

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—
Lesson 18—The Offices of Christ our Redeemer, Q. 23

Introduction

*Last week's lesson on the incarnation was critical and foundational to the Christian faith. *Without* those truths, there's no salvation in Christianity—it's just another hopeless religion of the world; *and without* our believing them, there's no salvation for us—we're still in Adam, and still dead in our sins.

*And it's *because* those truths are so foundational, that once we *believe* them they become gloriously comforting, assuring, and edifying, as well as a real stronghold and battalion against Satan's lies, an accusing conscience, and a condemning law. *And that's because this* is what these truths hold forth for us: *the perfect suitability* of Christ our Redeemer to the needs of our redemption. *Who* He is, and *what* He became, and the *offices* He holds, are *all perfectly matched* to the *kind* of Redeemer and redemption we need. —And so *before* we come to Q.23 this AM, I want us to visit Qs.38-42 of the LC, which help us understand the great significance of the incarnation in Q.22 of our SC.

- I. Why was it necessary that our Redeemer be by nature God? WLC 38
 - A. If He'd *not been God* He could not have come into the world or been incarnate and had the guilt of our sins laid on Him, with His own consent, Heb 10.5-7; Gen 3.15
 1. The terms of our redemption and the covenant made to transact it, were all established in eternity as an everlasting covenant between the Father and our Redeemer, a covenant in which our Redeemer agreed to make satisfaction for us. If Christ were not the eternal Son of God, He could not have been a party in that covenant.
 2. And once Christ took on our spotless and innocent nature, He could not have been justly charged by the Father with the guilt of our sins and then punished for them, unless He'd consented to be *before* He took on that nature—because the nature He took on was innocent and God cannot punish an innocent person, Heb 7.26-27
 - B. If He'd *not been God*, He could not have sustained and kept the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God and the power of death, Mk 14.34; 15.34
 1. No mere creature, by his own strength, can bear up under God's wrath. Even the reprobate in hell will have their human natures sustained by God's power in order to endure the everlasting burnings of His wrath.
 2. Upheld by the power of God, a mere man could've withstood the wrath of the cross; but even so, a mere man could've only made satisfaction for himself, and not for the whole church of God.
 3. Christ took on our nature *Himself, as God, in order that* there might be no possibility of miscarrying in the important work of bearing the full wrath of God, *and in order that* He might make *full satisfaction* for it and come out on the other side of it in the resurrection, Jn 19.30
 - C. If He'd *not been God*, He could not have paid the infinite price incurred by sin and satisfied the infinite justice of an infinite God against sinners, Col 2.13-14; Isa 53.6
 1. As one man, the *most* He could've done is obey for Himself, pay for Himself, and deliver Himself. But what of the whole church of God? What of the elect?
 2. Being God, His obedience to the Law, His payment towards the debt, and His purchase for the elect are all of *infinite* worth and value. All His mediatorial works as a man are done by Him *as God*, which gives to all of them an *infinite* value, and secures for the elect eternal life, eternal peace, eternal fellowship with God in heaven, Rom 8.33-34
 3. Now, when Christ intercedes for us for what we need, He but needs to plead the infinite value of His satisfaction on our behalf, and all our needs are supplied according to those riches, Rom 8.32
 - D. If He'd *not been God*, He could not have applied to the elect all He accomplished for them, Mt 11.28
 1. As God, Christ is able to send the divine Spirit, His equal, to apply His purchase to us, Acts 2.33
 - E. If He'd *not been God*, He could not have conquered all our enemies and removed everything that opposed our redemption: *sin, Satan, the world, and death*. Conquering these requires infinite power, Ps 89.19-37; Isa 53.10-12

