

## **Christ: Systematic Summary of Christology, VII**

We are studying the person of Christ. We are now turning to the subtopic of the humanity of Christ. It is easy to demonstrate our Lord's humanity from the Scriptures, although it is not as easy to face directly all the implications of His humanity, which I will push you to do in a moment. Let us begin with the different proofs of His humanity.

The texts that we have studied in looking at the Incarnation of Christ prove His humanity since God became a human being. If you show the Incarnation, you prove the humanity of Christ. Secondly, He had human weaknesses and needs. The Son of God, not in heaven before the Incarnation and not now, but during the state of humiliation alone, He had human weaknesses and needs. In John 4 He was tired and sat down by the well. He was not acting; He was tired. In John 19 He was thirsty. He was tempted. He avoided danger; John 7 says He stayed away from Judea because the Jews there were seeking to take His life. He thus did not tempt God. First, the Incarnation; second, He had weaknesses and needs common to humanity; and third, He had real human emotions. He evidenced genuine human emotions such as anger. John 2:16 says that He was angry that the Jews had turned His Father's house, which was supposed to be a house of prayer, into a house of merchandizing. He showed a righteous indignation at this. He showed sorrow, seen in John 11:35: "Jesus wept."

Jesus demonstrated real human emotions. He did cry outside of Lazarus' tomb. I take it to be not crying over the unbelief of the Jews—which was a reason to cry—but out of a genuine horror at the ugliness of death. I thus understand it is perfectly fine to cry at funerals. Our situation there is that it is bittersweet; there is sorrow and yet it is not as the world's sorrow. First Thessalonians 4 indicates that there is joy in knowing that the person is with the Lord, if it is a Christian funeral. He showed love in John 11:36: "The Jews said, 'See how He loved him!'" meaning Lazarus. So He had real human emotions.

Fourth, He had human experiences. He was born. God was born? The God-man was born; yes, the one who was born was God. He was crucified. He died. God died? God became a human being so He could die. The one who died is God. Charles Wesley was right when he wrote, "'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!" My question of Luke 2:52 is, how did Jesus grow? "He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." When I taught the Christological heresies, I told you that we ourselves, evangelical Christianity, at times, showed a tendency to Docetism, toward less than a full confession of Jesus' human nature. See how this sits with you. How did Jesus grow? He grew in wisdom. He grew intellectually. Does your view of the Son of God incarnate involve His having a greater intellectual capacity when He was 8 than when He was 3, and when He was 12 than when He was 8, and when He began His public ministry than when He was a little boy? It should. If He is God, am I attacking His deity? That is the motivation for this docetic tendency. We think we have to guard His divinity by downplaying His humanity. No, friends, we fully affirm that He is God. We also have to believe the Bible and affirm that He became a genuine human being. He grew in wisdom. Does it mean what it says? Yes.

Did He have to learn He was God? How I wish I was not asked this question. He was God, to be sure. He was fully God. If it was the Father's will for Him to learn and have normal human development and growth—I have come to this slowly over the years because I have felt unclean saying it—I guess so. I will put a guess in there, but I guess so. He grew in wisdom. He grew in stature means he grew physically. Does your view of the Lord Jesus Christ involve real physical growth? Did Joseph or Mary mark on the carpenter shop door what my wife marks on our kitchen door? On the birthdays of our four sons she gets them to stand on the linoleum and puts a line up marking height. The little guys love it, saying, "Hey, I am 9 years old and I am bigger than my big brother when he was that age. There is hope

for me yet.” The marks went up the carpenter shop door if they did that. He really grew. Are we afraid to confess His genuine humanity? We are not attacking His divine nature, but we affirm that along with it. We also affirm that we are not very capable of putting these two things together really well, but we have downplayed the one to guard the other and that is not good—though our motivation is good. We are afraid of the cult’s false teaching; we want to distance ourselves from it, we want to affirm that He is God, but we should not do it at the expense of His human nature. Our salvation depends on both, if it is true He must be God to be able to save us. He became a human being so that He could save us and salvation was wrought in human nature by a genuine human being.

