

Lesson 10 **THE WORK OF CHRIST**10.1 **The States of Christ**10.1.1 The State of **Humiliation**

One's state refers to one's legal position, or one's status before the law. Although Christ was always innocent and pure in His condition, He remained in the state of imputed **guilt** throughout most of His life on earth. Although He was a King, He became a servant, Isaiah 42:1f; Philippians 2:5-7; Matthew 17:24f. We distinguish the following stages in the humiliation of Christ:

a. incarnation

Christ took upon Himself the flesh and blood of man who had sinned, flesh and blood under the curse of sin, Galatians 4:4. He assumed our flesh and blood with all its weaknesses and infirmities, Hebrews 2:14f.

b. sufferings

Christ suffered throughout His life upon earth, and especially at the end of His life, see Lord's Day 15, Heidelberg Catechism. Since He was perfectly innocent, all His sufferings were **substitutionary**. He suffered in our place, Isaiah 53. Some aspects of His sufferings were:

- i. enduring shame and persecution, Luke 22:63f
- ii. enduring attack and temptation, Matthew 22:15, 4:1-11; John 8:59, 10:39
- iii. enduring unbelief and sin, Luke 4:28f; Mark 6:5,6

c. death

Christ's death on the cross forms the climax of His sufferings. In His death He truly appeared as one condemned and cursed by God, the object of the greatest possible shame, see Lord's Day 16, Heidelberg Catechism; Galatians 3:13, Deuteronomy 21:23.

d. burial

Christ's burial proves and proclaims His victory over the grave and the realm of death, Acts 2:27f. Since the essential battle was over, we may see the first rays of exaltation here, Isaiah 53:9.

10.1.2 The State of **Exaltation**

After a brief sojourn in the grave, the full atoning work of Christ is completed, and the Father grants Him the power to give the benefits of His victory over death to His Church. From this time on, both on earth and from heaven, He always appears to His children in the state of exaltation. He is now fully glorified in heaven. We distinguish the following stages in the exaltation of Christ:

a. resurrection

Christ rose from the dead with an imperishable, spiritual body, 1 Corinthians 15:42. The grave was not able to hold Him, Acts 2:24. So He is called "the firstborn of the dead", Revelation 1:5, "the first fruits of those who are asleep", 1 Corinthians 15:20. His resurrection assures us concerning our own resurrection at the last day, (Lord's Day 17, Heidelberg Catechism).

b. ascension

After forty days on earth, the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of His disciples, Luke 24:50, 51. The ascension shows that the Father fully accepts Christ's sacrifice, and so gives Him heavenly rewards. He obtains access to the Father, and also gives this to us, (Lord's Day 18, Heidelberg Catechism).

c. session

Upon His ascension, Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father, Acts 2:33f. Here Christ officially receives all power and authority in heaven and on earth, Philippians 2:9-11; Matthew 28:18, 19.

d. final coming

Christ will be fully exalted when He has placed all His enemies under His feet, and given full judgment to all men, 1 Corinthians 15:24f. The Father will be fully honoured in Christ's work as Judge, Revelation 1:7; Revelation 6:9f.

10.2 The Offices of Christ

According to the manifold testimony of the Old Testament, Christ was ordained to be Messiah, the Anointed One. Three kinds of office bearers were anointed in the old covenant: prophets, 1 Kings 19:16, priests, Leviticus 8:12, and kings, 1 Samuel 10:1. To be **anointed** implies two specific gifts of God:

- i. ordaining - God calls, sets apart, Psalm 2:7; Psalm 110:4,5
- ii. equipping - God girds and strengthens, Hebrews 10:5

The LORD always equips those whom He calls or ordains; so Christ was ordained and equipped to be Messiah, the Mediator of the covenant of grace. As the fulfilment of the offices, He had a threefold office, prophet, priest and king.

10.2.1 Prophet

The task of a prophet is to teach, foretell and disclose. Christ did all of these perfectly, and is still doing them through His Spirit. He is our chief prophet and teacher, Matthew 16:21; 1 Peter 1:10f.

10.2.2 Priest

The task of a priest is to sacrifice, pray and bless. As our eternal High priest, Christ sacrificed His own flesh, and so always makes intercession for us, and gives us His blessings. He was priest and victim at the same time, Hebrews 9:11f.

10.2.3 King

The task of a king is to lead, guide, rule and protect. Christ's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, John 18:36. Those who are ingrafted into Him by true faith as members of His body are the citizens and subjects of His kingdom. He exercises His kingship in gathering, protecting and preserving His Church, (Lord's Day 21, Heidelberg Catechism).

10.3 **The Atonement of Christ**

10.3.1 The **Nature** of the Atonement

Christ came to satisfy the justice and mercy of God. He makes the atonement or satisfaction for sins by giving Himself as a ransom, Matthew 20:28, an offering and sacrifice acceptable to God, Ephesians 5:20. He satisfies God's justice and also reveals God's mercy in granting redemption to lost sinners.

The Old Testament law indicated that atonement could only come through sacrifice, Leviticus 16. In order for payment to be made, blood had to be shed, Leviticus 17:11. In the fullness of time, Christ makes the expiation for sins by His blood, Romans 3:25. Through this expiation, the world is reconciled to God. Thus, reconciliation comes through expiation.

Because Christ acts as representative and head of His people, His atonement is called **vicarious atonement**. Christ suffers in our place, so that His payment becomes payment for us, Isaiah 53:6.

10.3.2 The **Extent** of the Atonement

We confess limited or particular atonement, that is, that Christ died only for the elect, and so gave His ransom for those predestined by the Father to eternal life. Those who reject His Word and sacrifice do not share its blessings, but are condemned at the day of judgment. However, the one atonement of Christ leads to the renewal of all creation, Matthew 19:28; Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20.

Exercises Lesson 10

I. Reference Passages

Study and Review: Belgic Confession, Article 20, 21.
 Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 6, 7, 11,
 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.
 Canons of Dort, Chapter II, 1-5;
 Note the Rejection of Errors, Chapter
 II, 3-7, V, 1.

II. Review Questions

1. What makes Christ's sufferings different than all other human suffering?
2. If Christ did not die for all men, why do we confess that "He bore the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race"? See Lord's Day 15.
3. How did God manifest His wrath against His Son?
4. What are the three offices of Christ, or the three aspects of His one office? At what point does the three-fold office come fully to light?
5. How does Christ satisfy God's justice? How does Christ show God's mercy?
6. What are the fruits of the atonement?

III. Extra Questions

1. Explain the term **vicarious atonement**.
2. Show how the three-fold office of Christ was foreshadowed in the Old Testament.
3. Compare the work of Moses and the work of Christ. Why is Moses called the **mediator** of the old covenant, Galatians 3:19f?
4. Compare the benefits of the resurrection, the ascension, and the session at God's right hand. How do these benefits relate to each other?