

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 16 (HCLD 5)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2

Vocabulary: Christology, Ecumenical, Council, Heresy

Question: Why is it necessary for the Mediator to be God? Why is it necessary for the Mediator to be man? Why is it a necessity that the mediator be fully man and fully God?

Answer: It is essential that the Mediator be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death;[a] give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession;[b] and to satisfy God's justice,[c] procure his favor,[d] purchase a peculiar people,[e] give his Spirit to them,[f] conquer all their enemies,[g] and bring them to everlasting salvation.[h] It was essential that the Mediator be man, that he might advance our nature,[i] perform obedience to the law,[j] suffer and make intercession for us in our nature,[k] have a fellow feeling of our infirmities;[l] that we might receive the adoption of sons,[m] and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.[n] It was essential that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should himself be both God and man, and this in one person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us,[o] as the works of the whole person.[p]²

¹ Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 5

Q12: Since, then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, how may we escape this punishment and be again received into favor?

A12: God wills that His justice be satisfied;[a] therefore, we must make full satisfaction to that justice, either by ourselves or by another.[b]

Q13: Can we ourselves make this satisfaction?

A13: Certainly not; on the contrary, we daily increase our guilt.[c]

Q14: Can any mere creature make satisfaction for us?

A14: None; for first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man committed;[d] and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin [e] and redeem others from it.

Q15: What kind of mediator and redeemer, then, must we seek?

A15: One who is a true [f] and righteous man,[g] and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.[h]

a. Exod. 20:5; 23:7

b. Rom. 8:3-4

c. Job 9:2-3; 15:15-16; Matt. 6:12; 16:26

d. Heb. 2:14-18

e. Ps. 130:3

f. I Cor. 15:21-22, 25-26

g. Jer. 33:16; Isa. 53:11; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:15-16

h. Isa. 7:14; Heb. 7:26

²a. Acts. 2:24-25; Rom. 1:4; 4:25; Heb. 9:14

b. Acts 20:28; Heb. 7:25-28; 9:14

c. Rom. 3:24-26

d. Eph. 1:6; Matt. 3:17

e. Titus. 2:13-14

f. Gal. 4:6

The Westminster Larger Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism both declare the absolute necessity of Jesus Christ being fully man and fully God. This is expected since all Reformed confessions are in agreement in all areas that are essential to the Christian faith. The Heidelberg Catechism is more precise and perhaps easier for us to grasp in this area than the Westminster Larger Catechism. However there is value in studying both that all the understanding available concerning this essential doctrine might be before us in prayer. As noted before, all heresies have had their root in the person of Jesus Christ (Christology³). How we understand, this crucial doctrine will flavor every other single area of theology we consider. The Westminster standards were composed almost a century after the Heidelberg Catechism (1563 vs 1648). We might expect to see some maturity of the doctrine during these early developmental years of the reformation. There is little difference because this battle was fought not in the reformation, but by the early church in the several councils across several centuries.

Very early in her history the Christian church was forced to establish the canon of Scripture to protect the Gospel of Christ from false teachers and their spurious literature. At this same early period the church found herself facing all the errors being taught concerning Christ. The Nicene Creed was a result of the of the council at Nicaea. This creed was drawn up to specifically guard the church against the heresy of the Arians⁴. It is actually two creeds, one long and one short. The shorter is the original. Four amendments were later added as anathemas against the Arians. The Council of Nicaea was held c. 325. There were various church fathers who agreed with Arianism until Constantine called for the Council of Nicaea to put the question to rest. The Reformed church thus continued the doctrine set by these early councils and still affirms them.⁵

While the doctrine is essential, it is perhaps only matched by the doctrine of the Trinity in difficulty of understanding by mankind. This deals with a metaphysical issue, that we cannot see, touch, nor articulate how two (three in the case of the Trinity) distinct persons or beings can truly be one and maintain their distinctions. What men do not understand they will be indifferent toward or ignore altogether. This cannot be allowed in such crucial areas of our faith. Faith is the proper word and is the issue here. God's revealed word says this is how it is. This should be the end of debate for the believer as the faithful by faith accept the word of God and move forward in faith as if by sight. Nonetheless, Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God, the two natures being joined together for all eternity. The Heidelberg and Westminster Catechisms are in total agreement here, as well as all other Reformed creeds in addition to the ecumenical councils before the reformation. It is outside orthodoxy to allow any deviation from this doctrine.

g. Luke 1:68-69, 71, 74

h. Heb. 5:8-9; 9:11-15

i. Heb. 2:16

j. Gal. 4:4

k. Heb. 2:14; 7:24-25

l. Heb. 4:15

m. Gal. 4:5

o. Matt. 1:21, 23; 3:17; Heb. 9:14

p. I Peter 2:6

³ Christology is the study of Christ, specifically the who, why, and how of Christ.

⁴ Arianism is/was the principal heresy that denied the true divinity of Jesus Christ. The heresy was named for its author, Arius.

⁵ There are seven of these councils that properly go by Oecumenical instead of ecumenical because this is the proper translation of the Greek and meant the entire world, more correctly all of the bishops from the organized church of the whole world met and signed these creeds as the belief of the church and binding upon all her members.