He grew in favor with God. How did He grow? He grew spiritually. Does your view of the Lord Jesus Christ involve real spiritual growth? That He had a deeper prayer life when He was 15 than when He was 7? That He gained spiritual skills and the ability to interpret the Bible as He grew? It should. He grew in favor with God. He grew in favor with human beings. The Lord Jesus Christ grew socially. His social skills at 30 were much more developed than when He was 6 years old. I would confess to you it is hard to hold together both of His natures at the same time. I would also confess to you the Bible itself forces us to do it. We need to live with reverence and with an awareness that we do not know all the answers. We do not even know all the questions here. How can He be God and human at the same time? We need to confess both His full deity and His genuine humanity. From the Bible’s perspective, there is no rivalry; confessing one does not jeopardize the other. He grew in those ways.

Fifth, He had a human relationship with God the Father. How do we view Jesus’ visit to the temple when He was 12? He was precocious, He was in obedience to His parents, and He continued in obedience to them. Mary and Joseph apparently got upset, especially Mary, and that is understandable. They traveled in family groups; they missed him a day later and went back and there He was, teaching the rabbis. There is definitely precocity. Did the rabbis conclude He was God incarnate? I do not think so. But He was certainly precocious and yet the text itself points to His genuine humanity. The God-boy, which is what He was, submitted to His parents. That is just an awesome thought. We cannot fully understand these things. He had a human relationship with God the Father. He was subordinate to God. “The Father is greater than I” and, as we have spelled out, this was an economic, a functional, role of subordination and not an essential subordination. God gave Jesus life; God gave Jesus authority over all people; God gave Jesus work to do. Jesus honored God. He obeyed God’s commands. In the interest of time I will not turn to those texts, but they show those very things. Could we reverse it and say the Father obeyed the Son’s commands? It does not work. No, this pertains to the Incarnation and to the human relationship that the Son had with the Father. The Bible puts these things side by side. Did you notice in Hebrews 1:8 that the Father calls the Son God, and in verse 9 the Father says that the Son has a God? How could it be said? With reference to His divine nature, the Son is God. With reference to His human nature, it could be said of the person of Christ that He is a human being who has a God and to whom He prays.

Sixth, He was made perfect. Hebrews says it in a number of places. Perhaps the most emphatic is chapter 5. Hebrews 5:8-9 reads, “Although He was a son, he learned obedience from what He suffered, and once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.” How was He made perfect? Was He made perfect in His divine nature? No, He already was perfect. Was He made perfect in that He was sinful and became sinless? No, He always was sinless. I understand His perfection in this way: if there were a job description in the Jerusalem Gazette for redeemer of the world, this would be quite a unique position. The qualifications would include: first, deity—that leaves the rest of the human race out, in fact, only three could meet that qualification; second, humanity—that leaves two of those out (I say it reverently). But the remarkable thing is—and this is how I understand perfection—that that is not even enough; it is not enough to be God and human, because God the Father, the Trinity

and the eternal councils before creation planned (ordained) that one of the qualifications for being the redeemer of the world would not only be having a divine nature and a human nature, but also “on-the-job” experience. If you do not have experience, do not apply. You have to live and obey the law sinlessly; you have to become qualified experientially. Novices need not apply. This is amazing. It speaks of His being perfectly qualified in experience. That is why the Father did not send His Son down as a 33-year-old man to make atonement. That is why He was born of a virgin, as Galatians 4 notes, He was “Born of a woman, born under the law.” He obeyed the law and He was made perfect in this sense: He became perfectly qualified experientially to be the savior of the world through obedience and through suffering. It goes beyond our ability to understand, I admit.

