

Lesson 12 - The Redeemer, Part 3: The Humiliation & Exaltation of the Redeemer, WCF 8, WLC 46-56

1. In the late 1990s, I attended various Dutch Reformed Churches as I lived in Michigan. I had studied Reformed doctrine, but I was fascinated by their preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism. The Catechism goes through the Apostle's Creed and explains each word and phrase, showing its significance for our comfort.
 - a. Q. Why did he suffer "under Pontius Pilate" as judge? A. So that he, though innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge, and so free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.
 - b. Q. Is it significant that he was "crucified" instead of dying some other way? A. Yes. By this I am convinced that he shouldered the curse which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.
2. The Westminster's approach is a bit different. It looks at the major aspects of Christ's life from the standpoint of His humiliation and exaltation. "WSC 23 What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer? A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation." Let's look at the various steps of his humiliation and exaltation.
3. The Humiliation of Christ
 - a. Birth - he was pleased in the fulness of time to become the son of man, made of a woman of low estate, and to be born of her; with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement . . . (WLC 47).
 - b. Life - subjecting himself to the law, which he perfectly fulfilled, and by conflicting with the indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in his flesh . . . (WLC 48).
 - c. Death - "having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors, having also conflicted with the terrors of death and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God's wrath, he laid down his life an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross" (WLC 49). I think this is a particularly powerful statement.
 - d. After death - "Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day; which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, He descended into hell" (WLC 50). Notice that the Standards are interpreting the meaning of "descended into hell" in the Apostle's Creed here.
4. The Exaltation of Christ
 - a. Resurrection - "he declared himself to be the Son of God, to have satisfied divine justice, to have vanquished death, and him that had the power of it, and to be Lord of quick and dead" (WLC 52).
 - b. Ascension - He "visibly went up into the highest heavens, there to receive

gifts for men, to raise up our affections thither, and to prepare a place for us, where himself is” (WLC 53).

- c. Session or Sitting at the Right Hand of God - “he is advanced to the highest favour with God the Father, with all fulness of joy, glory, and power over all things in heaven and earth, and doth gather and defend his church, and subdue their enemies; furnisheth ministers and people with gifts and graces, and maketh intercession for them” (WLC 54)
 - d. Return - “He, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory” (WLC 56).
5. The benefit of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in enabling us to glorify and enjoy God.
- a. WLC 57 What benefits hath Christ procured by his mediation? A. Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption, with all other benefits of the covenant of grace. “Christ suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). All His humiliation merits for us a glorious exaltation.
 - b. We need our own humiliation for our sin. WLC 95 says that moral law is of use to all people “to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.”
 - c. Our exaltation follows Christ pattern: first suffering, then glory. Happiness and joy come through the path of suffering. “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21, cf. 1 Pet. 5:7).