The Second Helvetic Confession this in more depth than most other creeds. The Helvetic also spells out which ecumenical councils they recognize and limit it to four:

The Creeds of Four Councils Received. And, to say many things with a few words, with a sincere heart we believe, and freely confess with open mouth, whatever things are defined from the Holy Scriptures concerning the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are summed up in the Creeds and decrees of the first four most excellent synods convened at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon - together with the creed of blessed Athanasius, and all similar symbols; and we condemn anything contrary to these.

This is important to us today because the Reformed do not agree with all of the later councils. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes fourteen other councils as having oecumenical authority (A total of 21 councils). The Reformed churches continue to confirm the doctrines of the first four, but only with a careful and critical eye to accept portions or not of later councils. The first councils dealt with heresies from within and outside the church. The latter councils more of affirming the Roman Catholic Church as the church broadly speaking than heresies facing the church. The first five councils were universally accepted and the council of Toledo was accepted by the “Western” church. All Reformed groups affirm the “Economic Trinity” which affirms the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son.⁶

Specifically in the Second Helvetic, the Reformed church recognized these four councils and the area the respective councils addressed:

Nicaea: c. 325 – Arianism⁷

Constantinople1 : c. 381 – Apollinarianism⁸

Ephesus: c. 431 – Nestorianism⁹

Chalcedon: c. 451 – Eutychianism¹⁰

As noted, some recognize at least parts of other councils, but these four are universally accepted by the early reformers. There is some debate over what councils were oecumenical between the Eastern and Western Church. The point here isn't to enter that debate, but to show the reformation wasn't born in a vacuum and did not invent a whole theology, the attempt was to restore the church to a more pure form of worship in accordance

⁶ This is the so-called filioque clause.

⁷ Arianism – see footnote 4

⁸ Apollinarianism: Named for Apollinarius c. 310-390 a vigorous advocate for orthodoxy and taking at least a major part in the complete rewriting of Scripture in his day, to reach his theological goal ends denying the full manhood of Christ.

⁹ Nestorianism: Named for Nestorius c. 451 – This heresy declares there are two separate and distinct persons in Christ, one human and one divine. This heresy does not allow the two to be united and treated as one.

¹⁰ Eutychianism: same as Monophysitism: From the 7th century this heresy taught there was only one will in Christ. The heresy originated from political rather than religious causes. Later attempts to unify the differences only complicated matters and the issue was not settled until the Council of Constantinople in c. 680 which pronounced the duality yet one of the human and God natures of Christ to include will.

with the Bible, thus approving of and affirming dogma established by earlier church fathers..

Summary: Study the questions and answers by the early reformers given here from both the Westminster and Heidelberg side and time of the reformation. Take the time to read the Scripture references in sequence as presented in the answers above. This should bring you to a place that is solidly founded in Scripture that Jesus Christ is God and man, yet one distinct person. Christ is not to be divided in any way at any time for any purpose. It is essential to the Christian faith that Jesus Christ is both God and man.

Suggested Sermon Outline:

Justification by Grace

Since, then, by the righteous judgment of God we have deserved temporal and eternal punishment, how may we escape this punishment, come again to grace, and be reconciled to God?

God wills that His righteousness be satisfied; therefore, payment in full must be made to His righteousness, either by ourselves or by another.

Can we make this payment ourselves?

By no means. On the contrary, we increase our debt each day.

Can any mere creature make the payment for us?

No one. First of all, God does not want to punish any other creature for man's debt. Moreover, no mere creature can bear the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin and redeem others from it.

Then, what kind of mediator and redeemer must we seek?

One who is a true and righteous man and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is at the same time true God.

I. God Won't Write off Debts

A. In stark contrast to modern America, God refuses to ignore evil. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (Exodus 23:7)

1. God deals specifically with the deception, evasion, and blind confidence of human denial about sin. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall

hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:16-21)

2. Evasion is the exact opposite of God's way. Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

3. Before God's throne it will take more than jury nullification to settle matters. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD. (Proverbs 17:15)

4. Denial about sin is not materially different from denial about cancer. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: (Romans 2:5-6)

B. Someone must pay the debt for sin. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)

C. We can't talk God out of justice. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. (Job 9:3)

1. People have no starting place to resist God. Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (Romans 9:20)

2. Why would sin be the one area of life which people understood in full? Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. (Psalm 19:12)

3. People can lie to themselves, but they cannot lie to God. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

II. God Doesn't Discount Debts

A. Though a bankruptcy court will discount debts, God demands payment in full. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezekiel 18:20)

1. God deals in particulars rather than generals. Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. (Romans 2:6-9)

2. The Bible ends with an emphasis on the final accounting. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do

his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Revelation 22:12-15)

B. God's demand for full justice removes the room to hope that somehow there must be some way around the implications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (Psalm 130:3)

C. People do not have the resources to solve the problem. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (Psalm 49:7)

III. Only a Unique Mediator Can Resolve the Problem

A. The substitutionary atonement of the perfect for the imperfect provides an answer for the human dilemma. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:21)

1. Death is no barrier to the Savior. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: (John 11-25)

2. Paul summarized the substitutionary atonement in a sentence. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

B. God directed the atonement. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

C. The Christmas message is ultimately about the God-man becoming the substitutionary payment for the sin debt. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Heidelberg Catechism
Lord's Day 5
Questions 12-15
Dr. Edwin P. Elliott, Jr.