

LORD'S DAY 14

35. Q. What do you confess when you say:
*He was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary?*

A. The eternal Son of God,
Who is and remains true and eternal God,¹
Took upon Himself true human nature
From the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,²
Through the working of the Holy Spirit.³
Thus He is also the true seed of David,⁴
and like His brothers in every respect,⁵
yet without sin.⁶

1. **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 10:30-36 "I and My Father are one."³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.³² Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"³³ The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"?'³⁵ "If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),³⁶ "do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Romans 1:3 ...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh....

Romans 9:5 ...of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Colossians 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

2. **Matthew 1:18-23** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.²¹ "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

3. **Luke 1:35** And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

4. **2 Samuel 7:12-16** "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.¹⁴ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

Psalms 132:11 The LORD has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: "I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body."

5. **Matthew 1:1** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Luke 1:32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David."

Romans 1:3 ...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh...

5. **Philippians 2:7** ...but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Hebrews 2:17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

6. **Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a High Priest

who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 7:26,27 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

36. Q. What benefit do you receive from the holy conception and birth of Christ?

A. He is our Mediator, ¹ and with His innocence and perfect holiness covers, in the sight of God, my sin, in which I was conceived and born.²

1. **1 Timothy 2:5,6** For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time....

Hebrews 9:13-15 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

2. **Romans 8:3,4** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,

on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Galatians 4:4,5 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

1 Peter 1:18,19 ...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

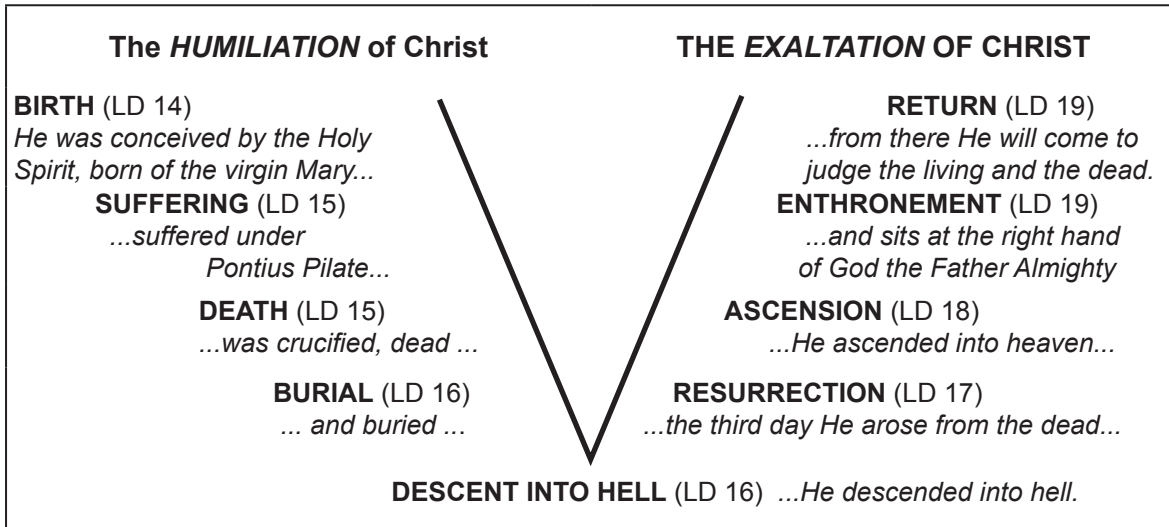


We have now finished dealing with the *names* of Christ and their significance. In Lord's Day 14 we begin to deal with the *work* of Christ. We continue to follow the pattern of the Apostles' Creed which first speaks about the work of Christ accomplished in His humiliation, which is covered in Lord's Day 14-16 of the Catechism. (By Christ's humiliation we refer to the fact that Christ did not cling to His rightful honour and glory, but took the form of a servant, and a suffering servant at that.)

Thereafter the Apostles' Creed deals with the work of Christ accomplished in His exaltation, which are covered in

Lord's Day 17-19. (By Christ's exaltation we refer to the fact that Christ again received the honour and glory that He had with the Father prior to His incarnation). Christ's humiliation and exaltation is shown in the diagram on the facing page.

