

**Theology for Life**  
**Faith Presbyterian Church**  
Lesson 7: Person and Work of Christ

**Opening Discussion:**

- Briefly describe who Jesus is. Explain why that description is significant.
- How can Jesus' claims of exclusivity be offered as good news to a diverse culture with differing religious beliefs? (Exclusivity: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me"* John 14:6)

**Key terms:**

- Mediator – A person whose role it is to bring reconciliation to conflicting parties.
- Atonement – (Hebrew: *kippur* means to "cover over"). Making amends. Repair for a wrong or injury.

*For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human who gave himself a ransom for all--this was attested at the right time. 1 Tim.2:5-7*

**Jesus Christ: His Person and Work**

*"The person and work of Christ must constantly be linked, each interpreting the other. What Jesus did was possible because of who he was. Who he was cannot be divorced from or confused with what he did.... The Incarnation can only be understood aright when we see it within God's overarching purposes of salvation." -David Wells*

**I. Person of Christ: Who is Jesus? What kind of person/thing is he?**

Proposed Options:

A. Man masquerading as God

1. *Arianism*: Jesus was really just a man, but he claimed to be God or at least he allowed that claim to be said of him.
2. How does this affect salvation?
3. Other problems? C.S. Lewis' "Lord, liar, lunatic"

B. God in the guise of man

1. *Docetism*: God only "seemed to be" man.
2. How human was Jesus? What does it say about humanity if we cannot conceive of Jesus as human? How does it change your understanding of sin?
3. How does this affect salvation?

C. Part God and part man

1. *Apollinarianism*: Jesus is a composite of God and man.
2. Which part did what? Was he then God-lite and human-lite?
3. How does this affect salvation?

D. One person, two natures

1. Christianity
2. Divine and human are neither confused nor separated

**Evidence in the Bible**

A. Fully God

- **Isaiah 9:6**-- "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
- **John 1:1,14** --"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, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."
- **2 Cor. 5:10**--"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body."
- **Col 2:9**-- "For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity lives in bodily form..."
- **Heb. 1:1-3**--"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, and through whom he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs."
- **Rev. 19:16**--"He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God..... On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

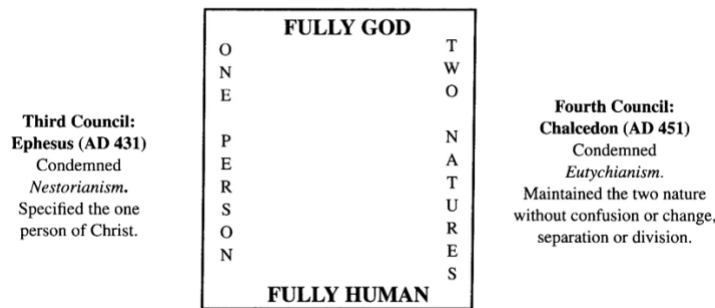
**B. Fully Man**

- **Luke 2:40**--*And [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.*
- **Matt. 4:2** --*And [Jesus] fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.*
- **Luke 22:44**--*And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground.*
- **Heb. 2:18** --*For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.*

**C. Dual Nature of Christ: Fully God and Fully Man**

- **Phil. 2:6**--*...Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

**First Council: Nicea (AD 325)**  
 Condemned *Arianism*  
 Soteriological axiom: "God alone can save us."



**Second Council: Constantinople I (AD 381)**  
 Re-affirmed Nicea, condemned *Apollinarianism.*  
 Soteriological Axiom: "That which is not assumed is not healed."

## Necessity and Implications of Dual Nature

### A. Why he must be human?

**Larger Catechism 39:** *"It was necessary that the Mediator should be human that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law and suffer and made intercession for us in our nature"*

1. Justice demands: "eye for eye tooth for tooth"
2. Bible operates with "federalism" concept  
*1 Cor.15:21-22--For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*
3. What does this tell us about humanity?
4. What other benefits come from knowing that Christ is fully human?

### B. Why must he be God?

1. Only God was capable of enduring God's wrath
2. Only God was able to defeat Sin and Death  
**Heb. 2:14**--*Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has power over death.*  
**Larger Catechism 38:** *"It was requisite that the Mediator be God, that he might sustain and keep human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death."*

## Offices of Christ

- John 1:41 *"We have found the Messiah (which is translated Christ)"*  
Christ is the Greek word for "Messiah", both literally meaning, "the anointed one."

The Heidelberg Catechism # 31:

Q. Why is he called "Christ" meaning "anointed"

A. *Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance; our only high priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal king who governs us by his Word and Spirit and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.*

A. Three "anointed" offices in Old Testament:

1. Prophet: 1 Kings 19:16--"and Elisha... you shall anoint to be prophet in your place"
2. Priest: Exodus 29:7--"And you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on [Aaron's] head and anoint him."
3. King: 1 Sam. 10:1--"Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be the prince over his people Israel?"

B. Three Offices of Christ

All Anointed with oil to signify the designation by decree and the imparting of the Holy Spirit in order to set them apart and qualifying them for their respective offices. Jesus, the final prophet, priest, and king, was also anointed by the Spirit.

