

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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| Series: | The Heidelberg Catechism | | Pastor/Teacher |
| Number: | 9 | | Gary L.W. Johnson |
| Text: | Colossians 1:18-20 | | |
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The Mediator and His Work (Part II)

6. Lord's Day

Question 18. Who then is that Mediator, who is one person both very God, (a) and a real (b) righteous man? (c)

Answer: Our Lord Jesus Christ: (d) “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (e)

(a) 1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom. 8:3 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: Gal. 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Isa. 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 shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Jer. 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Mal. 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. (b) Luke 1:42 And she (Elisabeth) spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou (Mary) among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Luke 2:6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Rom. 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; Rom. 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Phil. 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: Heb. 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb. 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Heb. 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Heb. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (c) Isa. 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Isa. 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear the iniquities. Jer. 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a

righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. John 8:46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? Heb. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Heb. 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 1 Pet. 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 1 Pet. 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 1 Pet. 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (d) 1 Tim. 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Heb. 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a littler lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Matt. 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 1 Tim. 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (e) 1 Cor. 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

G. Campbell-Morgan in a book of a generation ago said that man's need was threefold: He is distanced from God by sin, he is ignorant of God through sin, and he is unlike God in sin. The glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the God-man, and His atoning mediatorial work, is that God finds Himself in this person and is with men, for He is man, and man finds himself in this person and is with God, for He is God. Thus, he who was distanced from God by sin is restored to God by the gift of righteousness. He who was ignorant of God through sin comes to the knowledge of God through Christ. And he who was unlike God in sin shall come to be like Him in Christ.¹ Job spoke long ago of the need of a Mediator. He, reflecting upon his unworthiness to approach God in his sin, cried, "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, That we may go to court together. There is no umpire (AV, "daysman"; NIV, "someone to arbitrate") between us, Who may lay his hand upon us both" (9:32-33, NASB). Jesus Christ, being the God-man, qualified and has accomplished the work of union. He has borne the separating penalty of sin for His people, and He as the infinite sin-bearer has satisfied the claims of God the Holy One. Through union with Him, who has represented us in the atoning work, we are brought near by Christ. Job's Daysman has been found (cf. Matthew 20:28; Acts 4:12). Note the claims of Christ. He claimed to be from Heaven and not of this world (John 6:38; 8:23). He claimed a unique relationship to God (John 10:30; 14:8, 9). He claimed prerogatives that only God could claim (John 11:25, 26; Matthew 11:27). He claimed divine authority (Matthew 28:18), the power to forgive sins (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20, 23), quicken the dead (John 5:24-29), and the power to give eternal life (John 10:28-29). One evening Near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus spoke to His disciples after a busy day of ministry and said, "Let us cross over to the other side." When the multitude of people was dismissed, the disciples took their weary leader into a boat and began to make their way across the lake. But there arose a lashing storm, which churned the little sea into a wet fury, and soon the boat and its occupants were in danger of being swamped. Anxiously and somewhat peevishly they turned to their sleeping companion and brusquely aroused Him with, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" being quite unaware of the fact that there is no sinking with the Savior aboard. Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush! Be still!" The wind died, and a dead calm ensued. After He had rebuked them for their fear and faithlessness, they, awestruck, murmured to one another, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (cf. Mark 4:35-41). If the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had been present, knowing what he knew when he wrote his letter, he would have replied confidently, "Why, He is the effulgence of God's glory and the stamp of God's very being, and sustains the universe by His word of power" (cf. Hebrews 1:3). Paul the Apostle might have replied, "He is the image of the

invisible God; He has primacy over all created things” (Colossians 1:15). This line from Paul introduces the section of Colossians, which has often been called, “The Great Christology,” due to the striking information that it offers concerning the person and work of the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. We owe the section to the heresy which was on the verge of infecting the little church that met in Philemon’s house in the city of Colossae in Asia Minor. Scholars differ over the most appropriate name for the heresy. It contained elements that are traceable to what we know of later Gnostic Judaism has been given it. We cannot be certain of its appropriateness, however. In one respect at least we can be thankful for the heresy, because the church of Jesus Christ would be impoverished substantially if it did not possess this significant testimony to the preeminence of the Redeemer. We turn now to “The Great Christology” and Paul’s striking defense of the Lordship of Christ over the physical creation and the spiritual creation, the church.²

The Apostle Paul in 1:15-20 declares Christ to be Lord of creation and redemption. Verses 15-17 address the issue of Christ as the Creator (not some angelic emanation). Paul now picks up his defense of Christ as Lord of redemption.

