

# The Work of Christ: Week 1 Outline

## Covenant of Redemption & Incarnation

### I. Introduction: The Heart of Christian Faith

The work of Christ is the very foundation of Christianity. As Scripture teaches, "The work of Jesus reveals to us who He is. The work and the person may be distinguished but never separated."

**Key Problem:** Humanity's complete separation from holy God due to sin necessitated the incarnation of the eternal Son of God.

### II. The Covenant of Redemption (Pactum Salutis)

**Definition:** The eternal agreement between the persons of the Trinity to plan and carry out the redemption of the elect.

#### A. Old Testament Implications

##### Psalm 2:7-8 (ESV)

"I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.'"

##### Psalm 110:1, 4 (ESV)

"The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'... The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'"

##### Isaiah 42:1, 6-7 (ESV)

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations... I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon."

## **B. New Testament Implications**

### **John 17:1-5 (ESV)**

"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you... And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."

### **Luke 22:29-30 (ESV)**

"I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."

### **Ephesians 1:3-4 (ESV)**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world."

## **C. Trinitarian Roles in the Covenant**

### **The Father's Role:**

- Elects and gives a people to the Son (John 17:6; 6:39)
- Sends the Son as representative (Romans 5:18-19)
- Prepares a body for the Son (Hebrews 10:5)
- Promises to raise the Son from the dead (Psalm 2)

### **The Son's Role:**

- Agrees to become incarnate (Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5)
- Submits to the Father's will (John 6:38; Hebrews 10:7)
- Dies for sins (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24)
- Fulfills the law perfectly (Galatians 4:4-5)

### **The Holy Spirit's Role:**

- Empowers Jesus for ministry (Matthew 3:16; John 3:34)
- Applies redemption to believers (John 14:16-17)
- Testifies of Christ (John 15:26)

## **III. The Incarnation of Christ**

### **Key Verse: Ephesians 4:8-10 (ESV)**

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. (In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)"

**Important Truth:** The incarnation was not subtraction (God laying aside divinity) but **addition** - the eternal Son took on human nature while retaining His divine nature.

## A. Why Did the Mediator Need to Be Human?

**Heidelberg Catechism Q. 16:** Why must he be a true and righteous man?

**Answer:** He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin. He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner cannot pay for others.

**Calvin's Explanation:** "Our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's righteous judgment."

## B. Why Did the Mediator Need to Be Divine?

**Heidelberg Catechism Q. 17:** Why must he also be true God?

**Answer:** So that, by the power of his divinity, he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

**Calvin's Insight:** "It was his task to swallow up death. Who but the Life could do this?"

## C. The Kenotic Hymn (Philippians 2:5-11)

**What Christ Did NOT Empty Himself Of:**

- His divine attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, etc.)
- His divine nature itself

**What Christ DID Empty Himself Of:**

- His glory, privilege, and exaltation
- His divine reputation and standing
- His right to be treated according to His divine dignity

## D. The Hypostatic Union

**Council of Chalcedon (451 AD):** Christ is **one person in two natures** (divine and human) existing:

- **Without confusion** (the natures don't mix)
- **Without change** (neither nature is altered)

- **Without division** (the person is not split)
- **Without separation** (the natures are permanently united)

**Westminster Confession:** "Two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion."

## IV. Theological Implications

### A. For Our Understanding of God

The incarnation reveals God's character - His love, mercy, and justice perfectly displayed through Christ's condescension.

### B. For Our Understanding of Humanity

Christ shows us what humanity was meant to be and what redeemed humanity becomes. He is the "last Adam" who succeeds where the first Adam failed.

### C. For Our Salvation

The incarnation makes possible:

- **Representation:** Christ acts as our covenant head
- **Substitution:** He takes our place under God's wrath
- **Satisfaction:** He provides what we owe to God's justice
- **Reconciliation:** He bridges the gap between holy God and sinful humanity

## V. Conclusion

**Belgic Confession:** "The Son took the 'form of a slave' and was made in 'human form,' truly assuming a real human nature, with all its weaknesses, except for sin... In this way Christ is truly our Immanuel—that is: 'God with us.'"

The incarnation stands at the very heart of God's redemptive plan - not an afterthought, but the centerpiece of God's eternal purpose. Through the incarnation, the eternal Son permanently joined Himself to humanity, making possible our redemption, sanctification, and ultimate glorification.