Section: Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q61. What makes Christ’s life different from every other person?**

He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, and He obeyed God’s law perfectly: He never sinned.

**Matthew 1:20** ... “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

**1 Peter 2:22** [Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

**Philippians 2:8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

**Hebrews 7:26** For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

**1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit

**Mark 10:45** “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Welcome the church family and thank them for tuning in.

Let’s pray:

I’ll begin our time tonight by reading the catechism question and answer.

**Q61. What makes Christ’s life different from every other person?**

He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, and He obeyed God’s law perfectly: He never sinned.

I’m hopeful that our understanding of the hypostatic union and what happened at the incarnation will give us an even greater insight into the significance of our catechism question now.

**P:1** **Christ was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit:**

Jesus’s life was truly different than any other who has lived. He was not born of a human father. This is one of the first unique things we see in our answer. Jesus was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit:

**Matthew 1:18-25 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.**

The other gospel account speaking about the miraculous conception is seen in Luke 1.

**Luke 1:26-38 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 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 borne will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.**

We have spoken in some depth over the last two weeks about the incarnation and the hypostatic union. This was one of the passages we read in regards to the incarnation. This passage shows us how God the Son Jesus took on flesh and that it was God at work in the human Mary to conceive the God man Christ Jesus! Recall from our previous lessons that the incarnation takes place at exactly the moment of conception. At conception is the exact time in history that Jesus took on a human nature and came “in flesh” as the word incarnation is defined.

The hypostatic union is the reality that, in light of the incarnation, Jesus possesses both His eternal divine nature (as He has eternally) and a fully human nature, from that very point on.

What scripture reveals in the conception of Jesus is that the Holy Spirit does a miraculous work in the womb of Mary, and the power of the Most High overshadows her. The conception of Jesus in Mary’s womb is the will and work of the triune God, particularly assigned to God the Holy Spirit.

The man Christ Jesus, who Mary birthed, was conceived by God in Mary. Scripture gives particular attention to the Holy Spirits work in this conception. Other than that, there really isn’t any more detail about this. God saw fit that this is what we should have to know and understand the conception of Jesus. It is a “miracle” in the true definition of the word. Something beyond normal means and operation within creation. Something God Himself brought about in a unique—never before or after way.

This is a very important key point. Jesus was not conceived by natural conception with the sperm of a human father. If this were to happen then Jesus would be two persons. When we are created in our mother’s womb of a man’s sperm and a woman’s egg we come into being as a new person. However, we know that Jesus is one person, and His person preexisted with a fully divine nature eternally. If Jesus’s human nature had been brought about the same way as ours, He would be joining His person to another new person. This would also cause His new person to be born under the headship of Adam the way that we are and be dead in sin.

But, when Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit, she did not conceive a new person, rather the Spirit created a human nature (including human flesh) in the womb of Mary at conception, the already existing person of Jesus took on that nature. Jesus has human DNA, as you and I do. He was conceived with the human egg of Mary. However, it was not done the natural way we are conceived. The Holy Spirit did not conceive a new person, rather He conceived a human nature (including human flesh) that was taken on by the pre-existing person of Jesus. These points are extremely important to remember as we continue on and you’ll see why shortly.

It is only through the virgin birth (not the joining of a man and woman) that the divine (God the Son) is united to the human in **one person**. It is a wondrous work of God! If you remove the miraculous conception (Jesus being conceived in the womb of a virgin), then Jesus had to have an earthly father. If Jesus had both an earthly father AND earthly mother, then Jesus is not divine and we have no Savior.

This is the unique incarnation of Jesus. No other human in history was brought about in this way. Not even Adam was this unique. Though Adam was created directly by God and originally without sin, He did not possess a divine nature as the person of Jesus does. In the person of Adam there was only a human nature. Prior to his sin, Adam’s nature was not enslaved to sin. However, he had the ability to sin and as scripture shows us, he indeed did sin. Now through Adam as our federal head, when we are conceived, we are legally credit with the sin of Adam as our federal head and we are born with a sin nature. Adam’s sin is legally credited to us as our representative. However, Adam did not exist prior to Jesus. In fact, Jesus created Adam and so the person of Jesus must have preexisted and indeed as God, the person of Jesus did preexist Adam.

So what we see at the incarnation is not a new person being conceived and therefore falling under the headship of Adam but rather a human nature that was conceived and taken up by the pre-existing person of Jesus and therefore not under the headship of Adam the way that we are. See Jesus as the unique man because of this and of course many other reasons which we will continue looking at in this lesson.