There is the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, and the unity of the person of Christ. By the way, the Reformed tradition has some tendencies toward Nestorianism, or tearing Him apart; the Lutheran tradition has tendencies toward Eutychianism, or blending the natures. About the unity of the person of Christ we want to say a few things. First, it is a personal union. The divine and human natures of Christ are joined in a hypostatic, personal, union. The human nature had no existence prior to its creation by God in the virgin’s womb. There was no human person that the Son of God came and overpowered. God did not take a human being and give him the Holy Spirit and make him the Messiah. No. It would not be a personal union then. You would already have a person. Our Lord’s human nature never existed apart from the Incarnation. In this sense, it was non-existent and became impersonal and hypostatic when joined to the divine nature in the Incarnation. I will say it this way: the basis for continuity in the person of Christ, if you look at His whole career, including His being with the Father in heaven before creation, has to be His divine nature and not His human nature, because His human nature came into being. He existed as the Son of God before the Incarnation. He became incarnate; the point of continuity is that a divine person became a divine human person. He took to Himself a genuine human nature while not ceasing to be God in any sense. It is thus a personal union. The Word took to Himself a real human nature so that He is henceforth and forever going in that direction—the God-man. His humanity had a beginning. He was not always the God-man, but from the moment of His Incarnation He is the God-man. We distinguish the state of humiliation from that which followed His resurrection, the state of exaltation. This is a personal union.

Second, there is the communication of attributes. Some church fathers pointed out that at times Scripture referred to the person of Christ with a divine title. Calvin in the *Institutes*, book 2, chapter 12, says it well. He says that sometimes Scripture speaks of the person of Christ with special reference to His human nature as when it says He sat down by the well. It is not proper to say this is said of the man because there is no ‘the man’ apart from the God-man. So it emphasizes unity. It said of the whole person with reference to His weakness, His humanity. Other times the Scripture speaks of the person of Christ with special reference to His divine nature, as when Jesus says to the paralytic in Mark 2: “Your sins are forgiven you.” The Pharisees think in their hearts, “Who does this guy think He is? He is blessing, but only God can do that.” This was not, “Oh, would you forgive me? Yes, I forgive you.” This was not that, rather this was, “I forgive you the way God forgives sinners.” Jesus, first of all, did forgive the guy, and secondly, He read the enemies thoughts; that is pretty good. Third, He does a physical, visible, attestable miracle. A charlatan could have said, “Your sins are forgiven.” That is not testable. He did a physical miracle that you might know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—He told him to take up his bed and walk and the guy did—it is incredible. He performed a visible, validating miracle to show that He just did an invisible one. He forgave the guy’s sins the way only God can do. So Calvin says sometimes the Son of God does things that especially pertain to one nature or the other and he says that sometimes Scripture exhibits this curious phenomenon that the church fathers called the communication of qualities or the sharing of attributes. Scripture refers to the person of Christ with a title that corresponds to one nature while attributing to Him a quality that pertains to the other

one. For example, in 1 John 1-2 it says we saw and heard and even touched the Word of Life. Friends, “Word of Life” is a divine title. If the text was consistent and proper, you would use a divine title, “Word of Life,” and verbs that would be fitting. We marveled at the miracle performed by the Word of Life. See how it goes together? We fell on our faces before the Word of Life. But it does not do it; it uses human verbs. We saw the Word of Life. A Greek would say, “You did not do anything of the kind.” We heard God—now you are dreaming. Or how about this one; this would really upset Greeks. We touched God. There is no contact between God and the physical world in Greek philosophy. And the amazing thing is that they did not touch God in heaven, but the one they touched on earth was God; so John is not wrong in saying we have seen, we have heard, and our hands touched the Word of Life. Verbs pertaining to His humanity are used in the same sentence with a noun whose designation fits His deity. It is a crossing over, a sharing of qualities. It is the same in 1 Corinthians 2:8: “They crucified the Lord of glory.” Crucified speaks of what you do to a human. You cannot crucify God in heaven. He is beyond your reach, so if it was consistent it would say, “They crucified the man Jesus of Nazareth.” That works—human title with verbs pertaining to what you do to men. If we are consistent, the other way, “Lord of Glory,” which is a divine title meaning glorious lord, would be paired with bowing in awe. That fits. The verb is appropriate to the noun. We hid our faces from the Lord of Glory. It mingles the two. The verb pertains to humanity: “They crucified”—while the noun pertains to His divine nature—“The Lord of Glory.” Our first response is to say, “No, they did not.” But they did because the one they crucified is God. Do you see how this sharing of qualities ends up underscoring the unity of His person? It is an amazing thing. It is a feature that the church fathers saw in the Bible and since Calvin and Luther read the church fathers, they saw it in the Bible. If you wonder why you have not seen it, you have not read the church fathers or the Reformers. Maybe you have heard of it before and maybe you found it on your own, but most of us learned it from them.

