

Lesson 9 THE PERSON OF CHRIST

9.1 The Incarnation of Christ

9.1.1 The Birth from a Virgin

The covenant of favour has two parties: God and man. The covenant of grace also has two parties: God and fallen man.

The parties are reconciled through the work of Christ, the Messiah. He reconciles fallen man to God by paying the price for our transgression and so leading us back to the Father. So He is called the Mediator of the covenant, 1 Timothy 2:5. As Mediator, the Lord Jesus had to be true and righteous man, and true God, Lord's Day 5, 6. The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh, but was without sin from the moment of conception, Hebrews 4:15. We confess the conception by the Holy Spirit and the birth from a virgin, Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23. The Scriptures teach that the Lord Jesus took upon Himself the real flesh and blood of the virgin Mary. The power of sin was broken in the conception by the Holy Spirit.

Besides stressing the divinity of Christ, (Article 10, Belgic Confession), the Word of God also stresses the true humanity of Christ, inasmuch as our salvation depends upon it, Hebrews 2:14f; Acts 2:30; Romans 1:3, Luke 1:42; Galatians 4:4; Jeremiah 33:15; Isaiah 11:1; Hebrews 7:14, Romans 9:5; 2 Timothy 2:8. These passages are important in avoiding the errors relating to this doctrine.

9.1.2 Errors in the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth

- a. The Anabaptist error

The Anabaptists taught that the Lord Jesus took His body from heaven, and so did not receive His flesh and blood from the blessed virgin Mary. Since Mary was conceived and born in sin, they argued that Christ would have been sinful if He had taken her flesh and blood. For them, Mary acted like a funnel, a route through which Christ passed without in any way being affected by it in His person. Note how the passages above show this to be wrong. Ultimately, the Anabaptists made flesh and blood to be sinful in itself.

b. The Romanist error

While demonstrating the same underlying error, the Romanists have taken a different route. Throughout the years they have promoted the veneration of Mary. In 1854, the Pope officially declared her to be without sin (Immaculate Conception). In this way, Christ's sinlessness was ensured. Nowhere, however, does Mary have such a significant place in the New Testament Church, Acts 1:14.

9.2 The Two Natures in One Person

9.2.1 The **Distinction** Between the Two Natures

The two natures the Lord Jesus has since the incarnation, the divine and the human, are and always remain distinct, so that each nature retains distinct properties:

divine nature

uncreated

infinite

omnipresent

human nature

created

finite, temporal origin

limited by all properties of a real body

9.2.2 The **Union** of the Two Natures

The two natures are united together in one Person, and they may never be separated. Having been joined at the conception and birth of the Saviour, they will remain together forever. In this respect, we will always be different than the Lord Jesus. Note that the distinction and union of the two natures is not to be confused with the union of body and soul. The union of the two natures carries through all time, even through the severance of body and soul at Christ's death:

	always remains united	
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divine nature	human nature:	body and soul:separated at
		temporal death

9.2.3 Errors in this Doctrine

a. The Nestorian error

Nestorius (5th Century A.D.) divided the one person of Christ and began to speak of the Word or Logos as a person and Jesus as another person. In opposition to his heresy the Council of Chalcedon said that the two natures were:

- i. indivisible
- ii. inseparable

b. The Eutychian error

Eutyches (5th Century A.D.) taught that there were two natures before the union, but one nature after the union. He saw the Messiah as an intermediary creature, that is, one who was half God and half

man. In opposition to this heresy, the Council of Chalcedon said that the two natures were:

- iii. unconfused
- iv. unchanged

The clearest expression of the two natures is found in the gospel of John, although we also find it in the other gospels.

c. Monothelism

This error is closely related to the Eutychian error in that it taught that there was only **one** will in Christ. In opposition to this, we confess that Christ had two wills, a divine and a human, and had to submit His human will to the divine will every moment, Hebrews 5:7.

The will belongs with the nature; the character, deeds and disposition go with the Person.

Exercises Lesson 9

I. Reference Passages

Study and Review: Belgic Confession, Articles 14, 18.
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 5, 6, 13,
14.
Canons of Dort, Chapter II. 1-4.

II. Review Questions

1. How was the triune God involved in the virgin birth?
2. How does the virgin birth show God's love for us?
3. How was Christ's birth different from ours?
4. How is our original sin covered in Christ's birth (see Lord's Day 14)?
5. How does the virgin birth assure us that Christ is our Mediator?
6. How does Christ's true humanity still help us today? Prove your answer.

III. Extra Questions

1. How was the birth of Christ also a humiliation for Him?
2. What did the Council of Chalcedon say about the two natures of Christ? Explain these terms.

3. Show how the incarnation was prophesied and foretold in the Old Testament.