In this Lord's Day we deal with the first "step" of Christ's humiliation, namely, His birth. (When we refer to Jesus we speak about His birth, for Jesus was a true Man born of a woman. Yet, when we speak about the Son of God, we speak about His *incarnation*, for the Son of God is not born, but begotten (see the previous Lord's Day). Incarnation



means “*the assumption or taking on of the human nature.*”

The incarnation of Christ was a matter of humiliation. For through this act the Creator-God assumed the nature of a creature. The majestic divinity took on lowly humanity. Though He was equal with God, He did not cling to that equality, and He took the form of a servant (cf. Philippians 2:6-8), and placed Himself under the authority of His Father (cf. John 14:28).

In the previous Lord’s Day we saw that Christ *is* the eternal Son of God. Now in this Lord’s Day the Catechism stresses that the Christ *remained* true God even when He became Man, which was necessary if He was to be our Mediator. This necessity is borne from two facts:

1. No creature could bear the burden of God’s wrath against sin and still survive to save others from it. Yet by the **power** of His divinity, Christ could bear God’s wrath.
2. Only the death of one who was truly divine would have sufficient **worth** to pay for the sins of the “144,000” whom God has elected (cf. Canons of Dort, II, 3,4). If Christ were only a man, His death would be sufficient to pay for the sins of only one man. This is something that we have discussed already in Lord’s Day 6.

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is true God. This becomes clear from the following: ¹

1. By the **names** given to Christ.
 - a. Christ is called **God** (cf. Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1, 20:28, Romans 9:5, Titus 2:13, 1 John 5:20).
 - b. Christ is called the **Son of God** (cf. Matthew 4:3-6, Mark 5:7, Luke 8:28).
 - c. God Himself calls Christ His **Son** (cf. Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5).
2. By the **attributes** given to Christ
 - a. omniscience- (cf. John 1:48, 2:25, 21:17).
 - b. omnipresence- (cf. Matthew 18:20, 28:20).
 - c. omnipotence- (cf. Matthew 11:27, 28:18, John 5:17, Colossians 1:16,17).
 - d. eternity - (cf. Isaiah 9:6, John 8:58, 17:5).
 - e. immutability (unchangeableness) - (cf. Hebrews 13:8).
3. By the **works** of Christ
 - a. creation and preservation of world- (cf. John 1:3, Hebrews 1:3).
 - b. election - (cf. John 15:16, Acts 9:15).

¹ Cf. P.Y DeJong, *The Church’s Witness to the World*, Paideia Press, 1980, pg. 197-202.

- c. forgiveness of sins - (cf. Mark 2:7-10).
 - d. resurrection of the dead - (cf. John 5:21,28,29).
4. By the **honours** given to Christ (cf. Luke 24:52, John 5:23, Acts 7:59, Hebrews 1:3). He is worshipped (Hebrews 1:6), yet only God was to be worshipped (Luke 4:7-8, Revelation 22:8).

Already in the early church the divinity of Christ was denied. A man named Arius (256-336 AD) confessed that Jesus was a creature and not of the same essence (being) as God. Sozzini (Socinus) (1539-1604) who denied the Trinity, thus also the deity of Christ, also confessed this heresy during the time of the Reformation. These heresies continue to exist. Arius is the spiritual father of modern-day Jehovah's Witnesses, and Sozzini is the spiritual father of the Unitarians.² We could also consider the Mormons in this respect, for while they confess that Jesus is God, they will not confess that He is very God of very God, of the same essence as the Father and equal to the Father in eternity and majesty.

Besides the fact that Christ was true God, the Catechism also stresses that Christ was *true man*. In the history of the church there have been those who denied the possibility of the Saviour being true man. The Gnostics of the first centuries denied the humanity of Christ. They taught that all physical or material things were of lower value than spiritual things and even considered them sinful. They declared that Christ had only a spiritual body.

Others, like the Docetists, taught that Christ only appeared to have a human body. They taught that Christ had a spiritual body from heaven and went through His mother without assuming any of her physical properties, just as water goes through a tube without taking any of its properties. Christ, they said,

was not true man. He only appeared to have a physical body.

In Lord's Day 6 we learned that it was necessary for our Mediator to be true man. The justice of God requires that the nature that sinned must pay for sin. God will not punish any other creature for the sins which man has committed.

Luke's genealogy of Christ (cf. Luke 3) shows the lineage of Christ traced through Mary and brings it all the way back to Adam. Luke wishes to show his Gentile readers that Christ was true man, the son of Adam through Mary. He assumed a real human nature. That Christ was true man is clearly taught in Hebrews 2:14, "*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.*"

We also learned that our Mediator had to be a **righteous** man. (A righteous man is a man who is obedient to God's law, and who has not committed any sin or transgression.) For someone who is himself a sinner cannot pay for the sins of others.

