

Lesson 10 - The Redeemer, Part 1: The Person and Natures of the Redeemer, WCF 8, WLC 36-40

1. This is one of my favorite quotes about the significance of who Jesus is. “We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said, God has died for us, but only a man, we should be lost. But if ‘God’s death’ and ‘God died’ lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But, indeed, He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us.” -- Martin Luther
2. The thought of who Jesus is should give us tremendous joy and cause us constant wonder. Here’s one of my favorite quotes describing the wonder of who Jesus is from Gregory Nazianzen: “He was born — but He had been begotten: He was born of a woman — but she was a Virgin. The first is human, the second Divine. In His Human nature He had no Father, but also in His Divine Nature no Mother. . . . He had no form nor comeliness in the eyes of the Jews—but to David He is fairer than the children of men. And on the Mountain of Transfiguration He was bright as the lightning, and became more luminous than the sun . . . He hungered — but He fed thousands. . . He thirsted — but He cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. . . He was heavy with sleep, but He walked lightly over the sea. . . . He is stoned, but is not taken. He prays, but He hears prayer. He weeps, but He causes tears to cease. He asks where Lazarus was laid, for He was Man; but He raises Lazarus, for He was God. . . . He is sold, and very cheap, for it is only for thirty pieces of silver; but He redeems the world, and that at a great price, for the Price was His own blood. . . He lays down His life, but He has power to take it again; and the curtain is torn, for the mysterious doors of Heaven are opened; the rocks are cleft, the dead arise. He dies, but He gives life, and by His death destroys death. He is buried, but He rises again; He goes down into Hell, but He brings up the souls; He ascends to Heaven, and shall come again to judge the living and the dead. . .” (Gregory Nazianzen).
3. The early Christians worshipped Jesus as God. How can we explain this? How can someone be both God and man? Is He a real man? Is He really united to a human nature? These are hard matters to explain. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 provided a definition that has been honored by most orthodox Christians since that time. Our confession follows its wording closely. “The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, 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” (WCF 8.2).
4. You can read some of the biblical argumentation for this in my post here:

<https://www.weswhite.net/2020/07/what-we-believe-about-jesus/>

5. What I have found is that an understanding of why the Son of God became man makes this real and concrete. The Westminster Larger Catechism says this well in WLC Q/A 37–40. So, we will follow this line of reasoning. As a helpful parallel, consider also Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 12–19. Here is WLC Q/A 37: WLC 37 How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man? A. Christ the Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her, yet without sin.
6. WLC 38 Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God? A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession, and to satisfy God's justice, procure his favour, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.
7. WLC 39 “Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be man? A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.” I like the simplicity of the Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 16 here: Q. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human? A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for sin; but a sinful human could never pay for others.
8. WLC 40 Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God and man in one person? A. It was requisite 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, as the works of the whole person.