1. As God, He's able to make satisfaction for sin, break the dominion of sin over us, remove the condemnation standing against us, and free us from the enslaving power of sin by sanctification.
 2. As God, He's able to crush Satan under His feet, plunder his house of the elect, and keep them from ever being his slaves again.
 3. As God, He's able to deliver His people from the snares of the world and sanctify to them the blessings of providence.
 4. As God, He's able to turn death into a servant for His people's good so that it becomes a glorious transition into glory.
- F. If He'd *not been God*, He could not have brought His people into an everlasting salvation, Jn 10.28
1. As God, He is able to fit us for glory by justification, lead us in the way of it by sanctification, and bring us into it by glorification. As God, He is able to be the Author and Finisher of our faith.
- G. If He'd *not been God*, He could not have been our everlasting happiness, Jn 17.3; 1Jn 1.3
1. The happiness of the saints is not only found *from* Christ's work, but *in* Christ's person. *He* is our joy. He is our peace. He is our life. He is our good. Such is the gospel message, and such is the hope created by it in our hearts. If He were not our eternal and infinitely wonderful God, the message would be a lie and our hopes would be ashamed.
- II. Why was it necessary that our Redeemer be by nature man? WLC 39. *N.B. *The necessity of the incarnation is a necessity grounded on the divine purpose to redeem. In other words, it's not an intrinsic necessity, but a conditional necessity. Once Christ was ordained to be the Mediator between God and man it was necessary that He become a man.*
- A. It was necessary in order that He might perform obedience to the Law of God. He can't offer obedience to that Law in His divine nature because the divine nature can't be put under obligation. So if He is to come under the Law, He must take on a nature which can be subject to it and which is able to perform the obedience demanded of it, Gal 4.4-5
- B. It was necessary in order that He might advance our finite nature by uniting it His divine nature and thereby giving its obedience and suffering and intercession the infinite value of deity, Acts 20.28
1. Once His obedience and suffering are offered to the Father on our behalf, it infinitely more than compensates and satisfies for all the demands upon us because the obedience and suffering of the man Christ Jesus carries the worth and value of His divine person. It was done in a body like ours, but done by that body as it was exalted by unity to the divine nature of the Son of God. Who, then, can refuse it? How can there be anything left to pay? And how can there be any good which it cannot afford? Phil 4.19; Jn 14.13; 16.23
- C. It was necessary in order that He might have a fellow-feeling with all our infirmities, Heb 2.17-18; 4.14-16. He had a divine knowledge of our infirmities, but not an experiential knowledge. Now He can sympathize with us. Now His compassion comes from the heart of One who truly knows our frame, not because He made it, but because He Himself walked in it, Ps 103.13-14
- D. It was necessary in order that by our union with Him in His Sonship to God, we might also become sons of God. His Father is now also our Father, and His Sonship is now the ground upon which we can appear before God as acceptable as He, because acceptable in Him, Jn 20.17; Eph 1.6
- III. Why was it necessary that our Redeemer be both God and man, two distinct natures, in one Person? WLC 40
- A. The works needing to be performed in the human nature for our redemption could not have benefitted us unless they had the infinite value and worth of the divine nature added to them.
- B. The works needing to be performed in the human nature could not have been performed by the divine nature.
- C. The divine nature, which alone could save us, had no way to reach us without the addition of a human nature like ours.
- D. It's *impossible* for the two natures to be united because they're essentially opposed to each other: mortality vs. immortality, weakness vs. omnipotence, dependence vs. independence, finite vs. infinite. And yet it'll take both natures to redeem us. So in order for the two natures to work together,

they must be united in one Person. And since a human person couldn't exalt itself to add deity to himself, it can only be that a divine Person humble Himself to add humanity to Himself, Jn 8.58

E. The glory of this truth lies in this:

1. The works of each nature must be accepted by God for us, because they're the works of the one Person Christ Jesus. The obedience and sufferings of His human nature cannot but satisfy God as infinitely valuable to redeem us, because He did them as God. And the communion and fellowship and peace and glory He has with the Father in heaven cannot but be shared with us, because He enjoys them all as Man.
2. Moreover, we can rely on all those works performed by Him for us, whether on earth during His humiliation or now in heaven as our exalted Intercessor, because He did them all as God and man in one Person, the Person of our Redeemer.

IV. What offices must Christ hold in order to redeem us? WSC 23

- A. Christ comes from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning *anointed one*. In the Greek translation of the OT, *Christos* was used to translate the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, or Messiah, which means *one who is anointed*.
- B. And in the OT, the men of three offices were anointed: prophets, priests, and kings. These were all "the Lord's anointed ones".
- C. *Why* were they anointed? It was a ceremonial ordinance to signify three things: 1) that God had designated them to that office, 2) that they were to expect from God the equipage they needed to perform that office, *and* 3) to typify and foreshadow the offices that the incarnate Christ would execute as our Redeemer: the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, Acts 4.27; Ps 45.7; WSC 24-26
- D. Christ would come as our *Prophet* to teach us the will of God for our salvation (Jn 7.46), as our *Priest* to atone for us, reconcile us to God (Heb 10.14), and intercede for us, and our *King* to rule over us and subdue all our enemies for a full deliverance (Phil 2.9-11).
 1. Blinded by sin and depraved in understanding, we needed a Prophet to teach us truth.
 2. Guilty before God and subject to wrath, we needed a Priest to atone for us.
 3. In bondage to sin and Satan and under the fear of death and hell, we needed a King to deliver us.

V. Did Christ take these offices unto Himself? WLC 42

- A. Once Christ consented to be our Mediator in the covenant of redemption, He was appointed to these offices by the Father and anointed for each of them by the Spirit, Ps 45.7; Mt 3.16-17; Lk 2.10-11; Jn 1.29-30; 3.27-35; Ps 2.1-6; cf. Heb 5.4-6

VI. In what capacity does Christ execute these offices? WSC 23

- A. He holds and executes these offices for us both in the estate of humiliation, which covers from womb to tomb, and in the estate of exhalation, which commenced at the resurrection and will continue forever, without end.

Reflections

1. There's no Saviour like our Jesus. He brings to the table *everything* we need in a kinsman redeemer and *everything* we need from a God of grace and mercy, because of the *Person* He is!
 - 1.1. And being a Person complete with both the natures necessary to redeem us, then *O what a Redeemer* and *O what a redemption!* How complete and whole and full and final is our salvation!
2. He's *fully God* to bring efficacy to His every work and *fully man* to share that efficacy with us.
3. In the direst of straits, we can lean on the infinite value of His work for us. In the saddest of sufferings, we can lean on the fellow-feelings of His nature for us. In the happiest of times, we can be humbled that so great a God had so kind and saving a care for us, as to bring us into fellowship with His joy.
4. There is *everything* in Christ we need. Infinite power to save, infinite grace to forgive, infinite mercy to help, infinite wisdom to direct; *as well as* human sympathy to understand, human compassion to come along side, human tenderness to wipe our tears, and human nature to sympathize with us in all our weaknesses. We're fools to look outside of Jesus; but we're infinitely rich when we throw our all into His work as Redeemer.