Now we know that every one who is a descendant of Adam is born with sin. We call that *original sin* (in contrast to *actual sins*, which are those we commit in our own person). The depraved nature of man is passed on to his offspring. No one born of man is righteous. Speaking about man born of woman, Job says, "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!*" (Job 14:4). All the descendants of Adam share in the original sin of Adam. All are born unrighteous.

Now if Christ was to be a righteous man, it is clear that He could not be born of man. He must not inherit the sin of an earthly father. Yet He must be man. He must be true man, but He cannot be born of man.

In order that Christ should be both true and righteous man, God the Holy Spirit, in a most miraculous way, overshadowed

² The Unitarian churches or assemblies can be found in America, England, Germany and a few in Australia.

the virgin Mary and caused her to be with child. Being born of woman meant that Christ took the human nature from Mary. He was a man like us in every respect except for the fact that He was without sin, without the inherited guilt and pollution of Adam. This was possible because He was not conceived by man, but by the Holy Spirit.

In choosing Mary to be the mother of the Mediator and in choosing Joseph to become his adoptive or legal father, God fulfilled His promise to David that He would cause an heir to sit upon David's throne, and who would rule for ever in an eternal kingdom. Both Mary and Joseph were of David's house. (That Mary is of David's line is clear from Romans 1:3; 9:5, where we read that Christ was descended from David's line according to the flesh.) Joseph was actually the heir to the throne. Had the line of David continued to rule Israel, Joseph would have been crowned king. By his marriage to Mary, Joseph became the legal father of Jesus, and Jesus became the legal heir to the throne of David. In this way the promise to David was fulfilled. This is shown in Matthew's genealogy (cf. Matthew 1) that traces the legal status of Christ as David's heir through Joseph's lineage. Thus our Mediator is truly our eternal King.

Now our Catechism is always very practical. It asks the question, "*How does*

Christ's holy conception and birth benefit us?" And it gives us the answer. Christ was not only the son of Adam, that is, a true man. Christ occupied a position like that of Adam. Christ is the last Adam. Just as the first Adam represented us when he fell into sin and we were thus born in sin, so also Christ represents us and we share in His holiness.

This does not mean that we are now born without sin. Rather, it means that Christ covers the sin in which we are conceived and born. The Father does not look at us as we are in ourselves, but looks upon us in Christ. Christ's holiness, His purity and innocence are imputed to us so that the Father regards us as holy, pure and innocent.

This is a wonderful comfort for parents. By nature the children who are born to us are children of wrath. Like all other children they are conceived and born in sin and subject to condemnation. However, through God's grace in Christ they are sanctified, and Christ covers their sin so that they are acceptable in God's sight.

In a way the miracle of Christ's birth is reflected also in our miraculous rebirth. Through the work of God the Holy Spirit, new life is wondrously conceived in us and we are reborn. And through this "holy re-conception" we are being transformed so that more and more we display this innocence and perfect holiness of Christ.



Questions:

1. How does the Apostles' Creed divide the work of our Lord Jesus Christ? What do we deal with in Lord's Days 14-16? What does that mean?
2. What are the four "steps" of Christ's humiliation?
3. We distinguish between the birth of Christ and the incarnation of the Son of God. Why do we do that? What does incarnation mean?
4. For what two reasons must our Mediator be true God?
5. By four means Scripture proves that Jesus is true God. Name them!
6. Quote (in full) two texts for each of these four means, and explain how these texts show us that Christ is true God.
7. Name some ancient and modern heretics who deny the deity of Christ.

8. Besides stressing the divinity of Christ, the Catechism also stresses His humanity. Do all believe that Christ was true man? Who do not, and how do they explain his physical appearance?
9. Why must our Mediator be a true man?
10. How does Luke 3 show the humanity of Christ? What does Hebrews 2:14 say?
11. Christ is also a righteous man. What does that mean?
12. We distinguish between two kinds of sin. Describe them.
13. Why was it so important that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus Christ?
14. Why was it so important that Mary was the biological mother of Jesus Christ?
15. What was the lineage or ancestry of Mary and Joseph? Why is this important?
16. What benefit do we receive from Christ's holy conception and birth?
17. What comfort do parents receive from Christ's holy conception and birth with a view to their children?
18. Can we say that the miracle of Christ's miraculous birth is still reflected today?