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief"** (Isaiah 53:10).

The apostle John refers to both natures in Christ when he writes: **"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7). The action is cleansing from sin. The human nature contributes the blood that can be sacrificed to God. But the blood of any ordinary person would cleanse no one from sin. It has to be the blood of One with a divine nature, namely, the Son of God. For it is written: **"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly"** (Psalm 49:7-8). Only the blood of One who is God Himself has enough value to redeem sinners.

Peter, Jesus' apostle, wrote that Jesus **"Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed"** (1 Peter 2:24). Again we see the two natures cooperating in our salvation: the human nature contributes the body that was crucified – the body that could be beaten by stripes – but the divine nature is necessary in order for such suffering to provide healing – to actually bear our sins and take them away, to atone for them by means of a costly sacrifice.

Similar passages can be found in the Gospels, in the book of Acts, and in the epistles. Examples include John 1:29, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:2, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, and Hebrews 2:14, which says: **"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."** In order to destroy the power of death, Jesus had to be God. But He had to be man in order to die for our sins and destroy death and the devil. In all His functions – as Savior, Mediator, King, Priest, Prophet, Lord, and Shepherd – Jesus carried out His official actions as one Person using of both of His natures in order to accomplish His purpose.

How important it is to remember that Jesus died not only as man but also as God! Just as the Child Jesus in the manger was the Lord God Himself – as the angels told the Bethlehem shepherds – so the Man Jesus that was nailed to the cross was the Lord God Himself. Thus, it is correct to say that our

God, the mighty Creator, died for the sins of man, His creation. It needs to be emphasized that Jesus died on the cross not only in His human nature but also in His divine nature. We dare not separate the two natures from each other when we consider Jesus' actions. And when Jesus returns, He will return as God and man in one Person, our Savior.

Questions

1. In what way does Genesis 3:15 picture the coming Savior as both God and man?
2. Why was it necessary for Him to be man?
3. Why was it necessary for Him to be God?
4. Why could not even Jesus as a holy, perfect Man save us from our sins?
5. Why could God not save us without taking on a human nature?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Two States of Jesus' Existence: Humiliation and Exaltation

The Bible clearly makes a separation or distinction between two states or conditions in Jesus' life. Jesus Himself called attention to this distinction when He spoke to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus on Easter Sunday afternoon. At the time they did not know that the Man walking with them was Jesus. This Man said to them they were foolish for not believing what the prophets had foretold about the Messiah: **"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"** (Luke 24:25-26). The prophets foretold both the suffering of the Christ and the glory that would follow. First, humiliation; then, exaltation.

Jesus' apostle Peter also showed that the prophets foretold these two states, for he wrote that the prophets **"prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"** (1 Peter 1:10-11).

The terms themselves – humiliation and exaltation – come from Paul's letter to the Philippians, where we read: **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:5-11). Another term sometimes used instead of humiliation is "exinanition".

In his second letter to the Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul encouraged generosity on the part of the Corinthians by writing: **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"** (2 Corinthians 8:9). The purpose of Jesus' humiliation – His becoming poor – was to make us rich, not in earthly goods, but in spiritual treasures: the forgiveness of sins, faith in Christ, the sure hope of eternal salvation, the vast riches of heaven itself.

The letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus' time of humiliation as **"the days of His flesh"** during which time He **"offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears"** (Hebrews 5:7) to His heavenly Father. And then, **"having been perfected"** (having completed His work of redeeming the world through His suffering), **"He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"** (Hebrews 5:9).

From the day of Pentecost onward Jesus' followers have presented the life of the Savior according to these two states of living. Peter accused the thousands who gathered on Pentecost of crucifying their Messiah: **"Him... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death,"** but then he continued: **"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death"** (Acts 2:23-24). Jesus' death and burial were the last phases of His humiliation; after that there was nothing but exaltation and glory. As Peter said: **"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to**

the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33). And all of this was “by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).

Questions

1. What are the two states or conditions of Jesus’ life?
2. How did the Old Testament prophets speak of these two states?
3. What did Jesus say to the two disciples at Emmaus about these two states?
4. What is included in the humiliation, and what is included in the exaltation, according to Philippians 2:5-11?
5. What was the purpose of Jesus’ humiliation?
6. What was the end of Jesus’ period of humiliation?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The State of Humiliation

Jesus' state of humiliation began when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. At the same time, **"The Word became flesh"** (John 1:14). In other words, the incarnation began at the same time as Jesus' state of humiliation. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that incarnation, in itself, is not humiliation. The fact that God became man is a mighty miracle, but Jesus incarnate still had His glory. We see Jesus, as man, in His glory at the mountain of transfiguration. If Jesus came in this glory, it would not have been any humiliation at all. We also see that Jesus' incarnation is not part of His state of humiliation from the fact that Jesus' state of humiliation came to an end, but Jesus' incarnation is still in effect and will remain in effect even when Jesus returns.

Notice that the One who **"made Himself of no reputation"** was not the *Word without flesh*, but **"Christ Jesus,"** who was already the *Word in flesh*. The name Jesus was not given to Him until He became flesh. He was **"in the form of God,"** that is, He was the God-man, the incarnate God on earth, and it was this God-man who **"made Himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself"** (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus' humiliation is not God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' humiliation is that the God-man, Jesus Christ, became the kind of man He became: one that did not use His Godhead in any way. He came into the world in poverty and humility. He did not appear as a fully-grown man with all knowledge, but He was born and raised by poor parents, growing up like any other Jewish boy of that time. And He lived the life of a servant without a place to call His own.

Philippians says that **"He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation"** (Philippians 2:6-7). The best explanation of these words, according to the context, is that Jesus Christ did not consider His equality with God as something to be displayed, as one would display the treasures gained in a robbery. Instead He veiled or hid His divine nature in order to carry out His assignment as Redeemer. This assignment involved obedience. Just like any other human, Jesus was required to obey God's laws, to suffer and die as a human being, which is the punishment for sin. In a state of glory, as on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus could not have carried out His Father's plan of salvation. That is why He had to empty Himself, and humble Himself even to the point of crucifixion and death.

Jesus' state of humiliation, then, consists in this: that He did not consider His equality with God as something to be paraded as spoils of victory, but He took on the form of a slave (**"bondservant"**) in the interest of our redemption. Jesus in His state of humiliation was truly God and truly man, but He did not use His divine nature except on rare occasions (for example, when He performed miracles). Jesus in His state of humiliation voluntarily gave up the full use or continual use of His divine powers for a certain period of time. He did not give up the possession of His powers, but only the full and continual use of them. As His miracles show, He did sometimes use His divine powers partially or temporarily in His state of humiliation.

If Jesus had not humbled Himself, the Jewish leaders and the Roman governor would never have **"killed the Prince of life"** (Acts 3:15). If Jesus had not humbled Himself, He never would have **"died for our sins according to the Scriptures"** (1 Corinthians 15:3), that is, in accordance with Old Testament prophecy. If Jesus had not humbled Himself, He never could have **"loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma"** (Ephesians 5:2).

The Gospels give us many glimpses of Jesus' life in His state of humiliation. There is no doubt that Jesus was born to a poor family. The offering presented at the Temple when Jesus was forty days old was the offering of the poor: **"A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons"** (Luke 2:24). Jesus once said to a would-be follower: **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"** (Matthew 8:20). One of the most amazing facts about Jesus' humiliation was His non-use of His divine omniscience, as when He told His disciples: **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"** (Mark 13:32).

Questions

1. Which came first, the state of humiliation or the state of exaltation?
2. What are some differences between humiliation and incarnation?
3. What kind of human being did Jesus become when He **"became flesh"**?
4. What is the difference between possession of divine powers and the use of divine powers?
5. Why did Jesus have to humbled Himself in order to be our Savior?
6. What are some incidents in which Jesus used His divine powers in His state of humiliation?
7. Give some evidence of Jesus' poverty in His state of humiliation.



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.1.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Conception and Birth

The *Apostles' Creed* summarizes Jesus' state of humiliation in six phases: conception by the Holy Spirit, birth from the virgin Mary, suffering under Pontius Pilate, crucifixion, death, and burial. In Hebrews 5:7 this period in Jesus' life is called **"the days of His flesh."** The apostle Paul spoke of this time as knowing **"Christ according to the flesh"** (2 Corinthians 5:16).

The Bible makes it very clear that the Baby Jesus had no human father. He was conceived in Mary's womb by God, the Holy Spirit. When the angel Gabriel first visited Mary, a virgin girl in Nazareth, and told her that she would give birth to a son, she asked: **"How can this be, since I do not know a man?"** (Luke 1:34). With these words she did not mean she was unacquainted with any man; she was already betrothed (legally bound for marriage) to the carpenter Joseph at this time. What Mary spoke of was sexual knowledge; she was not having sexual intercourse with any man, and, therefore, there was no way she could become pregnant according to ordinary means.

Gabriel answered her plainly: **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"** (Luke 1:35). Is possible for God, the Holy Spirit, to create the beginning of a human being in Mary's womb and performing the role usually played by a male father? Gabriel's statement is the only answer we need: **"With God nothing will be impossible"** (Luke 1:37).

Thus, Mary became pregnant with a male baby in her womb. Mary visited her pregnant cousin Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea. When she went into Elisabeth's house and greeted her, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, who led her to say: **"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe (John the Baptist) leaped in my womb for joy"** (Luke 1:42-44). Notice that Elisabeth called Mary the mother of her Lord. At this time the Son of God was already in Mary's womb, even though she was still a virgin.

Meanwhile, the carpenter Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy and he was trying to decide what he should do. He knew that this baby in her womb was not his child. The only possible conclusion he could come to was that Mary was guilty of sexual sin, and that it was only proper for him to break off his legal betrothal to her. But he was an honorable man, and he did not want to hurt Mary or her reputation in any way. Matthew tells us: **"Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly"** (Matthew 1:19). He did not know what Mary and Elisabeth knew, that this Child was **"of the Holy Spirit"** (Matthew 1:18).

At this point God intervened: **"An angel of the Lord appeared to him (Joseph) in a dream, saying, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins'"** (Matthew 1:20-21).

Joseph was already her legal husband, for in those days a betrothal was binding, and so now he began to live with Mary as her husband, to protect her from foolish gossip. But Matthew is careful to add that Joseph **"did not know her (sexually) till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS"** (Matthew 1:25).

Luke chapter 2 gives us further details concerning Jesus' birth: **"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn"** (Luke 2:1-7).

This is the way God sent His Son into the world – not in glory, but in poverty and humility. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. His virgin birth was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, who gave this sign to King Ahaz of Judah 700 years earlier: **"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"** (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew tells us that Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of this prophecy: **"All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel.' which is translated, 'God with us'"** (Matthew 1:22-23). The birthplace of the Messiah was foretold by the prophet Micah: **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"** (Micah 5:2).

Jesus' birth was also the fulfillment of the first Gospel promise in Genesis 3:15, where God said to Satan: **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."** Jesus was definitely the woman's Seed, born of the virgin Mary. He was the One who was destined to undo the damage caused by Satan through his temptation of Adam and Eve.

There are some who claim that Jesus was born without Mary's womb being opened, but there is no Scriptural basis for such a claim. Some also teach that Mary remained a virgin all her life, but this is highly unlikely. Mary was the wife of Joseph; there is no reason to believe that Mary refrained from a normal sexual life with her husband after the birth of Jesus. Such a sexual union is expected in marriage, as the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth: **"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control"** (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). During Jesus' ministry, the Gospels often mention Mary with Jesus' brothers, who most likely were younger sons of Mary and Joseph. Jesus had four brothers: James, Joses, Simon, Judas, and several sisters (Matthew 13:55-56).

The virgin birth of Jesus is a clear teaching of Holy Scripture. But many so-called Bible teachers and Christian leaders today deny this doctrine. They consider it a mere fable invented many years after Jesus was born in order to enhance the reputation of the prophet Jesus. In order to remain faithful to Scripture, it is necessary for us to teach and confess that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We should not go beyond this and teach anything that is a mere opinion held by Christian teachers, including some Lutherans, such as the teaching that Mary remained a virgin all her life. This teaching originated in the days when virginity was praised as far superior to the marriage state.

It is important to recognize that the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and His birth of the virgin Mary happened at definite times and places. Luke's Gospel, in particular, is careful to stress the times and places where these events took place: Nazareth, Bethlehem, in the days of Caesar Augustus and Quirinius, etc. In other words, the Bible account is not myth or legend but factual history.

Questions

1. What are the six statements in the *Apostles' Creed* that summarize Jesus' state of humiliation?
2. What is the Scriptural proof that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit?
3. How would you answer someone who claims that such a conception is impossible?
4. Why did Joseph think that he should break his betrothal to Mary?
5. How was Joseph persuaded to take Mary as his wife?
6. How did God arrange for Mary's Son to be born in Bethlehem?
7. Which prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus' birth?
8. Why is it unlikely that Mary remained a virgin after Jesus' birth?
9. Why is it important for us to teach the doctrines of Jesus' conception and birth according to the Biblical account?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.6.1.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Obedience in His Earthly Life

God made sure that Jesus was brought up by parents who were careful to observe the laws of God given to the Israelites. We read in Luke 2:21: **“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”** For the fact is that **“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”** (Galatians 4:4-5). Since Jesus was born under the law, it was necessary for Him to be obedient to the law of God. Jesus could redeem us only by perfectly obeying the laws of God. Jesus' perfect obedience to the law throughout His life is known as His active obedience.

We see Jesus' obedience also in what took place when He was forty days old. The days of Mary's purification were completed after forty days, as the law of Moses prescribed, and Jesus, as the first-born son, was presented to the Lord at Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph gave the proper sacrifice **“according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons’”** (Luke 2:22-24). Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem only after **“they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord”** (Luke 2:39).

Except for the account of Luke 2:41-52, which tells of an incident in Jesus' life when He was 12 years old, the Bible is absolutely silent with respect to Jesus' youth, education, and early manhood. Since He was the Son of God and without sin, His life must have been extraordinary in many ways. Yet, at the same time, it was quite ordinary. Joseph and Mary seemed very surprised when they found Him **“in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions”** (Luke 2:46). His conversation with them at that time revealed that He knew He was the Son of God, but they did not seem to understand what He meant. Because He was under the law, Jesus **“was subject to them”** (Luke 2:51). He was a perfectly obedient Child. At the same time, He always put God first. And thus **“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men”** (Luke 2:52).

After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He became a traveling preacher and teacher. The four Gospels give us many accounts of what He did and said. Although He was accused by His enemies of breaking the Sabbath and blaspheming, these accusations were not true. Jesus was completely without sin. No one replied when He asked them: **“Which of you convicts Me of sin?”** (John 8:46). They could not point to anything He had ever done wrong.

Jesus' whole life must have been filled with pain and suffering, for He, as a holy, sinless Person, was living in a sinful world among sinful people, including His own family and His own twelve apostles. We hear of His anger and also grief and pain at times, both because of the evil of His enemies and the lack of understanding among His followers. Long before He was crucified, Jesus was **“a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”** (Isaiah 53:3). Think of the sadness that He must have experienced as He realized that **“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him”** (John 1:11)! Think of the pain He must have felt in His heart when He said: **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”** (Matthew 23:37). Luke tells us that **“He saw the city and wept over it”** (Luke 19:41).

When Jesus' nine disciples were unable to drive out a demon that was plaguing a man's son, Jesus said: **"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?"** (Matthew 17:17). In the days after Lazarus' death, when He was with Mary and Martha, **"He groaned in the spirit and was troubled"** (John 11:33). And **"Jesus wept"** at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:35).

Jesus' entire life was a life of perfect obedience. **"He became obedient to the point of death"** (Philippians 2:8). **"He learned obedience by the things which He suffered"** (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus' perfect obedience was necessary for our salvation. **"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous"** (Romans 5:19).

