

THEOLOGY SESSION 6

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Beloved friends, let us continue to look to Him, and let us measure and estimate our spiritual life, not by feelings and experiences, but by our knowledge of Him and our love for Him. He is the center of everything.¹

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Group Work: What are the theological implications of these verses in regard to the doctrine of the Person of Christ? (Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3; Galatians 4:4-5; Isaiah 9:6-7; John 1:1-5; John 1:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:3-6)

¹Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 288.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PERSON OF CHRIST?

*Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.*² (Wayne Grudem)

The Humanity of Christ:

1. The Virgin Birth

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to 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." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. (Luke 1:30-35)

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25)

Doctrinal Implications of the Virgin Birth:³

*Christians must face the fact that a denial of the virgin birth is a denial of Jesus as the Christ. The Savior who died for our sins was none other than the baby who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin. The virgin birth does not stand alone as a biblical doctrine, it is an irreducible part of the biblical revelation about the person and work of Jesus Christ. With it, the Gospel stands or falls.*⁴ (Albert Mohler)

- Salvation ultimately comes from the Lord.

*The principal reason for the virgin birth was so that the entry of God into human flesh might be by **divine initiative**. It is not by any human act or at any human initiative that salvation comes to us. It is divinely initiated. Man does nothing. Mary did nothing (other than to submit to what God would do). Joseph did nothing. God did it all. The virgin birth... "graphically shows that salvation comes 'from above' and that the source of our hope and confidence lies in the living God who entered into human history in the historical figure of Jesus Christ.*

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 529.

³Ibid., 530.

⁴R. Albert Mohler, "Can a Christian Deny the Virgin Birth?," *AlbertMohler.com*, December 5, 2007, accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2007/12/05/can-a-christian-deny-the-virgin-birth-3/>.

The virgin birth marks off the origin of Christ from the human race just as his end is marked off by the resurrection".⁵ (Sam Storms)

- In Christ, there is a uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person.

God, in his wisdom, ordained a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Christ, so that his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of his ordinary human birth from a human mother, and his full deity would be evident from the fact of his conception in Mary's womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. (Wayne Grudem)

- The virgin birth makes possible Christ's true humanity without inherited sin.

7 Points to Consider⁶ (Sam Storms)

1. The virgin birth was not a demonstrable event. (No empirical evidence –must be believed by faith)
2. The virgin birth was not the beginning of the Son of God. (He is eternally self-existent)
3. The virgin birth does not entail a reduction or denial of the deity of Christ. (God the Son did not cease to be God when he became a man)
4. The virgin birth does not entail a reduction or denial of the humanity of Christ.
5. The virgin birth does not require us to believe in the immaculate conception of Mary. (as proclaimed by Pope Pius IX on Dec. 8, 1854 - The doctrine of the "immaculate conception" is the idea that Mary herself was conceived without sin.)
6. The virgin birth does not require us to believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary. (as proclaimed by the Council of Trent in 1545-63; but also embraced by a number of Protestant Reformers, including Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli.)
7. The virgin birth does not elevate Mary to a place of worship and veneration.

2. Human Weakness and Limitations

- Jesus had a human body.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)

...so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well... (John 4:6)

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." (John 19:28)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (Matthew 4:1-2)

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

⁵Sam Storms, "Virgin Birth," *Enjoying God*, April 15, 2006, accessed July 3, 2015, <http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/virgin-birth/>.

⁶Ibid.

- Jesus had a human mind.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mark 13:32)

- Jesus had a human soul and emotions.

Jesus wept. (John 11:35)

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. (John 12:27)

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit... (John 13:21)

Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." (Matthew 26:38)

3. Sinlessness

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Heidelberg Catechism:

Q: *Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?*

A: *God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for its sin; but a sinner could never pay for others.*

Jesus was human and yet did not sin. The fact that he became man reveals the nature of true humanity. His humanity gives a glimpse of what our humanity would be, were it not tainted with sin. He shows that the problem with humanity is not that we are humans, but rather that we are fallen. Jesus' human nature shows the potential of humanity as God intended. This display of sinless humanity reaffirms God's declaration that creation in all its original dimensions (material and spiritual), including humanity, is by divine definition very good.⁷

Why was Jesus' full humanity necessary?⁸

1. Representative Obedience

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19)

⁷ESV Study Bible, *Bible Doctrine: An Overview*. "The Person of Christ" (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2517-2518.

⁸Ibid., 2518

2. Substitute Sacrifice

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)

3. Effective Mediator Between God and Man

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

4. Sympathetic High Priest

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

5. True Example and Pattern For Our Lives

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

How can a right understanding of the humanity of Christ strengthen our intimacy with God?

How can a right understanding of the humanity of Christ strengthen our missional activity?