Recall what we learned in our lesson about federal headship. Federal headship shows us that we are represented by Adam and born sinful due to our first federal head Adam.

**Romans 5:12-14 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.**

This amazing reality of federal headship means that if Jesus had both a human father and mother then He would also have been born sinful, legally accredited with Adam’s guilt, and could not be our better federal head.

Notice in this Romans passage Adam was a type of the one who was to come. Christ Jesus was the anti-type, the better federal head.

See that Jesus had to be born this way so that He could be the better sinless federal head of all the elect. The virgin birth makes it possible for Jesus not to have the inherited guilt of Adam. If Jesus had an earthly father, He would have inherited the sin of Adam and he would be two persons not one person. But because of the virgin birth, Jesus is proven not to be under Adam’s federal headship and therefore not imputed with his guilty, fallen nature.

**As J. Owen says, “Scripture teaches us that through the overshadowing of the Spirit, that which was born was holy [Lk. 1:35], the Son of God. At the very moment of conception and assumption, the Holy Spirit sanctified the human nature of Jesus equipping him as Son of God to be the Savior of men. Consequently Jesus was not only separate from sinners, he was positively endowed with all appropriate grace, and was holy and harmless, as well as undefiled [Heb. 7:26].”**

If you’ll recall pastor Matt’s teaching on covenant theology the Hebrews passage in Owens quote also shows us that:

**Hebrews 7:22 This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.**

**7:26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.**

Along with His perfect life, the uniqueness of Christ’s conception (His incarnation) is one of the main ways we see Jesus’s headship being the perfect stainless headship over the better covenant! I wanted to point this out so you can see the amazing way that these lessons and the work of God comes together! Keep this in mind, if Christ were to come in the flesh the natural way, He would be under the headship of Adam and therefore the inheritor of Adams guilt and not stainless. God brought this about uniquely because Jesus is the anti-type, the Federal head for all the elect of God.

I’ve mentioned a few times that the person of Jesus preexisted Adam (as God, Jesus has eternally existed). Think upon the Covenant of redemption and the covenant of Grace. These covenants were prepared by God in eternities past, long before Adam was created. Uniquely so Jesus was already designated and willingly took on the role of the better Federal head of the New Covenant prior to it taking place in time. This again shows us how Jesus is not under the headship of Adam though He did most certainly possess a fully human nature. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, but not a new person. The conception done by the Spirit was that of a human nature and the human nature then belonged to the preexisting person of Jesus!

We know that scripture declares the virgin birth to have happened, but let’s look to see the ways that it was prophesied about in the Old Testament.

The virgin birth is a fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 3:15 that a savior will come through the offspring of the woman.

After Adam sinned in the garden God confronts Adam, Eve, and the serpent. God then hands down the curses for their transgression.

**Genesis 3:14-15 The LORD God said to the serpent,**

**“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”**

Church in the first gospel proclamation (referred to as the protoevangelium), God declares that an offspring of the woman would be the victor over the serpent and the serpent’s work. Jesus had to come from the woman and Jesus had to be conceived by God in order to not be born under the representation of Adam as a new person.

This should also show us that Jesus’s human nature most certainly came from Mary’s biological egg. Jesus was not growing in the womb of Mary separate from her. Jesus has the DNA of Mary in His human nature. The scriptures declared that the seed of the woman in the garden would be the one to crush Satan. It would be a wrong view to think of Christ’s human nature as created in the womb of Mary but not really a biological part of Mary.

Unfortunately, there are many false views of this. The thinking typically goes that Jesus was conceived in Mary but it wasn’t actually Mary’s egg that Jesus’s human nature was conceived in, rather it was something fully so foreign that it was literally separate from Mary’s physical body, while still inside her physical body. This is simply not true. Jesus’s human nature truly did get conceived in a miraculous way, however it was miraculously done with a real human biological egg of Mary.

It must have been done with Mary’s true human genetics because we are told in the prophecies that Jesus would be from the offspring of the woman.

We spoke about this in our last two lessons but it’s important to remember that if scripture prophecies about something then that something is as good as done. If God declares that something will happen. He also ensures that it comes to pass. God’s saying is His doing and we would be blessed to remember this fact!