Questions

1. Which laws of God did Joseph and Mary obey in Jesus' infancy?
2. What do we know of Jesus' boyhood and education?
3. What is meant by Jesus' active obedience?
4. How did Jesus obey the 4th Commandment when He was 12?
5. Why didn't Jesus' enemies challenge Him when He claimed to be without sin?
6. What kind of pain and suffering did Jesus experience in His life?
7. Why is it so important that Jesus was sinless?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.6.1.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Suffering, Death, and Burial

The four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, devote many of their chapters to the last week of Jesus' life **"in the flesh."** This week is called Holy Week. It begins with Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey. It continues with Jesus' last debates with the Pharisees and scribes in the temple courts on Monday and Tuesday. We are not told of any events that happened on Wednesday. We know what happened on Thursday and Friday which the *Apostles' Creed* summarizes with the statements: **"suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried."** The four evangelists tell us of Jesus' last Passover supper with His twelve disciples, His institution of the Lord's Supper, His last words to His disciples (John 14-16), His prayer to His Father (John 17), His agony in Gethsemane, His arrest, His trials before the Jewish Sanhedrin, His trial before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, His condemnation, His journey to Calvary, His crucifixion, His seven words from the cross, His death, and His burial. Everyone who wants to be a witness for Christ should become thoroughly familiar with all of these events that represent the climax of Jesus' life in His state of humiliation. As it is written, **"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"** (Philippians 2:8).

There are two main Old Testament prophecies that show Jesus' suffering and death on the cross and its meaning for us. Psalm 22 begins with the cry: **"My God, My God, why Have You forsaken Me?"** (Psalm 22:1). It then describes Jesus' suffering on the cross a thousand years before it took place. Isaiah 53 not only describes Jesus' suffering, but tells us its cause and effect: **"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed... And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"** (Isaiah 53:5-6). The book of Lamentations, written by the prophet Jeremiah, describes how God poured out His righteous wrath on His chosen city of Jerusalem because of its sin. This description pictures the way God poured out His righteous wrath on His Son Jesus because He was bearing our sins.

Jesus was well aware of what He had to experience in order to carry out His assignment to redeem the world. At the very beginning of His ministry Jesus knew that He would suffer, die and rise again, for He gave the Jewish leaders this sign: **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"** (John 2:19). Around this same time Jesus said to the Pharisee Nicodemus: **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:14-15).

As the time for His suffering and death came closer, Jesus openly referred to what was going to happen to Him. He said: **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep... No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"** (John 10:11, 18). More than once Jesus took His disciples aside **"and began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day"** (Matthew 16:21).

Although Jesus' entire life was a life of suffering, the full fury of God's wrath began to fall on Him on Thursday evening as He took Peter, James, and John with Him to a spot in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here Jesus prayed in great agony in anticipation of what was to befall Him on the next day. Luke tells us: **"He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me;**

nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:41-44).

The full punishment for all human sin fell on Jesus on Friday – in particular from noon until about 3:00 in the afternoon. Matthew reports: **“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”** (Matthew 27:45-46). What is the punishment for human sin? It is eternal death, that is, eternal separation from all the blessings of God. That is what Jesus experienced on the cross in our place. He was abandoned and forsaken and cursed by God as the One responsible for all the sin of the entire world of all ages. There is no way we can fully understand what kind of suffering this must have been for One who is in Himself holy and spotless. The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians: **“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)”** (Galatians 3:13). Paul also wrote: **“For He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”** (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus took our sin on Himself so that we might become righteous by faith in Him.

Jesus’ suffering and death and their meaning for us was the main topic of the apostles’ preaching, teaching and writing. We can find reference to Jesus’ suffering and death in every one of Paul’s letters. Here are some examples: **“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us... We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son”** (Romans 5:8-10). **“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and...He was buried, and...He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). **“Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”** (Ephesians 5:2). **“In whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”** (Colossians 1:14). **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him”** (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). **“The Man Christ Jesus...gave Himself a ransom for all”** (1 Timothy 2:6). **“Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people”** (Titus 2:13-14).

The apostles Peter and John also emphasized Jesus’ suffering and death: Jesus **“Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree”** (1 Peter 2:24). **“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7). **“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”** (1 John 2:2). **“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ... to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever”** (Revelation 1:5-6).

The burial of Jesus’ body proves that Jesus truly died, having been punished with the death we deserve because of our sins. **“In the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus”** (John 19:41-42). The prophet Isaiah had foretold that the Messiah’s burial would be associated with the rich: **“And they made His grave with the wicked – but with the rich in His death”** (Isaiah 53:9). The two men who buried Jesus were rich men: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. The place where Jesus was buried was Joseph’s own tomb.

Jesus’ burial is the last phase of Jesus’ humiliation. Jesus’ enemies believed that Jesus’ burial was the end of Jesus forever, but they were concerned that Jesus’ disciples might take His body from the tomb and tell the people He had risen from the dead, as He had foretold. Jesus’ disciples, however, were not in any frame of mind to do such a thing because of their grief and sadness. But just to make sure, Jesus’ enemies asked Pilate for a guard for the tomb. **“Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how’ So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard”** (Matthew 27:65-66).

Questions

1. What events took place during Holy Week?
2. Which Old Testament prophecies foretold Jesus' suffering and death?
3. What is the similarity between the destruction of Jerusalem and Jesus' death?
4. How do we know that Jesus knew He was going to suffer and die from the very beginning of His ministry?
5. Why did Jesus go through such agony in the Garden of Gethsemane?
6. What was Jesus undergoing during the three hours of darkness on Friday?
7. Why was Jesus' suffering on the cross necessary for our salvation?
8. Besides the references listed above, what other references to Jesus' suffering and death can you find in the New Testament letters?
9. What is the last phase of Jesus' state of humiliation?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The State of Exaltation

The difference between Jesus' state of humiliation and state of exaltation is not that Jesus began to be God or to possess divine attributes and powers in His exaltation. No, Jesus was God and possessed all of God's attributes in His state of humiliation. The difference is that in His state of exaltation Jesus began to use fully and continuously the divine attributes that He possessed already at His conception because of the union of human nature and divine nature in one Person.

Jesus' state of humiliation is in the past and it does not ever have to be repeated. Jesus' state of exaltation began shortly after His burial and continues to the present time. It will continue in the future even to eternity. **"Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God"** (Romans 6:9-10).

After telling the Christians in Philippi that Jesus humbled Himself even to the point of death on the cross, the apostle Paul spoke of Jesus' state of exaltation: **"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus' disciples recognized Jesus' body as the same body that had been nailed to the cross, but His body was now a glorious body, as Paul wrote: **"The Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself"** (Philippians 3:20-21). After He came to life again, Jesus appeared and disappeared at will; He went through locked doors on Easter evening. After He ascended into heaven, He appeared to Stephen and the apostles Paul and John in a glorious form. The apostle Peter also used the term "glory" to describe Jesus' state of exaltation: **"The Spirit of Christ (in the Old Testament prophets) testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"** (1 Peter 1:11).

When Jesus' followers gathered around Him at the appointed mountain in Galilee, Jesus proclaimed His new glorious existence among them: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:18-20). When Jesus returns at the end of the age, He will not come in a humble form as in His first coming, for we read: **"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory"** (Matthew 25:31).

In His state of exaltation Jesus did not give up His human nature. He remains the God-man, with all divine powers and attributes at His disposal. Jesus' exaltation is presented in Scripture as a gift from God to His human nature. **"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession"** (Psalm 2:8). **"You have crowned Him with glory and honor. You have made Him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under His feet"** (Psalm 8:5-6). Peter said to the murderers of our Lord: **"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior"** (Acts 5:30-31). The apostle Paul wrote: **"He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at**

His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet” (Ephesians 1:20-22).

It is clear from Scripture that Jesus remains a true human being with a human nature in His state of exaltation. The incarnation remains in effect. The apostle Paul uses the same word “man” for both Adam and Jesus Christ in his grand comparison of the two: **“If by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many”** (Romans 5:15). Paul used the same comparison in his first letter to the Corinthians: **“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven”** (1 Corinthians 15:47). **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”** (1 Timothy 2:5).

When Jesus’ body was in the tomb, He was made alive again. That is when His exaltation began and, according to Scripture, His exaltation will never end. The prophet Isaiah wrote of Him: **“He shall prolong His days”** (Isaiah 53:10). God told Daniel in a dream: **“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed”** (Daniel 7:14). The angel Gabriel informed Mary before Jesus’ conception: **“He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”** (Luke 1:33). The letter to the Hebrews says of Christ: **“He continues forever”** (Hebrews 7:24). Jesus said to His apostle John on the island of Patmos: **“I am alive forevermore”** (Revelation 1:18).

In His state of exaltation Jesus is Lord over all persons, things, and places. In His state of humiliation **“Jesus was not yet glorified”** (John 7:39). That was obvious, because the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out on His followers. But on Pentecost Peter proclaimed that Jesus was indeed now glorified: **“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear... Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (Acts 2:32-33, 36). **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Philippians 2:10-11).

Although Jesus is presently in a state of exaltation, Christ’s Church on earth has not yet been glorified. Although every believer in Jesus possesses all of Christ’s treasures by faith in Him, the state of Christ’s Church, as well as of every believer in Christ, is still a state of humiliation. We bear the cross of Christ and endure shame for Christ’s sake. Jesus and His apostles made this clear many times and in many ways. For example, Jesus said: **“Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”** (Luke 14:27). He warned: **“In the world you will have tribulation”** (John 16:33). The apostle Paul did not promise his converts an easy life but told them: **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22).

But there is glory for every believer in Christ in the future. The glorious future that is promised to us makes it easier for us to bear the trials of this life: **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory”** (Colossians 3:1-4).

Questions

1. What is the difference between Jesus' state of humiliation and His state of exaltation?
2. What kind of body does Jesus have in His state of exaltation?
3. What is the difference between Jesus' first coming and His second coming?
4. What does God give to Jesus' human nature in His exaltation?
5. How do we know that Jesus' human nature continues even now?
6. When did Jesus' state of exaltation begin, and when will it end?
7. What did Peter proclaim to the murderers of Jesus on Pentecost?
8. What is the condition of Christ's Church on earth until He returns?
9. What did Jesus tell His disciples to comfort them in their trials?
10. What does Jesus want you to remember when you are persecuted?



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.2.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Descent into Hell

The *Apostles' Creed* lists five phases in Jesus' state of exaltation: three in the past, one in the present, and one in the future. The first of these is Jesus' descent into hell. There is probably no statement in the *Apostles' Creed* that is so misunderstood as this. We shall first of all discuss the Bible passages that deal with Jesus' descent into hell and then point out some of the ways in which it has been misunderstood and taught that are contrary to the plain Word of God.

In his first letter, the apostle Peter declared: **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water”** (1 Peter 3:18-20). The only “prison” we know of from Scripture is hell, and so it is clear that after His death and burial, Jesus went to hell. But He went to hell only after He was made alive again; therefore, Jesus' descent into hell was not a phase of His humiliation, but it was the beginning of His exaltation. He was made alive in the tomb – His soul was reunited with His body and He was physically alive. In that new glorious body, Jesus Christ, the God-man, descended to hell.

For what purpose did Jesus descend into hell? Peter says He **“preached to the spirits in prison.”** The Greek word that is translated “preached” does not mean “to preach the Gospel,” but it means He made a proclamation of some kind, as a herald might make some public announcement. We have to determine what is being announced from the context. Whom did Jesus address in hell? Peter says He addressed the spirits of those who were disobedient in the days of Noah, that is, those persons who did not listen to Noah's warnings of the coming destruction and were overwhelmed by the waters of the great flood. Where did the spirits of these unbelievers go? They went to prison; they went to hell. That is there where the exalted Jesus addressed them and told them what had happened. He had suffered and died and had been buried and now He was alive again, victorious over all the forces of Satan and hell and death and sin. He was not giving these spirits a second chance to repent and believe, but He was declaring to them His victory over Satan and all his army. We know that Jesus was not giving these persons a second chance, for God's word says: **“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27).

The apostle Paul was most likely referring to Jesus' descent into hell when he wrote to the Christians in Colossae: **“And He (God or Christ) has taken it (the handwriting of requirements that was against us) out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (the cross, or more likely, “in Him”, that is, Christ)¹”** (Colossians 2:14-15). When did Jesus triumph over Satan? The letter to the Hebrews says: **“He Himself likewise shared in the same (flesh and blood), that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”** (Hebrews 2:14-15). It was through His death that Jesus took away the power of Satan and all his forces. Through His death Jesus **“disarmed principalities and powers,”** that is, the forces of the devil. After His death (and burial) Jesus came to life again in the tomb and then made a public spectacle of them by descending to hell and proclaiming His victory over

¹ The Greek can be translated either “in it”, referring to the cross, or “in Him”, referring to Jesus.

them. Jesus' descent into hell did not involve any suffering on His part. Jesus suffering was finished. But now, having won the victory, Jesus declared His victory in hell. Jesus informed all the spirits in hell that the one who had deceived them had been defeated.

There is one other passage that may refer to Jesus' descent into hell. The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians: **"Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.' (Now this, 'He ascended' – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"** (Ephesians 4:8-10). Jesus' ascension into heaven was a sign that Jesus had triumphed over "captivity," that is, Jesus had taken captive the one who had held all mankind captive, namely, the devil. Jesus' ascension into heaven was preceded by a descent into the lower parts of the earth, which could very well refer to Jesus' descent into hell. Some Bible students, however, consider this descent simply to refer to Jesus' coming down to earth from heaven. The passage does, however, link Jesus' descent with His ascent in victory and triumph.

The above, then, is what we know from Scripture concerning Jesus' descent into hell. It is clear that Jesus' descent into hell was not the last phase of His humiliation but the first phase of His exaltation. It was only after He was made alive again in victory that He descended to hell.

We must distinguish between Jesus' suffering on the cross, which was the equivalent of going to hell and suffering eternal torment because of our sins, and His descent into hell. It has become a predominant teaching among various Protestant churches that Jesus' descent into hell refers to Jesus' suffering hell in our place on the cross. But this simply does not agree with Scripture. The descent into hell does not in any way refer to Jesus' suffering of hell on the cross, because His descent into hell took place *after* His burial and *after* He was made alive again. Jesus did not suffer any torment after He died, because of His words from the cross: **"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit"** (John 19:30). There was no more suffering of hell after Jesus gave up His spirit. Luke tells us that Jesus said: **"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit"** (Luke 23:46). This shows that Jesus' spirit did not have to undergo any suffering in hell after that point. His spirit was with the Father in heaven.

It is also contrary to Scripture to teach that Jesus descended to hell to give a second chance to the spirits of the unbelievers. This idea is popular among those who teach that no one is destined to stay in hell forever, but that eventually everyone will be saved. But there would be no urgency in the Bible's constant call for repentance if one has another opportunity after death. We have already quoted Hebrews 9:27: **"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."** And what about Jesus' teaching in His story of the rich man and Lazarus? There we hear Abraham say to the rich man in hell: **"Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us"** (Luke 16:26). God's word is clear that there is no second chances after death. **"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The Roman Catholic Church has explained Jesus' descent into hell in a way that has no basis whatsoever in Scripture. They teach is that there are several places in the hereafter: hell, purgatory, and a limbo for Old Testament believers². In their view, Jesus descended to hell to set free the Old Testament believers. A Roman Catholic instruction book says: "After Jesus died, the soul of Christ descended into a place or state of rest, called limbo, where the souls of the just were waiting for Him. Christ did not go to the hell of the damned, but to the 'hell' of the just. In Holy Scriptures, it was called Abraham's bosom. St. Peter called it a prison. We call it limbo" (*My Catholic Faith*). But according to Scripture, the purpose of Christ's descent into hell was to proclaim His victory and the future judgment to those who were in hell.

² The Roman Catholic Church used to teach (unofficially) a limbo for unbaptized babies, but this doctrine was officially rejected in 2007.