I. THE SOVEREIGN LORD OF THE NEW CREATION (verse 18)

- A. His Lordship Affirmed. “And He is the head of the body, the Church.” The pronoun “he” (*AUTOS*) is an intensive pronoun, making the statement emphatic. The force of this could be conveyed in English by “and He (and He and no other) is the head.” The word “head” (*KEPHALE*) speaks not only of Christ’s relationship to, but authority over, the “body” (*SOMA*). The Church is the body of Christ (never “the body of Christians” compare with Ephesians 5:11-23). “Jesus,” says A.T. Robertson, “is first also in the spiritual realm as He is in nature.”³
- B. His Lordship Demonstrated. “Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” His resurrection from the dead is His title to the headship of the Church (cf. I Corinthians 15:20, 23; Philippians 3:10; Revelation 1:5).
- C. His Lordship Intended. “That in all things He might have preeminence.” This is the purpose in Christ’s work. “The hymn had previously asserted Christ’s primacy in creation; it now mentions His primacy in resurrection. In both new creation and old, the first place belongs to Him alone. He has become preeminent in everything.”⁴

II. THE ORDAINING CAUSE OF CHRIST’S PRIMACY (1:19-20)

- A. In His Person (verse 19). The efficient cause is now stated, “for it pleased the Father,” (the expression “the Father” is supplied by the translators. The verb “pleased” (*EUDOKESEN*) calls for either *HO THEOS*, as in the NIV, or *HO PATER*, as in KJV). “For” (*HOTI*, lit. because) points to what is often called “Pauline logic.” The Apostle is telling us “why” Christ must have primacy. “All the fullness” (*PAN TO PLEROMA* cf. 2:9 “all the fullness of the Godhead”) “should dwell” (lit. to make abode or house. All the divine attributes are at home in Christ).⁵
- B. In His Work (verse 20). Christ has made reconciliation (*APOKATALLAXAI* – double compound *APO*, *KATA* with *ALLASSO*, occurs only here in New Testament. The usual word, *KATALLASSO* is found in II Corinthians 5:18-20; Romans 5:10). What is this? It is accomplished by “the blood of His cross.” It established “peace” by addressing the question of sin and the character of man and the righteous wrath of a Holy God. John Murray writes: “The reconciliation of which the Scripture speaks as accomplished by the death of Christ, contemplates, therefore, the relation of God to us. It presupposes a relation of alienation and its effects a relation of favour and peace. This new relation is constituted by the removal of the ground for the

alienation. The ground is sin and guilt. The removal is wrought in the vicarious work of Christ, when He was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Christ took upon Himself the sin and guilt, the condemnation and the curse of those on whose behalf He died.”⁶ What does Paul mean by the statement “to reconcile *all things*...things in earth or things in heaven”? Does this mean universalism? No, the Bible expressly denies universalism (Matthew 25:46; John 3:16, 36; 5:29; Romans 2:2-10; 9:22, 23). Rather, it seems that what Paul has in mind is similar to Romans 8:18-23. The effects of Christ’s work extend to creation. As B. B. Warfield has written, “All nature, says Paul, travails in the same longing, and the consummation brings not only relief to Christ’s children, who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, in the redemption of the body, but also deliverance in the teaching of the Old Testament, not only in its declaration that the world was cursed for man’s sake (Romans 8:20), but in the prediction of a new heavens and a new earth (verse 21).”⁷

CONCLUSION: In the light of the things Paul has been saying, how remarkable and wonderful is the incarnation! As the devout old Scottish commentator, John Eadie, has said, “That the creator and upholder of the universe should come down to such a world as this, and clothe Himself in the inferior nature of its race, and in that nature die to forgive and save it, is the most amazing of revelations.”⁸ And yet, as the professor has declared, it is most glorious truth, sealed with the precious blood of Golgotha. The God of Genesis one is the Babe of Matthew one and two. The One of whom Isaiah said, “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance” (Isaiah 40:12), is the same person of whom Paul said, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:2). The same God of whom Jeremiah said, “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation” (Jeremiah 10:10), is He of whom John wrote, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), and “Jesus wept” (11:35), and also, “After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded” (13:5). And the One of whom Ezekiel wrote, “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a Man upon it” (Ezekiel 1:26), is the same One of whom John wrote in his gospel, “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:34). And, finally, He who warned ancient Israel and said, “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb” (Deuteronomy 4:15), says at length to His own, “Behold my hands and feet that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39).

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ G. Campbell-Morgan, *The Crises of The Christ* (Revell, 1936), p. 39. This is an outstanding book. It is composed of sermons that Campbell-Morgan preached at Westminster Chapel in London. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones was Morgan’s associate and later succeeded him.
 - ² I owe my analysis of this passage to the late Dr. S. Lewis Johnson’s lectures on Christology given while I was a student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1984-1985.
 - ³ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. IV (Broadman Press, 1931), p. 480.
 - ⁴ Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon, Word Biblical Commentary* (Word Books, 1982), p. 51.
 - ⁵ Robertson, op. cit., p. 481.
 - ⁶ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Eerdmans, 1975), p. 42.
 - ⁷ B. B. Warfield, “The Prophecies of St. Paul,” *Biblical and Theological Studies* (The Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1968), p. 490.
 - ⁸ John Eadie, *A Commentary on The Greek Text of The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (T & T Clark, 1884), p. 58.