In Acts 20:28 there is a textual variant. It is either the church of God, which He purchased with His blood, or the church of the Lord. It does not matter; they are both divine titles. God has blood? Blood pertains to humanity. It is true that the invisible God in heaven does not have blood, but it is also true that the invisible God became visible; He became a human being. So it could be said of the same one that He is God or Lord—these are divine titles—and that He died on the cross—human ascription to the one denominated by a divine title. There are a number of these in the Bible. Elizabeth says to Mary, “The mother of my Lord has come to me.” That is an amazing thing. Was she the source of our Lord’s deity? Of course not, but the one in her womb was the Lord. To be conceived, to be carried about in a womb, is that which pertains to human beings, but the title is a divine title. I should say the Lutherans and the Reformed disagree over this. The Lutherans see a real, anthropological impartation of divine attributes to the humanity of Christ so that there is a Eucharistic, a motivation here, in the Lord’s Supper. (The Reformed criticize them for this.) Christ’s body after the resurrection is present everywhere, and He is physically, bodily present in the Lord’s Supper. This is nonsense according to Calvin who had great reverence for Martin Luther and would hardly ever criticize him. He called him the apostle of the Reformation and things of that sort, but he would criticize Luther and pastors who teach that. No, the body of the Son of God is at the right hand of the Father. He is really present in the supper. Calvin’s was not a Zwinglian understanding—just a human action and a memorial—God is present and the benefits of the work of Christ are truly communicated to the believing recipient in the supper, but it is the Spirit who is the nexus between the Son of God at God’s right hand and His benefits and our participating in those benefits, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10.

The Reformed regard the communication of attributes as more of a figure of speech, a way of expressing the unity of the person of Christ without intending the reader to understand a real sharing of qualities from one nature to the other. No, the natures remain distinct, but though they are distinct, they are inseparable and the unity is emphasized by this curious way of speaking—using a divine title with

human actions ascribed to Him. Let me give one more example. Hebrews 6:6 says, “They are crucifying the Son of God all over again.” That is amazing. Some other examples of the communication of attributes include Hebrews 5:8; Acts 3:15, which says, “You killed the author of life”; John 20:18; and Luke 1:43, in which Mary is called “[t]he mother of my Lord.” God in heaven does not have a mother, but God on earth has a mother. I am not teaching Mariolatry here. If you have never noticed this before, begin looking for it. You usually see what you are looking for. Now, when you hear a new idea you should not just embrace it, but rather you should test it by the Bible. I am convinced this is right, that the Bible really teaches the communication of attributes.

What about the exercise of attributes? I have anticipated these conclusions. I need to lay them out here by way of summary. How are we to conceive Christ’s exercise of His divine and human attributes while not harming the unity of His person? First of all, all biblical statements speaking of the Son of God incarnate are to be attributed to the whole person, although they make special reference to only one nature. My dear adult Sunday school people whom I absolutely love sometimes botch it and they will say, “The human did that or God did that.” It scares me. I have to gently try to correct them and say, “No, that is tearing apart the person of Christ; you cannot do that.” No, we cannot do that so we talk like this: most statements in the Gospel of the person of Christ speak of a unity of His person and we cannot even parcel those statements out with special reference to one nature or the other. But for some of the statements we can say things like this: when He was tempted in the wilderness by the evil one, the person of Christ was tempted, the God-man, the whole person, but plainly what is most emphasized there is His humanity. That is, it was not God’s will for Him to get out of it by flexing His divine muscles any more than it was for Him to call a legion of angels and escape the cross. He had the ability, but He only used it in God’s will. So Scripture sometimes speaks of one nature or the other, but it is always of the whole person with special reference to one nature.