Questions

1. Which passages in Scripture discuss Jesus' descent into hell?
2. How do we know that Jesus did not go to hell to give unbelievers a second chance?
3. What kind of preaching did Jesus do in hell when He went there?
4. Why do we say that Jesus' descent into hell is a phase of His exaltation, rather than a phase of His humiliation?
5. How do Jesus' last words from the cross show that Jesus did not descend into hell to suffer?
6. What strange idea is taught in the Roman Catholic Church about Jesus' descent into hell?
7. What was the purpose of Jesus' descent into hell?



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.6.2.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead

We come now to a very central teaching of Scripture. The apostle Paul tells us that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, there is no salvation or eternal life for anyone. In fact, the whole Christian teaching would be a fraud and a lie if Jesus did not rise from the dead. This is his testimony: **"If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"** (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

It may seem strange that the *Apostles' Creed* puts Jesus' descent into hell before His resurrection from the dead. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus descended into hell after He had been made alive again in the tomb. It seems that the resurrection was placed after His descent into hell because Jesus was not seen alive on earth as the risen Lord until after He descended into hell.

All three Persons of the Triune God were involved in Jesus' resurrection. We find many passages that speak of God or the Father raising Jesus from the dead. In his Pentecost address Peter attributed the raising of Jesus to God, saying: **"Him (Christ) ...you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up"** (Acts 2:23-24). Addressing the Jews again after he and John had healed a crippled beggar in Jesus' name, Peter said similar words: **"You...killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses"** (Acts 3:14-15). When Peter and John were brought before the authorities, Peter repeated the same testimony: **"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole"** (Acts 4:10). A short time later Peter and the other apostles repeated this same testimony: **"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree"** (Acts 5:30). When Peter was invited to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius, he said the same thing: **"We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day"** (Acts 10:39-40). Although the apostle Paul was not with the other apostles when Jesus first showed Himself alive, Paul's testimony was the same as Peter's. In the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia Paul said: **"They took Him (Jesus) down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead"** (Acts 13:29-30). Paul began his letter to the Galatian Christians with a similar testimony: **"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me"** (Galatians 1:1). In his letter to the Ephesians Paul spoke of **"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory"** and said that **"He raised Him (Christ) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand"** (Ephesians 1:17, 20). The letter to the Hebrews also speaks of **"the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead"** (Hebrews 13:20).

Jesus, the Son of God, declared more than once that He raised Himself from the dead. Early in His ministry He challenged the Jewish leaders: **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"** (John 2:19). Speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus said: **"Therefore My Father loves Me,**

because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17-18).

The Holy Spirit was also involved. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome that Jesus was **“declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”** (Romans 1:4). Later in the same letter Paul wrote: **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”** (Romans 8:11).

In the Old Testament, David had foretold that the dead body of Jesus would not undergo any decomposition or physical decay: **“Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption”** (Psalm 16:10). Both Peter and Paul in their preaching called attention to Psalm 16 and its fulfillment in Jesus (Acts 2:31 and Acts 13:37). This was Paul’s testimony: **“David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption”** (Acts 13:36-37).

After His resurrection Jesus had the same body as before, but now it was a glorious or glorified body in form. In order to prove to His disciples that He was the same Jesus who had been crucified and buried, the risen Christ **“showed them His hands and His feet”** (Luke 24:40). They also **“gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence”** (Luke 24:42-43). The evangelist John informs us that Jesus **“showed them His hands and His side”** (John 20:20). Even though He was the same Jesus, He did things in His physical body that He had not done or rarely done before. He came to His disciples on two Sundays **“when the doors were shut”** (John 20:19, 26). He was with two disciples on their walk to Emmaus and suddenly **“He vanished from their sight”** (Luke 24:31). In His new body Jesus was no longer subject to death as man’s Substitute. **“Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him”** (Romans 6:9). As Jesus’ disciples, we are given this promise: **“The Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to himself”** (Philippians 3:20-21).

Regarding Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Bible often refers to three days and three nights. This has confused some people. Jesus Himself said: **“As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”** (Matthew 12:40). But when we read of Jesus’ resurrection, it is clear that Jesus died and was buried on a Friday afternoon, and that He rose on Sunday morning. This does not amount to three days and three nights. The problem is solved when we realize that the Jews spoke of three days and three nights even when the period only included a portion of three separate days. If the period included even a portion of a day, that day was counted as a separate day. This was their idiom – their way of speaking – as can be seen from what is written about Esther in Esther 4:16 and Esther 5:1. This way of speaking may be strange to us, but it was the way they expressed themselves in those days.

Since the entire Christian teaching stands or falls with the absolute certainty of Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead, the devil has been striving ever since that first Easter to convince both unbelievers and believers as well that Jesus did not really rise from the dead with a glorified body. One of the first attempts to raise doubt concerning the resurrection is reported by Matthew in his Gospel. In order to prevent Jesus’ disciples from stealing Jesus’ dead body from the tomb and telling others that he had risen from the dead, Jesus’ enemies asked Pontius Pilate for permission to guard the tomb of Jesus. **“So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard”** (Matthew 27:66). But when Jesus decided to rise from the dead, the stone and the seal and the guard proved to be futile. For we are told that **“an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men”** (Matthew 28:2-4). But now they had to come up with some kind of story to explain why the tomb they

had been guarding was empty and the body of Jesus was nowhere to be seen. We read: **“Some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day”** (Matthew 28:11-15).

This explanation is full of holes. If they knew who stole the body, why did they not try to get it back? If they were sleeping, how did they know who took the body? If they had been sleeping on the job, would they not have been punished instead of being given extra pay?

There have been many other lies told since that time, trying to explain away Jesus’ resurrection. The wise philosophers in Athens could not accept Jesus’ resurrection. When Paul brought this message to them, **“some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.’ So Paul departed from among them”** (Acts 17:32-33). There were not many converts in Athens. The wise of the world do not want to accept any tale that is so incredible.

But the fact is that the bodily or physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead is one of the best authenticated events in all of history. God does not want us to have any doubts about the resurrection of Christ, for everything depends on whether it really happened or not. Satan’s attempts to overthrow this doctrine have succeeded in deceiving countless numbers of people, but the evidence is clear and powerful. Jesus’ resurrection took place exactly as it is recorded in the Scriptures. Each evangelist relates what happened from a different point of view; they include different details of what happened, but their accounts all fit together very well when we are willing to believe that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore without error.

The first report of Jesus’ resurrection was given to some women who arrived on early Easter Sunday morning to anoint Jesus’ dead body. They had not been able to finish everything they had wanted to do on Friday, because the Sabbath began at sunset on Friday, and they could do no work on the Sabbath. These women were greeted at Jesus’ tomb by an angel who said to them: **“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead”** (Matthew 28:5-7). Mark’s account is almost identical (Mark 16:6). In Mark’s account the speaking angel is described as **“a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side”** (Mark 16:5). When we read Luke’s account, we learn that the angel mentioned by Matthew and Mark was not alone. There were two angels, who appears as **“two men...in shining garments”** (Luke 24:4). Their message was the same: **“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again’”** (Luke 24:5-7). The evangelist John wrote his Gospel much later than the other three, and supplied additional details that had not been mentioned by them. There is no real contradiction between the various accounts.

Questions

1. Why is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead so important to Christians?
2. Which Person of the Triune God raised Jesus from the dead?
3. What had Psalm 16 foretold concerning Jesus' death?
4. How did Jesus prove to His disciples that He was the same Jesus who had been crucified?
5. What kind of body did Jesus have after His resurrection?
6. What did Jesus do in His risen body that He had not done before?
7. What is meant by the Jewish idiom of three days and three nights?
8. What was the first lie that was told about Jesus' resurrection?
9. What proves that this lie is truly a lie and cannot be true?
10. Why is it so hard for people to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
11. Compare the four Gospels in their accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.6.2.2.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Many Appearances of the Risen Christ

Jesus did not want His disciples or us to have any doubts about His bodily resurrection from the dead. For this reason, He appeared alive in their presence during a forty-day period after His resurrection. Luke says that Jesus **“presented Himself alive (to them) after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”** (Acts 1:3).

There are at least eleven occasions that are referred to in the four Gospels and in the book of Acts when Jesus appeared alive to various witnesses. We list them here in the probable order in which they occurred:

1. We read in Mark 16:9: **“Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.”** This appearance is described more fully in the Gospel of John. Mary Magdalene was one of several women who got up early on Sunday morning and walked to Jesus’ tomb for the purpose of anointing His dead body. They did not expect to see Him alive, even though He had told them many times that on the third day He would rise again. When these women got closer to the tomb, they realized that the stone at the entrance had been rolled away. Mary Magdalene immediately suspected foul play and left the other women to fetch Peter and John. John and Peter then both ran to the tomb. John got there first, but he did not go in. Peter then went in, and John followed. Both John and Peter **“saw the linen cloths lying there”** (John 20:5-6). Peter also saw **“the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself”** (John 20:7). There was no evidence of foul play.

Peter and John then returned to Jerusalem. But Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb. **“She saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain”** (John 20:12). When the angels asked her why she was weeping, she replied: **“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him”** (John 20:13). She still wanted to see His dead body so that she could anoint it. Then a man suddenly appeared whom she thought was the gardener. When He (the gardener who was actually Jesus) asked her why she was crying, she said to Him: **“Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away”** (John 20:15). Then Jesus said to her: **“Mary!” and she realized who He was. He told her to tell the others what had happened, and she “told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her”** (John 20:18).

2. The other women with whom Mary Magdalene had been walking had arrived at the tomb before John and Peter and Mary Magdalene. The angels whom they saw at the tomb told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. **“So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him”** (Matthew 28:8-9). But even after hearing reports from Mary Magdalene and the other women, the disciples at first **“did not believe”** (Mark 16:11,13). Luke gives a similar report: **“Their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them”** (Luke 24:11).

Jesus later **“rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen”** (Mark 16:14).

3. Among those who did not believe these first reports that Jesus had risen from the dead were two sad disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on that Sunday afternoon. The name of one of the two was Cleopas. When a Stranger (who was actually Jesus, but they did not recognize Him) joined them, He asked them why they were so sad. They told Him about Jesus’ suffering and death by crucifixion, and then they lamented: **“We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came seeing that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but Him they did not see”** (Luke 24:21-24). These two had all this information about what had happened, and still they were sad.

The Stranger then proceeded to give them an Old Testament lesson on the promises of the Messiah that included both suffering and death before there could be glory. He said to them: **“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all of the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”** (Luke 24:25-27).

When they then stopped at Emmaus and ate together, **“their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight”** (Luke 24:31). Immediately they returned to Jerusalem and informed the others of what they had seen and heard.

4. Around this same time the risen Jesus appeared alive to Simon Peter. We do not have any information as to where this happened or what kind of conversation Jesus and Peter had with each other. We only know that when the two travelers to Emmaus returned to the others in Jerusalem, the others were saying among themselves: **“The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”** (Luke 24:34). This appearance to Peter is the first one in Paul’s list of appearances of the risen Savior in his first letter to the Corinthians: **“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and ... He was buried, and ... He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and ... He was seen by Cephas”** (1 Corinthians 15:3-5).
5. The second appearance of the risen Jesus that Paul mentions is His appearance to **“the twelve”** (1 Corinthians 15:5). This no doubt refers to the appearance Jesus made to His disciples on Sunday evening. Only ten of the twelve were actually present. Judas Iscariot, of course, was not there, and Thomas also was missing. The most complete accounts of this appearance are recorded in Luke 24:36-42 and John 20:19-23. Jesus greeting to them was **“Peace be with you”** (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21). At first they were terrified, but eventually they **“were glad when they saw the Lord”** (John 20:20). Jesus showed them His hands, His feet and His side, and He ate in their presence. It was at this time that Jesus **“breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are redeemed”** (John 20:22-23).
6. Thomas was not with the others when Jesus appeared on Easter Sunday evening. When the others said that they had seen the Lord, he refused to believe them. He said: **“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe”** (John 20:25). Jesus knew what Thomas had said. One week later, on the Sunday after Easter, Jesus appeared to the group again. This time Thomas was with them. **“Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing”** (John 20:27). Even Thomas was now convinced, and he said to Jesus: **“My Lord and my God!”** (John 20:28).

7. The seventh appearance of the risen Jesus to His followers was to seven of His disciples as they were fishing at the Sea of Galilee. Among the seven were Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, and John. They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. Then a Man on shore (who turned out to be Jesus) told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. They followed His suggestion and caught 153 large fish. John told Peter that the Man on shore must be Jesus. Jesus made breakfast for them, and they ate. After the meal Jesus had an extended conversation with Peter, who had denied Him three times after His arrest. Now three times Peter confessed his love for Jesus, and Jesus told him to feed and tend His sheep and lambs. This account is told to us in detail in John 21:1-25, and it says that **“this is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead”** (John 21:14). It is called the third time because John is referring to the times Jesus appeared to His disciples as a group, rather than to one or two individuals (the previous two times are #5 and #6).
8. On the Thursday of Holy Week, when Jesus’ betrayal and arrest, He had said to His disciples: **“After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee”** (Matthew 26:32). This is why the angels at Jesus’ tomb told the women: **“Tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him”** (Matthew 28:7). This eighth appearance of Jesus had been planned for a long time. Jesus told them when and where He would appear to them. So: **“The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted”** (Matthew 28:16-17). It was at this time that Jesus gave them what is called the Great Commission: to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them and teaching them to observe His instructions. Jesus here also promised to be with them always as they carried out His instructions.

It is very likely that this is the appearance the apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote to the Christians in Corinth: **“After than He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep”** (1 Corinthians 15:6). Since Jesus had announced this appearance in advance and had appointed a certain place for this appearance, it seems likely that as many disciples as possible would gather together at this time to see their Lord and to hear what He had to say to them.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, it was about twenty-five years later. Many of the 500 who had been there were still living, and the Christians in Corinth had the opportunity to get to know some of these witnesses and hear from their own lips what had happened. If they could not find any such witnesses, they would know that Paul was not telling them the truth, but Paul was sure of his details, and he knew that his account of Jesus’ resurrection appearances would stand up as completely truth. How many witnesses does it take to establish the truth of what took place? In this case there were over 500 witnesses! Again we see that the bodily resurrection of Jesus is one of the best authenticated events of all times. Our Lord does not want us to have any doubts that He really did rise from the dead.

9. The ninth appearance is mentioned only by Paul, and in few words: **“After that He was seen by James”** (1 Corinthians 15:7). There were several men named James among Jesus’ followers. The one referred to here was most likely Jesus’ brother James. He was a prominent leader of the congregation at Jerusalem at the time Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, so they would know who he was. James, the brother of John, was no longer living at this time. The other apostle James (known as James, the Less) was not a well-known leader at this time, so the Corinthians probably would not have known him.

James, the brother of Jesus, was not one of the twelve apostles; in fact, the Bible says that Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him during the years of His ministry. But James and the other brothers (Jude, Simon, Joses) did believe in Him after He rose from the dead and became leaders in the congregation at Jerusalem.

10. Paul tells us that after the risen Jesus was seen by James, He was seen **“by all the apostles”** (1 Corinthians 15:7). This appearance took place at the Mount of Olives when Jesus ascended to heaven. We shall save our discussion of this occasion for the next lesson.
11. In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul mentioned one last appearance of the risen Savior. As an apostle, he needed to include himself among the number of those who had seen the risen Christ: **“Last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time”** (1 Corinthians 15:8). Paul saw the risen Savior when he was on the road to Damascus, intending to find the Christians in that city and take them back to Jerusalem for trial and punishment – possibly even death. But as he neared Damascus, Jesus appeared to Him and called Him to be His special messenger and apostle to the Gentiles. The account of what happened to Paul (or Saul, as he was called at that time) is recorded in three places in the book of Acts: Acts 9:3-8, Acts 22:6-11, and Acts 26:12-18.

