

## Spurgeon Room Studies ~ Knowing God ~ Fall 2018

### Session 8

#### The Doctrine of Christ

I. Introduction—This doctrine is usually discussed in terms of both the *person* and the *work* of Jesus Christ:

- Person—I am the good shepherd.
- Work—The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
- Person—I am the way, the truth and the life.
- Work—No man comes to the Father but by me.

Christ accomplished for us reconciliation through satisfaction.

II. The Person of Christ

*Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.*<sup>1</sup>

#### A. The Humanity of Christ

1. Virgin birth—He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father (Matthew 1.18, 20, 24-25). Grudem notes several implications from this: salvation comes from the Lord, not human effort; there is a union of full deity and full humanity; Christ's humanity is without original/inherited sin (but not because Mary was sinless).<sup>2</sup> "The Holy Spirit will come upon you ... therefore the child to be born will be called holy." (Luke 1.35, cf. John 8.12; Hebrews 4.15)

*The activity of the Holy Spirit is not physiologically transparent. There is great mystery here. We are told what happened and that it happened, but not how it happened.*

2. Why was it necessary for Christ to have a human nature?
  - a. For representative obedience (Romans 5.18-19)
  - b. To be our substitute and sacrifice (Hebrews 2.14-18)

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1999, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1994, pgs. 529-30.

- c. To sympathize with us as our high priest (Hebrews 2.17; 4.14-16)
- d. To be our mediator (I Timothy 2.5)
- e. To be an example of true humanity (1 John 2.6; I Peter 2.21; Romans 8.29)
- f. As the first fruits of the resurrection, to give us hope (I Corinthians 15.20-23)

#### B. The Deity of Christ (refer to previous class material on the Trinity)

#### C. The Incarnation—Remaining what He was, He became what He was not.

1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...* (John 1.1, 14)
2. The greatest of all miracles. The infinite 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Godhead became incarnate! The biblical data is extensive that presents both the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>
3. *That* this is the case is a matter of Scriptural truth, but *how* this is the case is a matter of the deepest mystery (cf. Paul's phrase—the unsearchable riches of Christ—Ephesians 3.8).
4. The formulation of the doctrine of Christ's Person developed only gradually in the early centuries of the Church. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 this doctrine was presented in a form that has been accepted by the Church ever since.

#### D. Heretical Positions

1. Apollinarianism—Apollinaris taught that the one person, Jesus Christ, had a human body, but not a human mind/spirit. Instead His mind/spirit was divine, the *Logos*. This meant that in an important respect, Jesus was not fully human. But not only do our

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan, 1994, pages 529-554; Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Nelson, 1998, p. 211 ff.

bodies need redemption, so do our mind/spirits. This view was rejected by councils in Alexandria (362) and Constantinople (381).

2. Nestorianism—The idea associated with Nestorius (although it is doubtful that he himself actually held the view) is that there are two separate persons, one human, one divine in Christ. It has been described as a ‘schizophrenic Christ.’
3. Monophysitism—This view contends that Christ is one person, one nature (*mono* –one, *physis* –nature).

#### E. The Chalcedonian Confession of Faith

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer [*Theotokos*]; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized IN TWO NATURES, WITHOUT CONFUSION, WITHOUT CHANGE, WITHOUT DIVISION, WITHOUT SEPARATION; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person (*prosopon*) and subsistence [*hypostasis*], not as parted or separated into two persons [*prosopa*], but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Documents of the Christian Church*, Eds. Henry Bettenson & Chris Maunder, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 56.