Second, our Lord voluntarily—He was not coerced—became a human and voluntarily subordinated the exercise of His divine attributes in obedience to the Father’s will. Let me use one of Millard Erickson’s illustrations. The fastest man or woman in the world, the winner at the last Olympic games for instance, at a church picnic in a three-legged race could be outrun by a normal, healthy child. This is because the three-legged proponent would slow him or her down, even if that person was very coordinated. The three-legged business illustrates Jesus willingly subordinating the exercise of His divine attributes—the ability to run the 100-meter dash faster than anybody, if you will—for the sake of the work of redemption, for the sake of God’s will. So He has all the divine attributes. I am talking about incarnate now, not even the extra business. He has all the divine attributes and only uses them in God’s will. It is crucial to confess that He has those attributes. If you want to read further in Christology, David Wells’ good book, *The Person of Christ*, is a step above. It is the normal book I use for the “Christ and Salvation” course in the Masters of Divinity curriculum. It is an outstanding book, though not an easy book. David Wells was here and spoke in our Francis Schaeffer lectures a couple of years ago and he made us all laugh when he said of his own son—who is at least a college graduate and I do not know if he went to seminary or not—that he asked his father when that book was going to be translated into English, meaning understandable English. We thought that was good that he could tell jokes on himself.

The two states of Christ, spoken of in Philippians 2:6-11, pertain to the Incarnation. They are two chronological phases and also conditions through which the Son of God passed in accomplishing salvation. This is the biblical way to talk about how Jesus is different now than when He was on earth. An unbiblical way is to imply that He gave up His humanity and is no longer a man. That violates Chalcedonian orthodoxy, which said that God became a human being and His two natures are without confusion, but also without separation or division—they are inseparable. The state of humiliation included Jesus’ birth, earthly life, temptations, sufferings, and so forth through to His burial. The state of

exultation included His resurrection, ascension, session, present heavenly ministry, and second coming. That is an important distinction to make.

Just for a very brief couple of minutes let me turn our attention to what you read for today: the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 8. Chapter 8 is a model at pulling together some of the things that we said. Let me go to section 2 for the interest of time. Section 1 says that it was God's eternal plan to send His son. It says, in effect, before creation God chose the Lord Jesus to be the mediator. Section 2 affirms the very truths we have been studying. I will indicate deity of Christ, humanity, and unipersonality as we work through this.

The Son of God [deity], the second person in the Trinity [deity] being very and eternal God, of one substance [that is from the Nicene Creed] and equal with the Father [it plainly and repeatedly affirms the deity of Christ], did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature [humanity], with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof [human weaknesses and needs], yet without sin [an important qualification]; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost [humanity], in the womb of the virgin Mary [humanity], of her substance. [Remember I said the historical documents always said that Christ took His humanity from Mary? This was not originated at Westminster in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but rather this is patristic and they just carried on the tradition.] So that two [deity and humanity] whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead [deity] and the manhood [humanity] were inseparably joined together [uni-personality] in one person [uni-personality], without conversion, composition, or confusion. [This is aimed at Eutychianism. The "inseparably joined together in one person" is aimed at Nestorianism.] Which person is very God [deity], and very man [humanity], yet one Christ [uni-personality], the only Mediator between God and man.

This is a beautiful statement indeed. Maybe we can say some more about it when we talk about Christ's saving work. We will begin doing that in the next lesson. Persevere to the end and may the Lord bless you.