All of the events listed in the *Apostles’ Creed* are essential for our understanding and confessing of Jesus Christ, our Savior. But there can be no doubt that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead holds a very central place in Christian teaching. The main topic of the apostolic sermons in the book of Acts is Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection. When Jesus’ Jewish opponents asked Him for a sign that He was the Messiah, Jesus gave them the sign of Jonah, which is the sign of His resurrection: **“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”** (Matthew 12:40; also Matthew 16:4). Jesus’ death and resurrection were the subject of many Old Testament prophecies. During the forty-day period after His resurrection, Jesus taught His disciples and **“opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day’”** (Luke 24:45-46).

When the apostle Paul presented Christian doctrine in his letter to the Romans, Jesus’ resurrection was one of the points he stressed. In his introduction he pointed out that **“Jesus Christ our Lord”** was **“declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”** (Romans 1:3-4). After explaining that Abraham was saved by faith in the promise of the Messiah, Paul showed that our salvation is based on Jesus’ death and resurrection and our faith or trust in those events. He says righteousness **“shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification”** (Romans 4:24-25). Jesus was put to death because our sins were given to Him for punishment. Jesus was raised from the dead because God now declares the whole world righteous because the sin of the world has been taken away. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is God’s declaration to the whole world that the sins of the world borne by Jesus have been fully punished and now there is forgiveness for everyone in Him.

There are several other references to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead in Paul’s letter to the Romans. For example, he wrote: **“It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us”** (Romans 8:33-34). And Paul wrote: **“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”** (Romans 10:9). As we read the other New Testament letters, we find many other references to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. This is a vital Christian doctrine, and we cannot be saved without it.

The many so-called Christians who deny the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead should not be considered Christians at all. Without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there is no hope for salvation for any of us. Only a living Savior can save us, not one who has died and remains in his tomb. The dead Buddha, the dead Confucius, the dead Mohammed, and whatever other dead prophet there may be, cannot save us. Only the living Lord Jesus, who died for the sin of all, rose from the dead and is fully alive at the present time, can and has saved us.

Questions

1. Why did Jesus show Himself alive to His disciples so many times?
2. Who was the first to see Jesus alive after His resurrection?
3. What did Peter and John discover when they went to Jesus' tomb?
4. What did the other women who went to the tomb see there?
5. How did Jesus' disciples react to the accounts of the women?
6. Why were Cleopas and his friend so sad as they walked to Emmaus?
7. What did the Stranger (Jesus) point out to them from the Bible?
8. Why were Jesus' disciples behind locked doors on Sunday evening?
9. What kind of authority did Jesus give to His disciples that night?
10. How did Jesus prove to them that He was the Jesus who had been dead?
11. What convinced Thomas that Jesus had risen from the dead?
12. What was the largest number of people saw Jesus at one time?
13. What instructions did Jesus give to His disciples on the mountain in Galilee?
14. On what mountain did Jesus ascend into heaven?
15. Why did Paul say he was born out of due time?
16. What is meant by the sign of Jonah?
17. What did the resurrection of Jesus prove about Jesus?
18. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for our salvation?
19. What does this sentence mean: "The resurrection of Jesus is God's announcement to the whole world that its sins are forgiven"?
20. What is one of the great differences between Christianity and other religions?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.6.2.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Ascension to Heaven

Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection. Since Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, the ascension of Jesus took place on a Thursday. Jesus used those forty days to appear to His disciples from time to time and explain to them how His suffering, death, and resurrection was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Luke 24:27, 44-45). **“He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures”** (Luke 24:45). He spoke to them concerning **“the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”** (Acts 1:3). Their question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) showed that they still needed such instruction.

Jesus' last words to them before His ascension are recorded in Luke's two writings: the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Among His last words we find this directive: **“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high”** (Luke 24:47-49). The Promise of His Father refers to what John the Baptist had foretold at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry: that Jesus would baptize them **“with the Holy Spirit and fire”** (Matthew 3:11). **“He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father”** (Acts 1:4). Jesus then explained: **“John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”** (Acts 1:5, 8).

It is possible that at this same time Jesus spoke the words recorded in Mark 16:15-18, although He could have spoken these words earlier when He gave the Great Commission to His disciples on the mountain in Galilee: **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:15-16). He also told them of the signs that would accompany their preaching of the Word, such as the driving out of demons, the speaking in tongues, the curing of the sick, and supernatural protection against serpents and deadly poison.

According to the witnesses, Jesus' ascension to heaven was a bodily and physical going up into the sky for a certain distance until a cloud made it impossible to see Him. Mark tells us: **“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”** (Mark 16:19). Luke informs us where the ascension of Jesus took place: **“He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven”** (Luke 24:50-51).

Luke provides more details in the book of Acts: **“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath days' journey”** (Acts 1:9-12).

Questions

1. When and where did Jesus' ascension to heaven take place?
2. How did Jesus spend the forty days before His ascension?
3. What did Jesus promise to send to His disciples in a short time?
4. When was this promise fulfilled?
5. What last instructions did Jesus give His disciples before He went up?
6. Why did the disciples need the Holy Spirit to come upon them?
7. What was Jesus doing as He went up?
8. What was the message of the two angels who spoke after Jesus went up?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.2.4 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Sitting at the Right Hand of God and His Future Return

Mark's account of Jesus' ascension says that **"He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God"** (Mark 16:19). What is meant by Jesus' sitting at the right hand of God? To answer this question, we have to examine the ways that the Bible explains the right hand of God. The letter to the Hebrews uses this expression several times. We read in Hebrews 1:3-4: **"When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He had by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."** Sitting at God's right hand certainly indicates glory and honor. With reference to Psalm 8, we read in Hebrews 2:9: **"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor."**

Hebrews 4:14 says that Jesus is **"a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens"** – not being contained in a certain spot in the heavens. In Hebrews 7:26 Jesus is described as **"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens."** Again, in Hebrews 8:1 Jesus is called **"a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."** We read: **"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool"** (Hebrews 10:12-13). **"Jesus...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"** (Hebrews 12:2). It is clear that sitting at the right hand of God indicates victory, completion of His assignment, glory, honor, majesty, and power – without restrictions of any kind, higher than the heavens.

Perhaps the clearest explanation of what sitting at the right hand of God means is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where we read that God **"raised Him (Christ) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all"** (Ephesians 1:20-23). We also read in Ephesians 4:10 that He **"ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things."** In this same way the apostle Peter says: **"Jesus Christ...has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him"** (1 Peter 3:21-22).

It is comforting for us Christians still on earth to consider that our Lord Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again, is sitting at the right hand of God, willing to use His power and authority for the good of those who believe in Him. For example, we read this in Paul's letter to the Romans: **"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"** (Romans 8:31-34). A similar statement is made in Hebrews 7:25: **"He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."** The fact that Christ is praying (interceding) for us at this very moment surely should help us resist temptations to sin. The fact that Christ is at this very moment ruling all things for the benefit of His Church should encourage us to keep preaching the Gospel even though our efforts often seem to be without fruit.

On the basis of passages like these one of our Lutheran confessions, *The Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration*, says: “Christ can be and is present wherever He wills, and in particular...He is present with His Church and community on earth as Mediator, King, Head, and High Priest... He is present not only according to His deity, but also according to and with His assumed human nature, according to which He is our Brother and we flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone (Ephesians 5:30)” (*Book of Concord*, Kolb-Wengert Edition, p. 631).

After Jesus ascended to heaven at the Mount of Olives, two angels appeared to announce that Jesus would return just as they had seen Him go. Jesus’ return is the phase of Jesus’ exaltation that remains to be fulfilled in the future. We shall consider what the Bible says about Jesus’ return in Chapter 15 – Eschatology or The Last Things.

Questions

1. Which phase of Jesus’ exaltation is taking place at this very moment?
2. What is meant by the statement: “God’s right hand is everywhere”?
3. What concepts are associated with sitting at God’s right hand?
4. What comfort is there for us that Jesus is at God’s right hand?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Work of Christ as Our Savior and Mediator

Our Savior's personal name is Jesus, which means Savior. His official name is Christ, or the Christ, which means Anointed One in Greek. Messiah is Hebrew and also mean Anointed One. In the Old Testament there were three offices for which people were anointed: priests, prophets, and kings. Jesus, as the Christ and Messiah, held all three of these offices, but He was not anointed with a special oil, as were the priests, prophets, and kings in the Old Testament. At His baptism Holy Spirit descended like a dove and alighted upon Him to make public the fact that He was God's Anointed One (Matthew 3:16), but Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit even before that. He was anointed from His conception, for the angels at His birth said: **"There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"** (Luke 2:11). For in truth **"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power"** (Acts 10:38).

As we consider Jesus' role as Priest, Prophet, and King, we shall also consider His great work of redeeming or saving the human race from the clutches of Satan and removing sin and death and their consequences from the world.

Psalms 2 speaks of **"the LORD (JHVH)"** and **"His Anointed"** (the Christ). It then quotes the LORD as saying: **"Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion"** (Psalm 2:6). The LORD God appointed Jesus to be the Christ. In Psalm 40 we hear that the Christ willingly accepted His office: **"Then I said, 'Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your law is within My heart'"** (Psalm 40:7-8; see also Hebrews 10:5-9). The prophet Zechariah declares: **"Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: 'Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! ...He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a Priest on His throne'"** (Zechariah 6:12-13). It was necessary for Jesus to be appointed and anointed by God for His office, for **"no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' As He also says in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"** (Hebrews 5:4-6). It was God who anointed Jesus to be Priest, Prophet, and King.

Jesus spoke of His work of saving the world as an assignment from His Father. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples: **"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work"** (John 4:34). Jesus said: **"I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father"** (John 10:17-18). In His long prayer on the night before His arrest Jesus said to His Father: **"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do... I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world"** (John 17:4-6).

It was God the Father who sent His Son into the world to carry out the great project of redeeming and saving the world. Jesus knew what His job was, for the Father had assigned it to Him and sent Him into the world to carry it out. Paul says: **"When the fullness of the time has come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"** (Galatians 4:4-5). God sent His Son to redeem the world. **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"** (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus Himself was fully aware of this

assignment. He said: **“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10). And everything that Jesus did, said, and experienced in carrying out His work was according to **“the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God”** (Acts 2:23), as Peter declared on Pentecost to those who had been responsible for the death of their Messiah.

When we say that Jesus is the Savior, and that His work is salvation, we mean that Jesus has saved us from sin, death, and damnation. When the angel told Joseph what to name Mary’s Child, he said to him: **“You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins”** (Matthew 1:21). Jesus did not share this work of salvation with anyone else – neither with the angels, nor with His disciples, nor with His mother. Peter boldly testified before the Jewish council: **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). At the home of Cornelius Peter declared that the Old Testament prophets taught this truth: **“To Him (Jesus) all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins”** (Acts 10:43). We receive forgiveness of sins in Him, and in Him alone! **“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him”** (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10).

In Jesus’ work of salvation, He served as the Mediator between holy God and sinful man. That is, Jesus was the go-between between God and man who resolved the rift between God and man caused by man’s sin. Jesus was the only One who could be such a Mediator, for He Himself was both true God and true man at the same time. In fact, the Son of God became a true human being for this very purpose: so that He could mediate between God and men, and thus save lost mankind. We read in the letter to the Hebrews: **“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”** (Hebrews 2:14-15). He had to become man in order to die for us. He had to be God in order to destroy the devil and his power.

Jesus is the perfect Mediator. **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”** (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Moses was a mediator between God and the children of Israel in the giving of the law covenant at Mount Sinai. **“But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises”** (Hebrews 8:6). This better covenant is the forgiveness of sins, won by our Mediator by His life, death, and resurrection. **“He (Jesus) is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”** (Hebrews 9:15). Jesus is **“the Mediator of the new covenant”** (Hebrews 12:24).

Questions

1. What is the meaning of the name Jesus?
2. What is the meaning of the name Christ?
3. Which persons were anointed with oil in the Old Testament?
4. With what was Jesus anointed?
5. For what offices was Jesus anointed?
6. Who appointed and anointed Jesus for these offices?
7. Prove that Jesus was willing to accept the offices and work He was given.
8. What name is given to the work of Jesus?
9. Why is the work of Jesus so important for us?
10. How many others helped Jesus carry out His work?
11. What is a Mediator?
12. What kind of Mediator was Jesus?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7.1.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Office of Jesus as a Prophet

The greatest of the Old Testament prophets was Moses. When Moses died, the record in Deuteronomy says: **“Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”** (Deuteronomy 34:10). Over and over again we read in the books of Moses: **“The LORD spoke to Moses”** (Numbers 31:1 and many other places). When Moses’ sister Miriam and Moses’ brother Aaron (who were both older than Moses) complained that Moses had more authority than they did, the Lord said to them: **“If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD”** (Numbers 12:6-8).

The duty of a prophet was to receive messages from the Lord and relay these messages to the people or to certain persons chosen by God. Because Moses did not consider himself a good speaker, God gave Moses his brother Aaron as his spokesman. God said to Moses: **“Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well... Now you shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God”** (Exodus 4:14-16).

God is the source of the message, and a faithful prophet speaks only the words that God has put into his mouth. The prophet Jeremiah pointed out the difference between a true prophet of God and the many false prophets. Of these false prophets Jeremiah said: **“They speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD”** (Jeremiah 23:16). On the other hand, God said through Jeremiah: **“He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully”** (Jeremiah 23:28). The apostle Peter was speaking about these faithful prophets when he wrote: **“Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:21).

God told Moses that at some future time He was going to send them another Prophet greater than Moses: **“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him”** (Deuteronomy 18:17-19). On the basis of this word from God, Moses announced to the people of Israel: **“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear”** (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Later prophets enlarged on this prophecy. Isaiah, in particular, spoke concerning this future Prophet: **“I will put My Spirit upon Him; ... He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench”** (Isaiah 42:1-3). This Prophet would not primarily condemn of sin, as the Old Testament prophets often did, but He would bring a sweet message of comfort to the troubled and sorrowing. Again, Isaiah said of this Prophet: **“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary”** (Isaiah 50:4). In Isaiah 61:1-3 we hear this description of the great Prophet: **“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to**

the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

To some extent, the Son of God functioned as a Prophet already in the Old Testament age. From time to time the LORD Himself spoke to His people directly. In such cases He appeared as the Angel of the LORD, who was Himself the LORD. The Angel of the LORD appeared to Sarah’s maid Hagar (Genesis 16), to Jacob (Genesis 31), to Moses (Exodus 3), and to Samson’s parents (Judges 13), among others. The identity of this Angel of the Lord is finally revealed by the last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi, who prophesied: **“Behold, I send My messenger (angel), and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger (Angel) of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.’ says the LORD of hosts”** (Malachi 3:1). Notice that the prophet speaks of two messengers (angels): one to prepare the way for the Other. The second is the Messenger or Angel of the covenant, that is, the Angel of the LORD. This is clearly a prophecy of God’s messenger, John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way for the second Messenger, the Angel of the LORD: Jesus Himself. Thus, from time to time in Old Testament, the Son of God, the great Prophet to come, functioned as a Prophet by speaking the Word of God Himself. Even then He was the Angel of the Lord, the Messenger of the covenant. But most often God spoke to the people by means of chosen prophets. Now, however, Jesus is our Prophet: **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”** (Hebrews 1:1-2)

There can be no doubt that Jesus is the Prophet of whom Moses and the Old Testament prophets spoke. The apostle Peter identified the crucified and risen Jesus as the great Prophet in his speech to the people after healing in Jesus’ name the crippled man at the temple (Acts 3:20-23). Jesus Himself read the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2) at a synagogue service in Nazareth and then announced to the startled audience: **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”** (Luke 4:21). Peter, James, and John heard the testimony of God Himself on the high mountain when God spoke from above and said of Jesus: **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”** (Matthew 17:5). Surely in the words **“Hear Him,”** we have a reference to God’s words to the people through Moses: **“Him you shall hear”** (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Again and again Jesus claimed that the words He spoke were words given to Him by God. Even the Pharisee Nicodemus was willing to say of Jesus: **“We know that You are a teacher come from God”** (John 3:2). After just a few minutes of conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman at the well said to Him: **“Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet”** (John 4:19). Many of the five thousand who were fed by Jesus with five loaves and two fish said of Him: **“This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world”** (John 6:14). The officers who were sent by the Pharisees to arrest Jesus came back with the report: **“No man ever spoke like this Man!”** (John 7:46). Jesus said in plain words that His words came from God. **“I have not spoken on My own authority,”** He said, **“but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”** (John 12:49-50).

