

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

Christ the Mediator (7)

A. Introduction

1. Two things we are commanded to do as elders are to watch and to hold.

We are to watch what we believe, to make sure we are believing what God's Word says.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:16)

We are to hold firmly to the truths taught in God's Word.

"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:9)

It is vital we do these two things, not just for our own sake, but also for the members of this church and in fact those who live in the community God has placed us in.

To help us to watch and to hold, we are spending our elders' meeting working through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith a paragraph or so at a time.

2. The Lord Jesus was chosen and appointed to be the mediator between God and man by fulfilling the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king, for those people He was given as a gift in eternity.

But who is the Lord Jesus?

That's the question the second paragraph of Chapter 8 of the Confession answers. In this wonderfully dense paragraph we learn about His full deity, His true humanity, His sinless integrity, His miraculous nativity, and His singular personality.

"The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with Him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things He has made, did, when the fullness of time was complete, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities of it, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man."

First, we see that the Lord Jesus, the only mediator between God and man, is the eternal God and the revelation of God.

Second, we see that the Lord Jesus, as well as being fully God, is truly man. Christ added human nature in its fallen condition to His divine nature.

Third, we see that the Lord Jesus, did not and could not sin.

But how can this be? How is that Jesus did not inherit the sinful nature that all humans since Adam have?

The answer is found in His miraculous nativity. His birth was an amazing birth

"...being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures."

B. The facts of the virgin birth

1. It was supernatural.

"Being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her..."

Jesus' conception was not a work of humans.

It was not the result of intercourse between a male and a female. His mother Mary was a virgin, having had no relations with any man prior to giving birth to Him.

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34)

"But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus." (Matthew 1:25)

Jesus' conception was a work of the Holy Spirit.

God the Father sent the Son into the world. The Son willingly came. But it was the Holy Spirit who worked out all the details as to how this happened as Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary.

"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "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." (Matthew 1:20)

"The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

2. It was Scriptural.

"...and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures."

The Scriptures promised that Jesus would be the offspring of a woman.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

The Scriptures promised that Jesus would be the seed of Abraham.

"...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed..." (Genesis 22:18)

The Scriptures promised that Jesus would be from the tribe of Judah.

"The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his." (Genesis 49:10)

The Scriptures promised that Jesus would be the seed of David.

"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." (2 Samuel 7:12-13)

Jesus was legally the seed of Abraham and David via his adoptive father Joseph (see the genealogies in Matthew and Luke).

But He was also physically in the line of Abraham, Judah, and David, because Mary was, and Jesus really was her child.

"...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David..." (Romans 1:3)

C. The significance of the virgin birth

1. Jesus' birth was unlike every other birth because a new person was not created.

If Joseph was involved in Jesus' conception, a new person would have been created.

Though not creating a new person, the Holy Spirit did create for the Son of God a human body with a true human nature with all of its faculties, frailties and finiteness.

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me." (Hebrews 10:5)

The mystery of the incarnation is how the already-existing uncreated person of the Son of God was united to a created human nature.

2. Jesus' birth was unlike every other birth because a new sinner was not created.

As Christ the person existed before Adam, rather than being created at conception in Mary's womb, He is not under Adam's headship.

Only those under Adam's headship legally and spiritually inherit His guilt and pollution.

Since Jesus is not under Adam's headship, the original guilt and pollution of Adam's sin was not imputed to Him as it is to us at conception. He has no sinful human nature.

The conception by the Holy Spirit was not about, in the first instance, stopping the transfer of a sinful nature, but preventing a new person from being created who would have inherited Adam's sinful nature and be under God's curse.

"Adam's guilt is imputed to his posterity. But Christ is not a descendant of Adam. He existed before Adam. He does not stand under Adam as His head, but is Himself a new Head, having others under Him." (Abraham Kuyper)

"If Christ had been generated by man, He would have been a human person, included in the covenant of works, and as such would have shared the common guilt of mankind. But now that His subject, His ego, His Person, is not out of Adam, He is not in the covenant of works and is free from the guilt of sin. And being free from the guilt of sin, His human nature could also be kept free, both before and after His birth, from the pollution of sin." (Louis Berkhof)

Therefore, the Spirit's work preserved Christ in His life from actual sin – Christ did not and could not sin; and the Spirit's work also preserved Christ in His conception from original sin – Christ did not and could not have a sinful human nature.

D. How then shall we lead?

1. This truth that Jesus is born of a virgin is amazing.

It is amazing because it is out of this world – literally!

It is amazing because it means we have a Saviour.

2. This truth that Jesus is born of a virgin is to be accepted.

The truthfulness of Scripture depends on it.

The sinlessness of Jesus demands it.