- Psalms 2: 2--"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed... I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you."
- Matthew 3:16--"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

### 1. Jesus as Prophet:

- Acts 3:20ff--"In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer...that he may send the Messiah, appointed for you... Moses said, "the Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people..." (see Dt. 18:15ff)
- WSC #24: Christ executes the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.
- What is lost if Christ is not prophet?

### 2. Jesus as Priest:

- Hebrews 4:14, 5:5--"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God... So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"
- WSC #25: Christ executes the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.
- What is lost if Christ is not priest?

### 3. Jesus as King:

- Luke 1:32ff--"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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end."
- WSC #26: Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.
- What is lost if Christ is not king?

## II. Work of Christ

### 1. Active Obedience

*"If Christ had only earned forgiveness of sins for us, then we would not merit heaven. Our guilt would have been removed, but we would simply be in the position of Adam and Eve before they had done anything good or bad and before they had passed a time of probation successfully. To be established in righteousness forever and to have their fellowship with God made sure forever, Adam and Eve had to obey God perfectly over a period of time. Then God*

*would have looked on their faithful obedience with pleasure and delight, and they would have lived with him in fellowship forever.” Wayne Grudem*

Christ lived a perfect life, sinlessly obeying the Law of God (Gal 4:4).

- Hebrews 5:8–9 “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. [9] And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,”
- Hebrews 4:15 “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.”
- 1 Cor. 1:30 Paul says that Christ has been made “our righteousness”
- Romans 5:19 “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous”

2. Passive Obedience: Why did Christ die?

### **Atonement theories (What is done?)**

**1. Ransom** (classical)-formulated by Origen-regarded the atonement as a ransom paid to Satan. Origen taught that Christ was a trap: his humanity was the necessary bait for luring Satan into thinking that he had at last won out over God, and then he conquered the devil by his deity.

Critiques: Gregory of Nazianzus questioned God using deception. More troubling was the idea that Satan was the rightful owner of human beings to which a ransom should be paid.

Satan’s role in the drama is that of a seducer and prosecutor rather than judge or claimant in the dispute.

**2. Christus Victor**-a more general way of speaking about Christ’s death as a conquest over Satan. Christ’s kingdom overturning the kingdoms of this world, the defeat of Satan and the powers of this age.

The danger of contemporary theories of Christus Victor that push out the propitiatory character of Christ’s death. Horton writes, “Christ’s death was a victory over the powers only because in it he bears away the guilt for sin, ‘canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands...nailing it to the cross.” Col. 2:13-15.

**3. Satisfaction**-Anselm of Canterbury emphasized Christ’s death as the satisfaction paid to God’s offended dignity. Like a monarch slighted by a subject, God must have a suitable tribute to outweigh the affront to his honor. However, God’s majesty is infinite and therefore sin demands an infinite penalty...only God can pay.

Good: it points out that the problem is God’s problem with sin. God has been offended.

Bad: it is not God’s dignity that needs satisfaction; it is God’s justice. It also makes it a transaction between God and Jesus without any treatment of its communication to sinners.

**4. Moral influence**-Abelard-the purpose of Christ’s death was to provide a moving example of God’s love for sinners that would provoke repentance.

**5. Penal Substitution**-Only humans can rightfully repay the debt to God’s justice which was incurred through their willful disobedience to God. Since only God can make the satisfaction necessary to repay it, therefore we stand in need of a Mediator who can both represent Man and God. Christ is a sacrifice on behalf of humanity, taking humanity’s debt for sin upon himself, and propitiating God’s wrath (Isa 53:4-11; Rom 3:23-26; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:10-13; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; 1 John 2:2, 4:10).

While Penal Substitution is at the center of the atonement, we’ve seen how other theories (though flawed) can have true elements in them. When, however, they fail to include Penal Substitution, they fall short of biblical atonement.

**The Extent of Christ’s Atonement**

Old Testament

If Atonement for sin was necessary and done by Christ as the only mediator, then how were believers in the OT saved?

*WCF 8.6. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent’s head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and forever.*

For All or For Some

Definite atonement (How is it done?)

*WCF 8.8. To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them, and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey, and governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner, and ways, as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.*

What is the extent of the atonement? Is it effective to save or does it just make salvation possible?

Thesis	Extent and Nature	Position
Christ saved every person	Unlimited in extent and effect	Universal salvation
Christ made possible the salvation of every person	Unlimited in extent, but limited in effect	Hypothetical universalism
Christ saved all the elect	Sufficient for all, efficient for the elect	Definite atonement

**Summary:** Christ died for (1) all the sins of all people, (2) some of the sins of all people, or (3) all of the sins of some people. If unbelief is a sin, and some people are finally condemned, then there is at least one sin for which Christ did not make adequate satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

Is Christianity exclusive or universal?

Exclusive: There is only one way to God: Christ the One Mediator.

Universal: Christ is the mediator for all humans.

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<sup>1</sup> Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith* p. 517