We also see the incarnation prophesied about in the book of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

We see scripture ascribe this prophecy to Jesus in the book of Matthew:

**Matthew 1:21-23 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).**

**James M. Boyce says, “The virgin birth is important because of its unique and miraculous nature, which therefore points to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It is significant that the life of the Lord Jesus is bracketed by two great miracles. At the beginning is the virgin birth; He came into being without benefit of a human father, and so was the Son of God and son of man in a unique way. At the end is the resurrection: He conquers and transcends the greatest of all enemies, death.**

What clearer way did God have of drawing attention to this one who is unique in human history?”

The Doctrine of the virgin birth is also supported by:

**Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

Scripture clearly states that Jesus was conceived by a miraculous work of God, through the Spirit. Now notice here in our Galatians passage, this was done so that Christ could redeem those who were “under the law” so we might receive adoption as sons. Praise God church that Jesus’s life was different, yet so real, He was worthy to be made the sufficient sacrifice that brings us the elect of God, we who are sinful and unworthy brought into the family of God!

This brings us to our last point for the lesson, what must Jesus do (since He was born under the law) to be the perfect sacrifice and therefore secure the adoption of the elect?

**P:2 Christ obeyed God’s law perfectly:**

Our catechism answer tells us that Jesus was sinless– He obeyed God’s law perfectly: He never sinned

Jesus Christ never sinned. He was, as the Scriptures say, “obedient unto death.”

**Philippians 2:8-11 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

What does it mean that Jesus was obedient to the point of death? Think about those words church. You and I may exercise a degree of obedience and as we grow in our Christian walk, as we are sanctified we should continue to grow in greater degrees of obedience. However, most of us will never know what it means to be obedient even unto death. We most certainly won’t know to the fullest extent how this obedience was weighing on Jesus. Consider in the person of Jesus, having to submit in the flesh (His human nature) to a torturous and humiliating death, all the while in the same person of Jesus, according to His divine nature, simultaneously upholding the universe as it were all the while. Because of the mystery here we most certainly must see that this obedience unto death is like no obedience that you or I will ever face. Many of us do well in the little things as far as our obedience goes, however if we knew our obedience would cause death, not just any death but torturous death, how many of us would have the ability to obey still?

Well Jesus did! He obeyed even unto death and that death being death on a cross. Church this should cause some worship to well up in you. Our suffering Savior, in the flesh, obeyed unto the wrathful death you and I deserve! An obedience none of us would not have held! Praise God for Christ Jesus’s obedience, without it we would be the ones headed toward the cross!

We also see that He was tempted unto all points like us.

**Hebrews 4:14-16 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.**

We can take comfort in the Scriptures that Christ was tempted, understands our infirmities, and is our great high priest. His obedience even in temptations as the scriptures say, should give us confidence to draw near the throne of grace and find help in the time of need. In the time of your temptation, do you draw near to God and His throne of grace or do you give in? Church one of the purposes for Jesus’s obedience is to display His grace! It can never be said that Jesus obeyed perfectly because He was never tempted.

Let’s look at the passages that defend the sinlessness of Jesus.

**Luke 4:1-13 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”**

**And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” And Jesus answered him, “It is written,**

**“‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”**

**And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,**

**“‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’**

**And “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.**

Jesus was tempted by the devil to the devils fullest extent and yet Jesus responded to each temptation without sin. If you recall I mentioned this briefly in my last lesson. We give in long before the devil has done his worst work but Jesus was tempted and pressed to the ***fullest extent*** by the devil and yet remained sinless. This is why the devil departed, after he ended every temptation he departed and Jesus remained sinless!

**John 8:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**

If Jesus were himself a sinner He could not take away the sin of the world! Rather He would have had to pay for His own sin and would not have been a worthy sacrifice for anyone. John the Baptist rightly proclaims here that Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of God. Church, the Old Covenant types give weight on context to this—the Israelites knew that God require spotless lambs. Surely, Jesus was spotless, He was without sin and therefore a worthy sacrifice on behalf of His forever people. He was the Lamb of God, the spotless Lamb for the New Covenant!

**John 15:10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.**

Jesus Himself declared that He kept the Fathers commandments and that this keeping, this obedience, was vital in His abiding in the Father. Though this obedience was in the human nature of Jesus one clear thing we can draw from our previous lessons is that the person of Christ could never be separated from the Father’s abiding love. Therefore, in the flesh, the human nature possessed by the one person of Jesus He must have kept the Father’s commands for the person of Jesus to abide in the Father’s of love.