In His prayer to His Father on the night before His death Jesus said: **“I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me”** (John 17:8). **“I have given them Your word”** (John 17:14). On the next day, when Jesus was on trial before Governor Pontius Pilate, He called attention to His function as a Prophet, not an earthly king: **“My kingdom is not of this world. ...You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”** (John 18:36-37). Jesus is God’s Prophet who accomplishes His task as a Prophet by means of His voice – by His words speaking the truth of God. **“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him”** (John 1:18).

It did not take long for the Jewish people to realize that Jesus was not the same kind of teacher as their scribes. **“They were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”** (Mark 1:22). When the Pharisees accused Jesus of lying, Jesus responded: **“Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going”** (John 8:14). Jesus said: **“He who sent Me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him”** (John 8:26). That is exactly what a prophet is supposed to do. Again, Jesus said: **“As My Father taught Me, I speak these things”** (John 8:28). **“I speak what I have seen with My Father”** (John 8:38). Jesus called Himself **“a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God”** (John 8:40). Finally, Jesus challenged them with these words: **“If I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God”** (John 8:46-47).

In the days of His flesh, Jesus, for the most part, limited His preaching activity to the people of Israel. In fact, He told His disciples to do the same: **“Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”** (Matthew 10:5-6; see also Matthew 15:24). The time was not yet right for the good news of Jesus to go out into all the world.

But the Old Testament prophets already knew that the teaching of Jesus was intended to go out into all the world. The Lord God says to His great Prophet: **“I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth”** (Isaiah 49:6). To the Israelites God said: **“The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising”** (Isaiah 60:3). Jesus recognized that His teaching was for the whole world. He said: **“I am the light of the world”** (John 8:12), and: **“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice”** (John 10:16).

Many have recognized that some of Jesus’ law teachings are similar to the law teachings of other religious teachers, such as Confucius, the Buddha, or even Mohammed. But this is not surprising. The law of God is not found only among Jesus and His followers. The law of God has been written in men’s hearts (Romans 1:32; Romans 2:14-15), and therefore it is natural for earthly teachers to reflect this law in their moral and ethical teachings. Killing and stealing and committing adultery have been condemned by most cultures, even as most cultures understand that there is a supreme Being (or Beings) out there who demand our worship.

But it is indeed blasphemy when Jesus, the Son of God and Teacher of the world, is considered to be on the same level as other religious leaders. Non-Christian religious teachers may know something about the law of God, but they know nothing about the Gospel – the Good News of God’s plan of salvation for the world through Jesus. That is unknown territory, and it is truly sad and soul-destroying when supposedly Christian leaders, such as the pope, claim that followers of other religions may attain eternal life without knowing or confessing Christ. They may claim that Christianity is the best religion, but they fail to say correctly that Christianity is the only saving religion, and that Christ is the only Savior for the entire world.

Jesus taught God’s law, but that was secondary to His main purpose of preaching the Gospel. The Gospel of Mark summarizes Jesus’ teaching with these words: **“Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’”** (Mark 1:14-15). When John the Baptist in prison sent two of his disciples to Jesus, asking whether He was indeed the promised Messiah, Jesus said to them: **“Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them”** (Luke 7:22). In His teaching Jesus promised: **“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live”** (John 5:24-25). Jesus’ Gospel words were words of life, converting the spiritually dead and bringing them eternal life.

Questions

1. Who was the first great prophet of God?
2. What is the duty of a prophet of God?
3. What is the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet?
4. What did Moses say about the great Prophet who was to come?
5. What did Isaiah write concerning the great Prophet to come?
6. In what special way did Jesus Himself talk to Hagar, Moses, and others?
7. Show that the two messengers spoken of by Malachi refer to John the Baptist and Jesus.
8. Why can we be sure that Jesus is the great Prophet of whom Moses spoke?
9. What did Jesus say about the words that He spoke?
10. For the most part in His ministry, Jesus limited His preaching and teaching to whom? Why?
11. Why do some people say that Jesus is just like any other religious teacher? Why are they wrong?
12. What is the main teaching that Jesus wanted to bring to His people?
13. What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7.1.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus as Our Prophet Today

During His days on earth Jesus chose first twelve, then seventy, assistants to bring His message to the children of Israel. Jesus' directives to the twelve are recorded in Matthew 10:5-42. Notice that He restricted their preaching **"to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"** (Matthew 10:6). The Gospel of Luke records Jesus' instructions to the seventy in Luke 10:1-16, concluding with this assurance: **"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me"** (Luke 10:16). The word spoken by those who faithfully speak in Jesus' name is just as much the Word of God as any word spoken by Jesus Himself; therefore, the Father's command to listen to His Son: **"Hear Him"** (Matthew 17:5), applies equally to the messengers He sends out who speak faithfully in His name.

This is the way the work of Jesus as a Prophet continues today. It continues through those who faithfully preach His Word. Before His ascension to heaven Jesus instructed His disciples: **"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:19-20). **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"** (Mark 16:15-16). **"Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things"** (Luke 24:47-48). **"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. Receive the Holy Spirit"** (John 20:21-22). **"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"** (Acts 1:8).

The result was that **"they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them"** (Mark 16:20). The book of Acts gives us a record of some of their mission activities, centering on the work of the apostles Peter and Paul and the deacons Stephen and Philip. When Acts begins, the Holy Spirit is empowering the 120 disciples to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection in Jerusalem. When we get to the last chapter in Acts, we read how the Gospel of Christ is being proclaimed in the center of the Gentile world at that time, the city of Rome, by the apostle Paul, who was **"preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him"** (Acts 28:31).

The spread of the Gospel throughout the world was foretold by the Old Testament prophets. The prophet Isaiah exclaimed: **"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation... The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"** (Isaiah 52:7-10). God promised through Jeremiah: **"I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding"** (Jeremiah 3:15).

Our ascended Lord has supplied shepherds (pastors) for His people. These pastors lead the way in bringing the Gospel to the world. But the work of Jesus our Prophet is not done only by those especially called be pastors and evangelists. The apostle Peter was speaking to all the Christians in his care when he said: **"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that**

you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. ... You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Every Christian has been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Therefore, every Christian in his or her own way can and will proclaim the praises of our Lord and Savior.

But it is also true that our Lord supplies His believing people on earth with persons with special gifts and abilities to take the lead and assist others in bringing the good news of Jesus to the world. The apostle Paul told the Christians in Corinth: **“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues”** (1 Corinthians 12:27-28). Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus: **“To each one one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’ ... And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:7-12).

The main purpose of Christ as our Prophet is to convert unbelievers and enlighten those who have been already converted, so that they may be instruments in the conversion of others. When Jesus, our risen Lord, appeared to the Pharisee Saul on the road to Damascus, He told Saul (Paul) clearly what He wanted him to do: **“I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me”** (Acts 26:16-18).

Since it is by faith in Jesus Christ that we receive forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life, and since faith is created by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, our Prophet Jesus has this one goal in mind: the preaching of the Gospel. This includes all the various ways the Gospel can be proclaimed: by the written Word, by the preached Word, by friendly conversations, by the training of our children, on the radio, television, and the Internet, by the faithful use of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, by the use of the keys to forgive and retain sins. Yes, God’s law must be proclaimed also as a preparation for the Gospel – especially in our age that has so little regard for higher authority. But the aim is always to bring about faith in Christ through the Gospel, for only the person who trusts in the Gospel of Christ will be saved.

Note what Paul wrote to the Ephesians about how they became believers in Jesus: **“In Him (Jesus) you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory”** (Ephesians 1:13-14).

All people in the world need to hear the voice of their Prophet and Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jesus said: **“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live”** (John 5:25). Jesus said: **“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”** (John 8:12). **“If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death”** (John 8:51). The voice of the Shepherd needs to be heard! As Jesus said: **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life”** (John 10:27-28).

What a privilege it is for us sinners to be given a role in the work of our great Prophet, Jesus Christ. We can speak His Word, and the Holy Spirit can use the Word of God we speak to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin so that they also may enjoy eternal life. What greater work can there be in this world than to be a spokesman for Christ in the work of saving sinners!

Those who reject God's Prophet Jesus by rejecting what we or others speak in His name have no other hope for salvation. When Moses foretold the coming of the great Prophet, he warned: **"It shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him"** (Deuteronomy 18:19). Jesus repeated this warning: **"He who believes in Him (Jesus) is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"** (John 3:18). **"He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life"** (1 John 5:10-12). The rejection of God's Prophet Jesus has eternal consequences.

Questions

1. To whom did Jesus send His twelve and the seventy?
2. To whom does Jesus send His disciples today?
3. What does the book of Acts tell us about Jesus' work as a Prophet in the days after His ascension?
4. Who is carrying on the work of Jesus as a Prophet right now?
5. Who is called on to proclaim the praises of our Savior?
6. What special gifts has our ascended Lord given to His believers to lead and assist them in their work?
7. What is the main purpose and aim of Jesus in His work as Prophet now?
8. How does Jesus carry out His work in our midst?
9. Why does everyone need to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd?
10. What is the destiny of those who reject the voice of Jesus?
11. In what way can you participate in the work of the Prophet Jesus?
12. Why is this work so important?
13. How can you become a better participant in this work?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 6.7.2.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Office of the High Priest in the Old Testament

In order to understand the office and that work that Jesus took on as our High Priest, we must know something about the office and work of a high priest in the Old Testament. Moses' brother Aaron was chosen by God as the first high priest. Aaron was anointed with special oil for this office. He had to wear special clothing. The breastplate of judgment contained twelve precious stones set in four rows, one for each of the tribes of Israel. The breastplate also held the mysterious Urim and Thummim, which the high priest could use in order to receive yes or no answers from God. The ephod had two parts, one covering the back and one covering the front. The two parts were joined together at the shoulder by two onyx stones. Then there was the robe, worn under the ephod, whose bottom was decorated with blue and red pomegranates and bells of gold that could be heard as the high priest carried out his duties. On his head the high priest wore a miter (upper turban), with a gold plate engraved with the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD. Other items of clothing were the brodered coat, a tunic or long skirt of linen, the linen breeches covering the loins and thighs, the girdle of linen wrapped around the body several times, the bonnet or turban of linen, partially covering the head. All of these items are spelled out and described in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

The tabernacle – the place of Israel's worship designed by God Himself (Exodus 25-31) – was divided into three parts: the outer courtyard, where the altar of burnt offering and the laver for washing were placed; the Holy Place containing the lampstand, the table for twelve loaves of bread, and the altar of incense; the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant and its cover, which was called the mercy seat, was located. During the first years of Israel's history the ark contained the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. While an Old Testament prophet spoke to the people for God, the high priest represented the people in the presence of God. As a representative of the people, the high priest, and he alone, was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle once a year on the day known as *Yom Kippur* (the Great Day of Atonement – the 10th day of Tishri in October). On the Great Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sin offering seven times on the mercy seat, and burned incense inside the curtain or veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. God's instructions for *Yom Kippur* (the Great Day of Atonement) are given in detail in Leviticus 16.

The ceremony on that day included an animal called the scapegoat. **“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness”** (Leviticus 16:21-22). This ceremony was a picture of how God planned to transfer the sins of the people to a Substitute – a Scapegoat – who would take their sins away.

The man who served as high priest could not have any bodily blemish, nor was he permitted to have any contact with dead bodies. His wife could not be a widow or a divorced woman or defiled in any way; she had to be a virgin (Leviticus 21). When the high priest died, the office would pass on to one of his sons. Aaron had four sons who served as priests under him. When Aaron died, the high priesthood passed on to his son, Eleazar (Numbers 20:24-29), and then to Eleazar's son Phinehas, and

then to his son. This went on for hundreds of years, even to the days of Jesus. Some of the high priests mentioned in the Old Testament were Eli, Zadok, Abiathar, Jehoiada, Hilkiah, and Jeshua – all of them descendants of Aaron.

One of the chief duties of the priests – and of the high priest as the priest in charge – was to bring the required sacrifices to God in the tabernacle, and later, the temple. The Old Testament sacrifices were of two basic kinds: the bloody sin and guilt offerings and the thank offerings. The first chapters in Leviticus lay down God’s rules for the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering (Leviticus 1-9). The sacrifices that atoned for sin were bloody sacrifices, **“for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul”** (Leviticus 17:11).

God was not pleased when the Israelites brought their sacrifices only as an external ritual without the right attitude of the heart. David wrote in Psalm 51: **“For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise”** (Psalm 51:16-17). The prophets Isaiah and Amos warned the Israelites forcefully against their practice of bringing sacrifices without really repenting of their sins and amending their sinful lives. **“Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes”** (Isaiah 1:13-16). **“I hate. I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream”** (Amos 5:21-24).

The notion of offering up animals to God as sacrifices goes back to the time of Adam and Eve, when Abel offered an animal in sacrifice to God. When God told Abraham to offer his own son Isaac as an offering to God, God directed him finally to offer up an animal instead of his son. Job offered up burnt offerings in behalf of his children (Job 1:5). The purpose of the sacrifices was to restore or preserve the relationship between sinners and the God whom they had disobeyed by their sins. The fact that these offerings needed to be repeated day after day and year after year shows that they did not really take away any sin, just as the scapegoat was not truly able to remove the people’s sin. We understand from the New Testament that all the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were unable to remove even one single sin. Rather, they served as reminders to the people that they were sinners in need of atonement, and that the only way their sins could be atoned was through the shedding of blood.

Besides all the priests and high priests that were descendants of Aaron, there was one priest in the Old Testament who was very special, and that was Melchizedek. This is what Genesis reports about him: **“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him (Abraham) and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand’”** (Genesis 14:18-20). The name Melchizedek means King of Righteousness, and it seems Salem is another name for Jerusalem.

The unusual thing about Melchizedek is that nothing is said about his ancestors or his children. He just appears on the scene once, blesses Abraham, and then disappears. But he was not forgotten. David wrote concerning the coming Messiah: **“The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’”** (Psalm 110:4). We will learn what this means when we consider what the New Testament tells us about Melchizedek and Christ in the next lesson.

Questions

1. From which family in Israel did the Old Testament high priests come?
2. Describe the layout and contents of tabernacle that God commanded the Israelites to build.
3. What kind of sacrifices did the Old Testament priests offer to God?
4. What displeased God about some of the sacrifices made by the Israelites?
5. How can we be sure that the animal sacrifices did not remove sin?
6. What was involved in the scapegoat ceremony?
7. In what way was Melchizedek different from the other priests?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.7.2.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus as Our High Priest

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah foretold that the coming Messiah-King would also be a priest: **“Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both”** (Zechariah 6:12-13). Earlier King David had also prophesied the same combination of King and Priest when he recorded the LORD saying to the Messiah: **“Rule in the midst of Your enemies! ...The LORD has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”** (Psalm 110:2-4).

We do not know who wrote the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, but we do know that it was written to prove to the Jews (the Hebrews) that Jesus is the One of whom Zechariah and David wrote. Jesus is the great High Priest who fulfilled all the pictures and promises presented in the Old Testament ceremonies and sacrifices that were commanded by God for His Old Testament people. First of all, in order to be our High Priest representing us before God, Jesus had to be a true human being Himself. For **“every high priest”** among the Jewish people **“can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness”** (Hebrews 5:1-2). Therefore, Jesus as a true man knew human weakness and was tempted to sin like us, but He did not sin. **“In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”** (Hebrews 2:17-18). **“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”** (Hebrews 4:15).

In order to picture the needed restoration between the holy God and the sinful people, the Old Testament high priest and the priests under him had to bring bloody animal sacrifices to God over and over again. **“Those high priests”** had **“to offer up sacrifices”** daily, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people (Hebrews 7:27). **“Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins”** (Hebrews 10:11). **“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”** (Hebrews 10:4).