Next, Peter after healing a man who was lame from birth makes this very bold declaration to the men of Israel.

**Acts 3:11-16 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.**

Peter makes some very clear points. He said that Jesus was Holy and Righteous. He called Jesus the Author of life! To call Jesus the Holy and Righteous one would be impossible if Jesus had been blemished by sin. Notice as well by calling Jesus the Author of life and calling Jesus a servant of God, Peter declares that Jesus was both God and man. This is amazing! Jesus in His divine nature is of course Holy and Righteous, however those terms were applied in the text to Jesus the servant of God declaring that in the flesh, Jesus’s human nature, was Holy and Righteous!

In the flesh, in a truly and fully human nature, Jesus learned obedience.

**Hebrews 5:8-10 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.**

Remember this point from my previous lessons. Jesus, though He possessed a perfect divine nature, as a human Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered. He didn’t learn it through sin and repentance—no, He learned it through human growth in knowledge, experience, and wisdom day after day. He did not have some super human nature, rather Jesus learned as we do in His human nature even through suffering and yet He obeyed perfectly. The passage even declares that Jesus’s human nature was made perfect through this learning of obedience.

Early in the book of Hebrews we also see this:

**Hebrews 2:14-18 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.**

**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. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

You see Christ was truly tempted, and yet without sin. The human nature of Jesus never fell into temptation and thus sin. He was tempted but never gave in. Jesus was the unique man who never failed to obey perfectly! This is also why the man Jesus, who suffered when tempted is able to help those, through his divine nature, who are being tempted. What an amazing grace and truth we have from our perfect savior.

Let’s consider briefly Jesus’ perfect obedience to God’s law. It was not man’s law, or the Pharisees’ law, or something else Jesus needed to be obedient. It was God’s law.

But WHAT law? We learned in our catechism lesson on the law that there are two types of law (Universal Moral Law & Positive Law), consisting of three sets of laws.

Let’s review this here briefly.

1) Jesus came to obey the Universal Moral Law perfectly- this is the unchanging, eternal moral law that all people in all times are required to obey. This moral law, as we learned, was summarized and expressed by God in the Ten Commandments. This is a crucial part of Christ’s work.

Our next two sets of laws are under the Positive Law category. As we’ve learned, if law/commands are for a particular person(s) for a particular time, they are called Positive Law. Jesus had Positive Law of the old covenant to obey and Jesus had positive law given to Him by God in order to establish the New Covenant!

2) In addition to the Universal Moral Law, Jesus had to obey any other Positive Law that was applicable during the time He was living bodily here on earth. This means that Jesus had to obey the Positive Laws of the Old Covenant.

3) In addition to the Positive Law of the time, Jesus had other positive law- other commands- uniquely given to Him. These Positive Laws were the additional things required so that salvation can be granted to the chosen ones. They are things unique to Him. These things include Him having to die on a cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the elect. Jesus had to do that. It included Him having to become man in the first place: God the Son taking on flesh.

Notice that our catechism answer says He obeyed God’s law perfectly. Not only did Christ obey outwardly, but inwardly there was not rebellion or breaking of the law in heart or mind.

This mean Jesus never had a sinful feeling or thought! When Jesus turned the tables of the money changers over, He was angry and yet did not sin. He had righteous anger for the desecration of God’s house and the thievery of God’s people and yet Jesus never sinned!

**John 2:13-17 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”**

I often try to justify my anger as righteous, but I rarely get angry without sin connected to my anger. Jesus being fully human experienced things like anger and yet He held these emotions and never sinned in them. When we are happy it seems easier to avoid sin, but how about when you’re angry. This is such a beautiful truth church, Jesus experienced all human emotions in His human nature and yet in thought, speech, and action, Jesus never sinned.

This is the only way the wrath of God could be met. It is His perfect obedience that brings about our righteousness. Christ was the righteous One, and that righteousness is imputed to us at conversion; that perfect obedience is imputed to us. If Christ was not perfect, we would not be saved.

**So to close, what makes Jesus’ life different from every other person? Answer: He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, and He obeyed God’s law perfectly: He never sinned.**

**This answer may have seemed simple up front. But these truths are critical to the gospel and to our salvation; we must know these things well.**

**Love you church…miss you…God is good, and we are living out His plan for each of us. Stay plugged into the ministry we are doing on video and keep in touch with the leaders and others…**