But Jesus, our High Priest, offered no animal blood. Instead He offered Himself with His own blood – the blood of the Son of God – to fully atone for all human sin forever. This was His task as our High Priest: **“to make propitiation for the sins of the people”** (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus had no sins of His own. He is **“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”** and therefore **“does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself”** (Hebrews 7:26-27). **“For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One (Jesus) also have something to offer”** (Hebrews 8:3).

Jesus truly had something to offer in sacrifice. **“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”** (Hebrews 9:12). Just as the Old Testament high priest entered the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies with the blood of an animal, Jesus, our true High Priest, entered into the true Holy of Holies, heaven

itself, ascending to heaven after His sacrifice was complete. **“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us... Once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”** (Hebrews 9:24-26). **“This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God”** (Hebrews 10:12).

The one who wrote the letter to the Hebrews is not the only one who wrote about Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself as our High Priest. The apostle Paul wrote: **“Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”** (Ephesians 5:2). In his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, Paul spoke of **“the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”** (Acts 20:28). So also the apostle Peter assured his readers that they were **“redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”** (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus **“Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree”** (1 Peter 2:24). John also wrote: **“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”** (1 John 2:2).

Sacrifices can be divided into two kinds: propitiatory sacrifices that atone for sin and sacrifices of thanksgiving. The only propitiatory sacrifice that atones for the sin of the world is the sacrifice of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. This sacrifice was made once for all and it does not ever have to be made again. **“Where there is remission of these (sins), there is no longer an offering for sin”** (Hebrews 10:18). Jesus is **“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29), as John the Baptist testified. In this way the ceremony of the scapegoat has been fulfilled; Jesus has removed all sins **“as far as the east is from the west”** (Psalm 103:12). In all eternity God’s people will join with the angels in singing praises to the Lamb of God: **“You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing”** (Revelation 5:9-12).

As our High Priest, Jesus completed His work of atoning for all human sin and then ascended to heaven where He is at present interceding for us, that is, praying for us, even as He prayed for His disciples and for us in the days of His flesh. This was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, who wrote of the Messiah: **“He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”** (Isaiah 53:12). Jesus’ first words from the cross was a prayer of intercession for those responsible for His crucifixion: **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”** (Luke 23:34). On the night before His death Jesus prayed for His disciples, and even for us who believe in Him: **“I pray...for those whom You have given Me... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word”** (John 17:9, 20).

These prayers of intercession continue even now. The apostle Paul wrote: **“It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us”** (Romans 8:34). **“He...has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”** (Hebrews 7:24-25). The apostle John assures us: **“If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 John 2:1).

God instructed His Old Testament high priest Aaron to bless the people of Israel with the words: **“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace”** (Numbers 6:24-26). Jesus, our High Priest, ascended to heaven with His hands extended in a blessing for us (Luke 24:51), just as the risen Christ greeted His disciples on Easter Sunday evening with the words: **“Peace be with you”** (Luke 24:36).

Psalm 110 says that Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. As we saw in the last lesson, the account of Melchizedek is given in Genesis 14:18-20. Melchizedek was both king and priest. He visited Abraham and blessed him. Abraham in turn gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of the victory

he had just won. All the other priests in the Old Testament were Levites, descendants of Aaron. But Melchizedek was priest many years before Aaron was even born. Abraham was an ancestor of the Levites, and so, in a sense, Levi was, in Abraham, paying a tenth to Melchizedek, and thus regarding Melchizedek as greater than himself.

And so Jesus as High Priest was greater than the Levitical priests, because He was a **“priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”** (Hebrews 7:17). Just as Melchizedek is presented in Genesis as king and priest of Jerusalem, **“without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life”** (Hebrews 7:3), so also Jesus, **“because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood”** (Hebrews 7:24). The Levitical priests died and their priesthood passed down to their descendants, but Jesus **“remains a priest continually”** (Hebrews 7:3). **“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”** (Hebrews 7:25).

Christ’s work as a Prophet – proclaiming the good news of salvation – was dependent on His work as High Priest. If Christ as High Priest had not atoned completely for the sin of all the world, Christ as a Prophet would not be able to proclaim the good news (Gospel) of total forgiveness of sins and sure salvation.

Questions

1. How do we know that the Messiah was to be a priest as well as king?
2. Why did Jesus have to become a human being in order to be High Priest?
3. In what way was Jesus different from other human beings?
4. What could Jesus do as High Priest that the Old Testament priests could not do?
5. What did Jesus offer up to God as our High Priest?
6. Why did His sacrifice not have to be repeated?
7. What is the true Holy of Holies of which the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle was only a picture?
8. What is a propitiatory sacrifice?
9. What is Jesus doing now as Priest at the right hand of God?
10. What was Jesus doing as He ascended to heaven?
11. Who was Melchizedek, and why is he important?
12. In what ways does Jesus resemble Melchizedek?
13. If there are any religions in your locale that practice animal sacrifice of some kind, please describe them as well as you can.



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.7.2.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Obedience of Jesus as Our High Priest

On *Yom Kippur* (the Great Day of Atonement) the high priest was required to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat (the covering of the ark of the covenant) from two sin offerings: one for himself and one for the people. This was necessary because he himself was a sinner. But Jesus Christ, our High Priest, had to offer to God the blood of only one offering, because He was without sin. Jesus' blood was the blood of the holy Son of God, which **"cleanses us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7).

To be the perfect sacrifice, Jesus had to be perfectly obedient in His earthly life to the will of His Father. And indeed, He was obedient, **"obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"** (Philippians 2:8). **"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous"** (Romans 5:19).

It was the Father's will to save sinners through the obedient sacrifice of His Son, and His Son was perfectly willing to be obedient to His Father's will in every way, even though that obedience included His suffering and death as One being punished for the sin of the world. In the Old Testament David described in advance the obedience of the Christ in these words: **"Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your law is within My heart"** (Psalm 40:7-8; see also Hebrews 10:5-10). The prophet Isaiah reports these words from the Messiah's mouth: **"The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting"** (Isaiah 50:5-6).

In His ministry Jesus often referred to the fact that He was being obedient to the will of His Father. At Jacob's well in Samaria Jesus told His disciples: **"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work"** (John 4:34). When the Jewish leaders were persecuting Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, Jesus responded: **"I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me"** (John 5:30). When the Jewish leaders demanded that Jesus give them a sign from heaven, Jesus told them: **"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day"** (John 6:38-40).

Notice that it was His Father's will to save sinners and give them eternal life and a resurrection to that life on the last day. This was the Christ's assignment. Jesus was willing to carry out this assignment, even though it involved being punished for the sin of the world. Even though Jesus knew very well what drinking the cup meant, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: **"Not as I will, but as You will"** (Matthew 26:39). A few minutes later He said: **"Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"** (John 18:11).

Anticipating the fulfillment of His assignment on the next day, Jesus said to His Father on the night before His death: **"I have finished the work which You have given Me to do"** (John 17:4), and the next day He was able to cry out triumphantly from the cross: **"It is finished!"** (John 19:30). **"He was obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"** (Philippians 2:8).

It is customary to speak of Jesus' active obedience and His passive obedience. By His active obedience we mean Jesus' lifelong, perfect obedience to God's Law. Jesus actively obeyed God's law. Jesus, as God, was above the law – in fact He was the Giver of the law – but He put Himself under the Law in order to redeem us from sin. His active obedience was obedience in our place. We were disobedient, but He was obedient, so that His obedience could be credited to us.

The Father Himself gave testimony to His Son's obedience by twice saying of Him: **"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"** (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5) – both at His baptism and on the mountain of transfiguration. Jesus challenged His enemies to find some fault in Him by asking them: **"Which of you convicts Me of sin?"** (John 8:46). The apostle Peter, who spent over three years in close contact with Jesus, called Him **"a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (1 Peter 1:19) and said that He **"committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"** (1 Peter 2:22).

His active obedience was necessary for our salvation, for the apostle Paul wrote: **"God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"** (Galatians 4:4-5). **"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"** (Matthew 12:8). Nevertheless, Jesus put Himself under the law in order to redeem us. His perfect obedience to God's law was absolutely necessary for our redemption; however, He was not bound to obey the many man-made laws the Jewish elders had added to God's commandments because they were not commanded by God.

Adam's disobedience brought sin and condemnation into the world, but Jesus' obedience resulted in God declaring all sinners righteous in Jesus, being fully justified – declared righteous – in His sight. For this is what Paul says: **"As through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous"** (Romans 5:18-19).

By Jesus' passive obedience we mean the suffering that Jesus went through because He was taking our place and being punished for our sins. It is called His passive obedience, because Jesus suffered because of what others did to Him.

Our sins put us all under God's curse. All mankind is under God's curse because every person has sinned, and **"cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them"** (Galatians 3:10). But on the cross Jesus took that curse on Himself: **"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')"** (Galatians 3:13).

This explains why Jesus was in such agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, for He knew full well that on the next day He would be punished for the sin of the whole world. He would drink to the dregs the contents of the cup of punishment for all human sin. This explains what was happening on the cross when **"from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land"** (Matthew 27:45). It was especially in those three hours – from noon until 3:00 in the afternoon on that Good Friday – that God was pouring out on His Son the full wrath of God against all human sin. Surely Jesus was speaking the truth when He cried out on that dark afternoon: **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** (Matthew 27:46). God really did forsake Him, for that is what our sins deserved.

Isaiah prophesied: **"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed... And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"** (Isaiah 53:5-6). This is what was taking place on the cross. **"He (God) made Him who knew no sin (Jesus) to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"** (2 Corinthians 5:21). Notice the great exchange: our sin is transferred from us to Jesus and At the same time Jesus' perfect righteousness is transferred to us and credited to our account.

Just as Jesus' perfect life of obedience to the law was necessary for our redemption, so also His perfect death bearing our sins was necessary for our redemption. In Jesus **"we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"** (Colossians 1:14). We are **"redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ"** (1 Peter 1:18-19). **"Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him... We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son"** (Romans 5:9-10).

One of our Lutheran confessions, the *Formula of Concord – Solid Declaration*, speaks of Christ's obedience in this way: *"His obedience consists not only in His suffering and death but also in the fact that He freely put Himself in our place under the law and fulfilled the law with this obedience and reckoned it to us as righteousness. As a result of His total obedience – which He performed on our behalf for God in His deeds and suffering, in life and death – God forgives our sin, considers us upright and righteous, and grants us eternal salvation"* (*Book of Concord, Kolb-Wengert Edition, p. 564*).

Questions

1. Why did the Old Testament high priest have to bring the blood of two offerings to the Lord?
2. Why did Jesus have to offer the blood of only one sacrifice?
3. Provide some evidence that shows that Jesus' obedience was a willing obedience.
4. What is meant by the cup that Jesus prayed about in Gethsemane?
5. What is the difference between Jesus' active obedience and His passive obedience?
6. Why did Jesus have to be born under the law?
7. Who are the two men referred to in Romans 5:18-19?
8. When was Jesus cursed in our place because of our sin?
9. What great event took place during the three dark hours on Good Friday?
10. What is the great exchange that gives us hope for salvation?
11. What is all included in the total obedience of Christ?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.7.2.4 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus as Our Substitute

Jesus Himself indicated that He was giving Himself as a sacrifice in the place of other people. Jesus gave Himself up for sinners who deserve to be punished, but even so, Jesus willingly substituted Himself for them. Sinners deserve to die because of their sins. But Jesus died in the place of every sinner, as their Substitute. Jesus said: **“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28). The original Greek word that is translated “for” is *anti* (ἀντί), which means “in place of” or “in instead of”. It is the same word that is used by Jesus in Matthew 5:38: **“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’”**. The meaning of that Old Testament law was that the punishment should fit the crime. If a person knocked out the eye of another, he should have his own eye taken, one eye for or in place of the other.

There is another Greek word, *hyper* (ὑπέρ), that is also sometimes used to express the idea of substitution, one person giving himself instead of the other. Jesus said: **“The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world”** (John 6:51). Jesus said: **“I lay down My life for the sheep”** (John 10:15).

The idea of substitution comes out clearly in a vicious remark made by the high priest Caiaphas. This remark actually turned out to be a true statement in a way that Caiaphas never intended. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after being dead for four days, the chief priests and the Pharisees became alarmed and held a council to determine what they should do about Jesus. At this meeting **“Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ Now this he did not say on his own authority but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad”** (John 11:49-52). What Caiaphas meant was that instead of the whole nation perishing because the activity of Jesus would turn the Romans against them, only one man should die: Jesus. In vicious hatred Caiaphas wanted Jesus to be put to death. But actually, God worked it out so that what Caiaphas said was actually true in a deeper sense. Jesus would indeed die for the people – for or instead of the many sinners who deserved to die because of their sins. Jesus would take their place and be their Substitute, so that they would not have to die.

It is true that in some passages the word “for” may mean “for the benefit of” rather than “in place of.” But when the context calls for it, it is helpful to understand that Jesus lived and died in our place, as our Substitute. The term that is sometimes used for this is vicarious; that is, Jesus suffered and died for us vicariously, as our Substitute.

Consider the following New Testament references: **“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:6-8). **“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”** (Romans 8:32).

The thought of substitution is clearly present in 2 Corinthians 5:14, where we read: **“We judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died.”** If Jesus died as the Substitute for all human beings, it is as if all human beings had died, for Jesus died in our place. So also we read: **“He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Here are some more examples: **“The Son of God...loved me and gave Himself for me”** (Galatians 2:20). **“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us”** (Galatians 3:13). **“Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”** (Ephesians 5:2). **“Our Lord Jesus Christ...died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him”** (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

Notice that Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice. In a sacrifice, the victim takes the place of the sinner. So Christ was not only the High Priest who brought the sacrifice, but He was also the Victim given as the sacrifice in place of sinners. In this way, Christ’s entire obedience was vicarious. **“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; ...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed”** (Isaiah 53:4-5). **“Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us”** (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Bible also uses the terms “redemption” and “ransom.” A ransom is the price paid to set a prisoner or slave free. We sinners were purchased or redeemed, not with money or animal blood, but by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ in our place. **“Do you not know that...you are not your own? For you were bought at a price”** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 7:23). **“The Man Christ Jesus...gave Himself a ransom for all”** (1 Timothy 2:5-6). **“Our Savior Jesus Christ...gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works”** (Titus 2:14). **“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”** (Hebrews 9:12).

Questions

1. Which Bible passages clearly teach that Jesus was our Substitute?
2. What did Jesus endure in our place?
3. What did Caiaphas mean when he said Jesus should die for the people?
4. What is the deeper meaning of what Caiaphas said as a high priest?
5. If Jesus died in our place, why do we still have to die?
6. What comfort is there for us in having Jesus as our Substitute?
7. What was the ransom or redemption price by which we were purchased by God?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.7.2.5 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Satisfaction, Propitiation, Reconciliation

The result of Christ's work as our High Priest can be expressed in several different ways, such as by the terms satisfaction, propitiation, and reconciliation.

Our holy God demands holy perfection of His human creatures. Because of Adam's fall into sin and our own many sins, there is no one who can satisfy those demands. But Jesus has satisfied these demands as our Substitute by His holy life and by His sacrificial suffering and death. He has made perfect satisfaction for us. He has paid a sufficient price for us and satisfied God's demands of holy perfection.

We read in Psalm 49 that all the wealth in the whole world would not be a satisfactory price: **"Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means ransom his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever – that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit"** (Psalm 49:6-9).

Because we are not able to make satisfaction for our sins Christ had to step in for us. **"Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel**" (Isaiah 41:14) God spoke to His people through His prophet Hosea: **"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death"** (Hosea 13:14). God Himself had to take action to satisfy His own requirements by sending His Son.

The price Christ paid for our redemption satisfied God's demands totally. We **"were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ"** (1 Peter 1:18-19). The believers in Christ in heaven will sing to their Redeemer: **"You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood"** (Revelation 5:9). The blood of Christ is not just human blood, but it is the blood of Him who is God Himself, as the apostle Paul pointed out to the Ephesian elders: **"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood"** (Acts 20:28). **"In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"** (Ephesians 1:7). Some Bible teachers have mistakenly taught that Christ paid the price to Satan to set us free. But satisfaction was made to God, not to Satan, as the Bible clearly teaches: **"Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma"** (Ephesians 5:2).

In a few places the Bible uses the word propitiation to express the results of Christ's work as our High Priest. This means that God is *appeased* by a sufficient or satisfactory propitiatory sacrifice and so He is merciful to us sinners. The Old Testament sacrifices of the priests were propitiatory in the sense that they were symbolically sufficient to cause God to be merciful and to forgive His people for their sins. The first high priest, Aaron, and all the high priests that followed him took animal blood and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. This symbolically atoned for the sins of the people on the basis of the shed blood of the animal victim. This act pointed ahead to the only truly propitiatory sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ. God is merciful to us for Christ's sake. That is, God is merciful to us because of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.

Thus, the apostle Paul says that we are **"justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood"** (Romans 3:24-25). Jesus was "a

merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). The apostle John adds that the work of Christ as High Priest extends to all people: **“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world”** (1 John 2:2). **“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”** (1 John 4:10).

A third word used in the Bible to express the results of Christ’s work as our High Priest is the word reconciliation. In the United States the word reconciliation is used in connection with marriage disputes and labor disputes. When there is a problem between two parties in a quarrel, a mediator or go-between attempts to bring the two parties together again. By some means he removes the hostility between the two parties so that they are friends with each other again. He reconciles them to each other.

In the Bible the two parties that are hostile to each other are the holy God and sinful mankind. The barrier between them is sin. In order for mankind to be reconciled to God, the barrier of sin needs to be removed. This is what Christ did by His sacrificial death on the cross. He reconciled the world to God. It is written: **“All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them”** (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Notice that God is the One who takes the initiative and who brings about the reconciliation. Sinful man could not even attempt to reconcile himself to God. The one who accomplished the reconciliation was God through His agent Christ. His method was to take the entire sin of the whole world and transfer this mass of sin with all its guilt and punishment to Christ, and then to punish Christ in our place. This resulted in the reconciliation of the entire world to God, because God no longer imputes the sin of the world to the world, because He has already imputed the sin of the world to Christ, who then was fully punished for this entire mass of sin by His suffering on the cross. This reconciliation means that the relationship between God and man has been changed. The world that had been cursed by God because of its sins has, because of Christ’s work, become the redeemed world, the reconciled world, the forgiven world, the justified world. **“When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son”** (Romans 5:10).

Sinful man did not contribute anything to the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation was entirely God’s doing. **“It pleased the Father that in Him (Christ) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross”** (Colossians 1:19-20). Notice that Paul says God reconciled **“all things”** to Himself in Christ. Because of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, the whole created world was changed. Even the holy angels had to witness the tragic consequences of sin in the world. Sin affected not only human beings but all of creation, including animals, plants, and everything else. Christ’s work on the cross not only reconciled man to God, but all things to God. We shall understand what this means when God ushers in the new heavens and the new earth, where there will be nothing but righteousness (2 Peter 3:13) and everything will be perfect once again.

We should not think of the reconciliation worked out by Christ as changing God. It was God in His love who planned and carried out the reconciliation through Christ (John 3:16). Christ’s reconciliation did not change human beings either, for we are still sinful and we still hate God by nature. What Christ’s reconciliation accomplished was to change man’s legal standing before God. If there had been no reconciliation, the world would be and remain unredeemed, unreconciled, unjustified, unforgiven. Because of Christ’s work of reconciliation as our High Priest, the world has become redeemed, reconciled, justified, and forgiven.

Individually we are changed when the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament brings us or leads us to faith in Jesus Christ and His work in our behalf. In other words, we receive reconciliation through faith, and without faith we lose the benefits of Christ’s reconciliation. That is why Christ’s

representatives on earth – His Christians and their called ministers – say with the apostle Paul: **“We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God”** (2 Corinthians 5:20). In other words, take for yourself the gift God extends to you in His Word. Receive Christ’s reconciliation. Accept Christ’s forgiveness. Believe what God tells you about Christ and His work. This is the message God has entrusted to us to tell the world.

Even though the Bible consistently speaks of Christ as reconciling man to God, our Lutheran confessions also speak of Christ as reconciling God to man. This can be properly understood as meaning that requirements of God’s Law had to be satisfied, and that God’s wrath had to be vented on human sin. The ransom was paid to God; His justice was satisfied; Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient to propitiate God’s wrath so that God is reconciled.

Questions

1. What are the three terms used in the Bible to express the results of Christ’s work as our High Priest that are discussed in this lesson?
2. What is the only price that is sufficient to pay for our sins?
3. Why is it so important to remember that the blood of Jesus is the blood of Him who is God?
4. To whom was Jesus’ sacrifice made?
5. What is a propitiatory sacrifice?
6. What is the difference between the propitiatory sacrifices of the Old Testament priests and the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ?
7. What does the word “reconciliation” mean?
8. Who did the reconciling, and who was reconciled?
9. What did Christ have to do to reconcile the world to God?
10. How do we sinners today receive this reconciliation?
11. What is the main work or privilege of ambassadors for Christ?



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7.2.6 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Universal Atonement and Universal Justification

Two other Bible terms are used to express the results of Christ's work as our High Priest: atonement and justification.

Atonement can be defined as the establishing of peace between God and mankind. In order to remember its meaning, we can break it apart as at-one-ment, that is, getting to be at one with God again. It is about the same as reconciliation, bringing two parties together. In the Old Testament it was the blood of the sacrificial animal that brought about atonement, symbolically, between God and the people. **"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul"** (Leviticus 17:11). For this reason, the Israelites were forbidden to eat blood. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the coming of the Messiah would mean the true and final ending of the hostility between God and His people, bringing this good news from God: **"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins"** (Isaiah 40:2). The bloody sacrifice of the Messiah would bring about atonement, reconciliation, and the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus expressed the idea of atonement by pronouncing peace to His followers. **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"** (John 14:27). So also on Easter Sunday evening Jesus greeted His disciples with this word: **"Peace be with you... Peace to you! ...If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them"** (John 20:19, 21, 23). Since Jesus had died for the sin of the world and had risen again, the Good News of peace and forgiveness was now to be proclaimed in the world.

The apostle Paul emphasized that there was atonement and peace, not just for the Israelites, but for the Gentiles as well. There was peace with God for all mankind, won by the priestly work of the Messiah. **"Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off (the Gentiles) have been brought near by the blood of Christ"** (Ephesians 2:13). Christ's atoning sacrifice not only brought a peace between God and man, but between Jew and Gentile. **"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ... so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near"** (Ephesians 2:14-17).

We must emphasize the fact that Christ's priestly work is for all mankind and is an atonement for every kind of sin, so that every sinful human being living in every part of the world may take comfort in what Christ has done. Listen to the missionary Paul as he addresses an audience made up of mostly Jews (but also some Gentiles) in Antioch in Pisidia: **"Let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man (Jesus) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses"** (Acts 13:38-39). That every sin has been atoned for is taught clearly by Paul's words: **"Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more"** (Romans 5:20). Christ's work is complete; it is finished. All sins of all sinners have been atoned for.

There is no Bible passage that stresses this point more clearly than these words that Paul addressed to the Christians in Corinth: **“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation”** (2 Corinthians 5:19). Since Christ has atoned for all the sins of all people, the whole world has been reconciled to God. This means that God does not impute or count the sins and trespasses of the world against the world. The reason for this is very plain, as Paul continues: **“He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”** (2 Corinthians 5:21). The apostle John therefore says: **“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7).

Because of what Christ has done as our High Priest, the Good News (the Gospel) can go out to all the world: There is forgiveness of sins for all sinners and all sins in Jesus Christ, because **“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”** (1 John 2:2). Now that Christ has reconciled the whole world to Himself, He has given us who believe in Him a **“ministry of reconciliation”** to announce **“the word of reconciliation,”** that is, the Good News that there is forgiveness for all sins of all persons in Jesus Christ. We proclaim the message of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. Listen carefully to Paul’s complete presentation of this matter: **“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”** (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

The Gospel that we proclaim as Christians is based on historical facts. It is based on events that took place in space and time: Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. If these things did not happen, there is no forgiveness, no reconciliation, no atonement, no justification, no resurrection from the dead, no eternal life. The apostle Paul teaches us the blessings of Christ’s priestly work by proposing what would be true if Jesus had not risen from the dead: **“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable”** (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

But since Christ has suffered and died for our sins and has risen again, the opposite of the above paragraph is true. That is, our preaching is not empty and our faith is not empty. Our message is true: there is forgiveness for all in Jesus; we have something firm to believe. The apostles of Christ were not false witnesses but faithful eyewitnesses; they had been with and seen the risen Christ. Our faith is not futile. We are not still in our sins, but our sins have been paid for in full; they are gone. Those who have died as believers in Christ have not perished, but will rise from the dead on the Last Day to be with their Lord forever. We are not the most pitiable of men, but we are the most blessed, because we have forgiveness in Jesus. We have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

Christ and His apostles do not want anyone to feel left out of the salvation Christ won for them by His work as our High Priest, so the fact that everyone is included is stressed in many places in the Bible. Jesus said: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). And Jesus said: **“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10). Surely all of us are lost sinners. Paul tells us: **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 3:23-24). **“As through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life”** (Romans 5:18). **“If One died for all, then all died”** (2

Corinthians 5:14). **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”** (1 Timothy 1:15). **“The Man Christ Jesus...gave Himself a ransom for all”** (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

When the word “many” is used instead of “all,” it does not mean “many, but not all,” rather it is a contrast between “many” and “few.” Jesus said, for example: **“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28). In instituting the Lord’s Supper, Jesus said: **“This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”** (Matthew 26:28). **“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous”** (Romans 5:19). It is especially clear in this last passage that “many” means “all”, because *all* were made sinners by Adam’s disobedience and *all* were justified, as previous verse clearly states.

What about those who lived and died before Christ died and rose again? Did Christ’s work apply also to them? Yes! Jesus’ work certainly included Abraham, for He said to the Jews: **“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad”** (John 8:56). The apostle Peter testified at the Jerusalem convention: **“Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they”** (Acts 15:10-11). The apostle Paul pointed out that God had forgiven the Old Testament sinners because of Jesus’ sacrifice: **“God set forth [Christ Jesus] as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed”** (Romans 3:24-25). The letter to the Hebrews makes it clear that Old Testament sinners are included in Jesus’ work: **“He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”** (Hebrews 9:15). The transgressions under the first covenant were redeemed by Jesus’ death and resurrection, and so the Old Testament believers received the promise of the eternal inheritance because of Jesus sacrifice.

When God’s Word tells us that Christ died for all, it means every individual sinner: **“Jesus ... was made a little lower than the angels ... that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone”** (Hebrews 2:9). This even includes the many who, because of their unbelief, will not benefit from what Christ has done for them. Peter writes: **“There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them”** (2 Peter 2:1). Even though these false teachers denied Jesus, they were still bought by Jesus’ blood.

Christ and His apostles also make it clear that since Jesus, as our High Priest, has atoned for all sinners in the world, there is no need to add to His priestly work. Jesus said: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:6). Peter testified: **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). The letter to the Hebrews repeats over and over again that Jesus had to bring His sacrifice only once, and that His one single sacrifice gained remission of sins for all. **“Where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin”** (Hebrews 10:18). No other sacrifice is needed. We need no other Savior. Christ’s work of atoning for the sin of the world as our High Priest is complete and needs no supplement.

On the basis of the Bible passages we have quoted above, it is certainly proper for us to speak of universal atonement and universal justification. Many passages say that Jesus has atoned for the sins of the world and that He has justified all. But there are many false teachers in Christendom who deny that Jesus atoned for all sinners. The followers of John Calvin, Calvinists, for example, believe in and teach what they call a *limited atonement*. They claim that Jesus did not atone for all sinners, but only for those who were chosen by God from eternity to come to saving faith in Christ. In other words, they claim that Jesus sacrificed Himself only for those who remain believers in Christ to their dying day. Calvinists cannot believe that Jesus died for sinners who reject Him in unbelief. But the Bible is clear that Jesus died for all persons, including even those who reject Him. The message these false teachers

proclaim is no longer the Good News of the Gospel. Instead of proclaiming forgiveness of sins to all because of Christ's work of atoning for all, they have to wrongly say: "Jesus died for you if you believe in Him. Jesus died for some of you, but not for all of you. There are some of you whom God did not want to save; Jesus did not die for you." This kind of message is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ! God's word is clear: Jesus took away the sins of the whole world and, by His obedience, justified all.

There are also many false teachers, even among Lutherans, who accept universal atonement but do not accept universal justification. But the Bible clearly teaches universal justification in such passages as Romans 3:23-24, Romans 5:18-19, and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. In all of these passages the Bible clearly says that all are justified, or declared righteous, on the basis of Christ's redemption of the world. It is true, however, that many reject the forgiveness and justification they have from Jesus, and thus lose these gifts. Justification and forgiveness can be received only by faith.

It is important that we do not preach God's message of forgiveness as though there were conditions that we have to fulfill before it becomes true. For example, we should not say to someone: "If you do this or that good thing, then you will be forgiven." We should not even say to someone: "If you believe, you will be forgiven." Rather our message is this: "Because Jesus has died for all, He has died for you, and therefore there is forgiveness for you. You have been declared righteous and forgiven before God, because Christ's sacrifice has paid for all your sins." One of our Lutheran teachers has said it this way: "Sinners are not justified now *if* they believe, but if they have true faith, they believe that they *have been justified* in Christ (objective justification). There is no gospel (good news!) for the sinner but this" (John Schaller: *Biblical Christology*, p. 181). So, the Gospel needs to be proclaimed as a true blessing, without *any* conditions – without any ifs, ands, or buts, as we say. It is *unconditioned* good news. Not even faith is a condition or term we need to meet; faith is only the receiving organ, that is, the way by which we receive the benefit. In Christ we all have universal atonement and universal justification!

Questions

1. What is meant by atonement?
2. What was necessary for atonement in the Old Testament ritual?
3. Why was Jesus' first word to His disciples on Easter evening so fitting?
4. What two kinds of peace did Jesus establish by His death and resurrection?
5. How do we know that Jesus atoned for all sins of all sinners?
6. Which persons have been reconciled to God through Christ's redemption?
7. What is meant by the ministry and word of reconciliation?
8. What would be true if Jesus had not risen from the dead?
9. What evidence is there that all sinners have been justified?
10. What is the only way this justification can be received?
11. Why is the doctrine of limited atonement a false teaching?
12. What do John Calvin and his followers teach about atonement?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 6.7.2.7 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Intercession as Our High Priest

Although Jesus, as our High Priest, completed our redemption by His total obedience (both active and passive) during His state of humiliation, He is still interceding for us as our High Priest. Intercession means speaking to God on behalf of others. Jesus is interceding right now for us sinners at the right hand of God. In His state of humiliation Jesus interceded for Peter in these words: **"I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail"** (Luke 22:32). Jesus interceded for those responsible for His crucifixion when He said from the cross: **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"** (Luke 23:34). On the night before His death, Jesus prayed for His disciples and for all who would believe in Him through their testimony – this includes us believers who are living today. Among His words were these: **"I pray for them (the twelve). I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours... Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me... I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one... Sanctify them by Your truth... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word... Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me"** (John 17:9, 11, 15, 17, 20, 24).

In a similar way to these prayers Jesus is interceding for us at this very moment. For it is written: **"It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"** (Romans 8:34). The apostle John calls Jesus our Advocate at the right hand of God. An Advocate is someone who speaks up for another, just as a defense attorney might speak up for and defend his client. **"If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"** (1 John 2:1-2). Notice that the basis for Jesus' intercession and advocacy is His propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus is saying to His Father: "You cannot punish these sinners, for I have already been punished for their sin. For My sake forgive them."

The letter to the Hebrews makes many references to Jesus' work of intercession as our High Priest. **"He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"** (Hebrews 7:24-25). As the Old Testament high priests entered the Holy of Holies with sacrificial blood, so Jesus as our High Priest entered the true Holy of Holies, heaven itself, with His sacrificial blood. **"Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption"** (Hebrews 9:12). **"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"** (Hebrews 9:24).

Jesus' intercession for us will continue until we are safely home with Him in heaven, for **"He always lives to make intercession"** for us (Hebrews 7:25). When the end comes, there will be no need for any further intercession, for all enemies will have been put under His feet, and **"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"** (1 Corinthians 15:26).

The Holy Spirit is also a kind of intercessor. While Christ is our Advocate at the Father's right hand, the Holy Spirit is a Helper within the hearts of the believers. On the night before His death, Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in this way to His disciples: **"I will pray the Father, and He will give another Helper, that**

He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17). The Greek word that is translated as “Helper” is *parakleetos* (παράκλητος), *paraclete* in English. A *paraclete* is an encourager, a counselor, a comforter, an advocate. As our *Paraclete* who is with us and in us, **“the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God”** (Romans 8:26-27). **“God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’”** (Galatians 4:6).

There is no Scriptural evidence that departed saints pray for us or intercede for us. Of course, while we are living as Christians here on earth, we pray for one other. We read in many places that Paul asked his fellow-Christians to pray (intercede) for him and his work. For example, Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica: **“Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified”** (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

In a previous lesson, we pointed out that the Old Testament sacrifices were of two kinds: propitiatory sacrifices to remove sin and sacrifices of thanksgiving. Christ made the one and only truly propitiatory sacrifice when He sacrificed Himself. The Old Testament propitiatory sacrifices were only symbolic. Any kind of sacrifice we make today to try to atone for our sin is totally unnecessary and such a sacrifice is, in fact, an insult to our Lord Jesus, for He has already atoned for all sin once and for all, totally and for eternity.

Nevertheless, all Christians today are called priests, and we can offer sacrifices to God – not propitiatory sacrifices to atone for sin, but sacrifices of thanksgiving. After presenting all the manifold blessings of the salvation accomplished by Christ, the apostle Paul called on the Christians in Rome to bring a sacrifice of their own: **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). God’s Old Testament people brought animal sacrifices to give thanks to their God. We today are to offer ourselves – our lives, our bodies, our talents, and whatever we have that can be of service to God’s work on earth – as our offering of thanks to God for the salvation He has given us.

The apostle Peter expanded on this point by saying that Christians are priests who capable of offering acceptable sacrifices to God. He wrote: **“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 2:4-5). **“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Proclaiming God’s praises is one form of sacrifice that is especially pleasing to God when it is done by those who trust in Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews also refers to this kind of sacrifice: **“By Him (Christ) let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”** (Hebrews 13:15-16) Notice that a Christian life that brings forth the fruit of good works out of faith in Jesus is a sacrifice that pleases God. When Paul received support for his earthly needs when he was a prisoner in Rome, he thanked the congregation in Philippi with these words: **“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”** (Philippians 4:18).

Only Christ could bring a sacrifice that could atone for our sins and the sin of the whole world. But we can bring sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God that are pleasing in His sight, because we treasure Christ’s sacrifice in our hearts and trust in Him and what He has done.

Questions

1. What is meant by intercession?
2. How did Christ intercede for others in the days of His flesh?
3. How is Christ interceding for us right now?
4. What was the Holy of Holies in the temple a picture of?
5. What kind of interceding does the Holy Spirit do?
6. Why should we not teach that the departed saints pray for us?
7. What kind of sacrifice can only Christ do, and what kind of sacrifices can we do?
8. What is meant by the priesthood of all believers in Christ?
9. Give some examples of sacrifices that we can make to God that are pleasing in His sight.



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 6.7.3.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Office of Jesus as King

Besides prophets and priests, kings also were anointed in the Old Testament. Jesus, as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, combines all three of these offices in Himself. He is Prophet, High Priest, and King. In the Old Testament the coming Messiah was more often pictured as a king than as a prophet or priest. It was to King David that God gave the promise of a dynasty that would last forever: **“I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son... Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever”** (2 Samuel 7:12-16). David’s son, Solomon, built the temple as a house of God, but David understood that this prophecy did not refer only to Solomon. In reply David said: **“You have spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come”** (2 Samuel 7:19).

This prophecy of the coming King as a Son of David was repeated many times by the prophets. Several psalms refer to this King, for example: **“I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion”** (Psalm 2:6). **“I recite my composition concerning the King”** (Psalm 45:1). **“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth”** (Psalm 72:8). **“The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!”** (Psalm 110:2).

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah also wrote of the coming King: **“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given... Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom”** (Isaiah 9:6-7). **“I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper”** (Jeremiah 23:5). **“David My Servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one Shepherd”** (Ezekiel 37:24). **“In the days of these kings (the Roman kings) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed”** (Daniel 2:44). **“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed”** (Daniel 7:13-14). **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey”** (Zechariah 9:9).

There is abundant evidence in the New Testament that Jesus, Son of Mary from Nazareth, is the fulfillment of these prophecies. The angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary to tell her about the Son she was going to bear, who was conceived in her by the Holy Spirit: **“You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS, He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”** (Luke 1:31-33).

On the Sunday before His death and resurrection, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, as Zechariah had foretold, and the people cried out: **“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!”** (Luke 19:38). Almost from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry His disciples recognized Him as the Messiah King. Andrew told his brother Peter: **“We have found the Messiah”** (John 1:41), and Nathanael met Jesus and said to Him: **“You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”** (John 1:49).

When He was on trial before Pontius Pilate, Jesus explained that He was not an earthly king, but then He explained: **“You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”** (John 18:37). Jesus is a King who rules by means of His voice, that is, His words and His teaching.

God arranged events in such a way that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, the title on the cross clearly proclaimed: **“JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS”** (John 19:19). On the day of Pentecost and on the days that followed, Peter and the other apostles testified to the world that Jesus was the Son of David, the promised King: **“Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (Acts 2:36). Every time the apostles called Jesus “Lord”, they were confessing Jesus to be the promised King. Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae: God **“has delivered us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”** (Colossians 1:13-14).

Jesus and His apostles spoke often of the kingdom of God or of Christ. In the New Testament, “kingdom” generally does not refer to a piece of land or a portion of territory, but the exercise of kingly authority. We need to keep this primary meaning in mind when we read the Bible. When we hear “kingdom”, we should think “kingship”, that is, the ruling activity of the king. For example, the words **“the kingdom of God is at hand”** means that God or Christ is acting in connection with His gracious plan of salvation. The kingdom of God in Scripture does not refer to the subjects of the King, that is, the Church of Christ, nor any earthly or visible organization, but to God’s rule.

Jesus Himself gave a good illustration of what is meant by **“kingdom of God”** when He said: **“If I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from his all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils”** (Luke 11:19-22). In His earthly ministry Jesus often drove out evil spirits from. When Jesus battled Satan in this way, it was the coming of the kingdom of God, that is, the King was active in carrying out His work.

In a similar way the apostle Paul said: **“The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”** (Romans 14:17). When the Holy Spirit is active in preaching the Gospel through Christ’s ambassadors, and brings sinners to faith in the forgiveness of sins and gives them peace of conscience and the joy of salvation, this is the kingdom of God in action; this is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in action.

Jesus, as God, was always active in the on-going work of God in carrying out His plan of salvation. But when the Son of God became incarnate, this ruling power of the king was given also to His human nature. The angel Gabriel told Mary that God would give to her Son the throne of David, and thus He was King from the moment of His conception (Luke 1:31-33). When the Wise Men from the east visited Jesus as a small Child, they worshiped Him and called Him King (Matthew 2:1-11). When Jesus was on trial before Pontius Pilate, He did not say: “I shall become a king,” but He said: **“You say rightly that I am a king”** (John 18:37). In fact, as He was suffering and dying on the cross, He was carrying out His kingly activity as the Stronger Man, taking away the power of the strong man, Satan. For it was by His death that Jesus took away the power of the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

Because Jesus’ human nature has been given kingly authority and dominion, the risen Christ said to His followers on the mountain in Galilee: **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”** (Matthew 28:18). Peter announced on Pentecost: **“Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (Acts 2:36). We understand that at this very moment Jesus, our ever-living Savior, is at God’s **“right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come”** (Ephesians 1:20-21). **“We see Jesus...crowned with glory and honor”** because God has **“put all things in subjection under His feet”** (Hebrews 2:8-9).

What does this mean for us who trust in Jesus? **“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Questions

1. For what three offices were persons anointed in the Old Testament?
2. What promise did God give to David about the future of his family?
3. What are some examples of how later prophets enlarged on this promise to David?
4. What did the angel Gabriel say to Mary about her Son's kingdom?
5. How did God call attention to the fact that Jesus was the promised King?
6. How did Jesus explain what is meant by the coming of God's kingdom?
7. What is the primary meaning of the kingdom of God in the New Testament?
8. When was the kingdom given to Jesus' human nature?
9. How is Jesus functioning as our King at this very moment?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7.3.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Three Aspects of Jesus' Kingdom: Power, Grace, Glory

Jesus' Kingdom of Power

Christ as King exercises supreme control over all creation, including His enemies. He exercises this control for the benefit of His Church. This is sometimes called His kingdom of power, since it involves Christ's power over the entire universe. King David wrote of the Messiah in Psalm 110: **"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!"** (Psalm 110:1-2). The letter to the Hebrews uses the same language when it says of Jesus: **"This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool"** (Hebrews 10:12-13). The prophet Daniel said of the Messiah: **"To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed"** (Daniel 7:14).

Christ's dominion includes power even over the devil and all his army. Jesus said: **"I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"** (Matthew 16:18). And He said: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"** (Matthew 28:18).

Jesus' apostles were well aware of His kingdom of power. Peter said: Jesus **"is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him"** (1 Peter 3:22). Paul talked about Jesus being at God's right hand **"in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet"** (Ephesians 1:20-22). The most wonderful thing about Jesus' kingdom of power is that He uses this power for the good of His Church; He used it for the benefit of those who believe in Him and love Him. Very clearly Paul teaches: **"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"** (Romans 8:28). Yes, all events that happen anywhere in the world fit into God's pattern for good for those whom He has called out of the world to be His own people.

Jesus' Kingdom of Grace

Christ as High Priest was most concerned with making the sacrifice to atone for all sin. Similarly, Christ as King is most concerned about using the Gospel to bring sinners to faith in Himself and to keep them in that faith. He then uses the Gospel in their hearts to produce the fruits of faith in their lives. This beneficial rule of Christ through the Gospel is known as His kingdom of grace. Whatever good we do is the work of our King on us, in us, and through us, without any merit on our part.

Jesus told many parables that show how Jesus' kingdom works through the Word (Matthew 13). His parable of the sower and the seed shows that Christ works through the planting of the seed, which is the Word of God – more specifically the Gospel (the Good News) of our salvation in Christ. Christ's work as king reaches its goal when the planted seed yields a crop, that is, when believers are added to the Lord through the power of the Word – believers who then bring forth the fruit of proclaiming the Gospel to others and the fruit of living a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel, showing love for God and their fellowman in their daily lives. Another parable of Jesus' kingdom is His parable of the weeds

in the wheat. In this parable we see how Christ sows good seed, but the devil sows weeds, and during the present age we cannot always distinguish between the weeds and the wheat as they are growing. But eventually the harvest time will come, and the final separation will take place. The other parables in Matthew 13 also illustrate Christ's kingdom of grace and how it works.

While Jesus was on earth, He was busy **“preaching the gospel of the kingdom”** (Matthew 4:23). **“He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God”** (Luke 8:1). Today His kingdom continues to function through His ambassadors – His believing followers – who bring His Word to the world. It is through His Word that the Shepherd-King gathers His flock and keeps His flock safely in His fold to all eternity. Jesus told Pontius Pilate that He was a King who works by means of His voice speaking the truth (John 18:37). Jesus told His disciples: **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”** (John 10:27-28). **“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd”** (John 10:16).

When Jesus' followers speak His Word faithfully, Jesus' voice is heard in the world, and His kingdom is at work and progresses. The apostle Paul explained: **“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”** (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Christ as King does not force persons to believe the Gospel and follow Him. He persuades them through the Gospel of His love and forgiveness.

Christ uses all kinds of persons in His kingdom work, and He gives them varying gifts that they can use for this work. But it is never their own power or wisdom that brings people to Christ. It is God Himself who draws people to Christ. The apostle Paul wrote: **“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”** (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The same apostle recognized where the power of Christ's kingdom was to be found, for he wrote: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek”** (Romans 1:16). The Gospel that brings people to faith in Christ also builds them up in that faith. Paul said to the Ephesian elders: **“Brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”** (Acts 20:32).

Jesus' Kingdom of Glory

Christ will also function as King when He returns at the end of time and welcomes His believers into His eternal glory. This is known as Christ's kingdom of glory. In the week of His death and resurrection Jesus spoke to His disciples about His coming again. He compared the kingdom of heaven to ten girls, five wise, five foolish, waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. The point of this story was to emphasize the importance of being ready when He returns. He also told a parable of a man distributing to his servants various amounts of money that they were to work with until his return. So we followers of Christ are to be busy with the gifts He has given us while we are waiting for His return. Jesus concluded His discussion by describing the day of His return as King of glory: **“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory”** (Matthew 25:31). What will happen then? Christ as King will judge all people. Some **“will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”** (Matthew 25:46). **“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’”** (Matthew 25:34).

At His return Christ will bless His Church of believers with unending and unrestricted fellowship with Himself. **“The Father...has given Him (the Son) authority to execute judgment also... All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth”** (John 5:26-29). **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16). At that time Jesus' prayer

to His heavenly Father will be answered in full. On the night of His arrest Jesus prayed: **“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me”** (John 17:24).

The apostle Paul explained what will happen on that day: **“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And then we shall always be with the Lord”** (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Each believer in Christ can therefore say with Paul: **“The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom”** (2 Timothy 4:18). On that day **“the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells”** (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Ever since the days of the apostles, false teachers have arisen in the church with false ideas of the kingdom of Christ. Some have wanted to make Jesus an earthly king, even though Jesus said plainly: **“My kingdom is not of this world”** (John 18:36). Some believe that the Gospel of Jesus will gain more and more influence on earth until almost the whole world becomes Christian. Others believe that Jesus will return more than once, the first time invisibly to take His believers from this earth and then return with them to set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem that will last a thousand years. They say that only after that period will Jesus return for the final judgment. The Roman Catholic teaching is that the kingdom of Christ is present now in their earthly organization headed by the pope of Rome. We will go into more detail on these matters in Chapter 15 - the Doctrine of Eschatology, or the Last Things.

We have now completed the specific study of Christology. This subject is so central for the Christian faith, however, that we will always be referring to Christ, His person, His office, and His work as we study other doctrines.

Questions

1. What is meant by Christ’s kingdom of power?
2. For what chief purpose does Christ use His royal power?
3. How does the knowledge of Christ’s kingly power affect our view of world events?
4. What is meant by Christ’s kingdom of grace?
5. List the parables of Matthew 13 that describe Christ’s kingdom of grace.
6. How does Christ’s kingdom work, according to the parable of the sower and his seed?
7. How is Christ showing Himself as King of grace in our times?
8. What does Paul mean when he says our weapons are not carnal?
9. What method does Christ use to extend His kingdom?
10. What must we confess about the good that we do as Christians?
11. How do Christians participate in the coming of Christ’s kingdom?
12. What is meant by Christ’s kingdom of glory?
13. How will Christ usher in His kingdom of glory?
14. What will eternal life be like for those who trust in Christ?
15. What will happen to those who reject Christ?
16. Describe three false views of Christ’s kingdom.