

The Westminster Confession of Faith

Lesson 27: Of Christ the Mediator (¶ 8.4a)

High Plains Fellowship PCA

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Introduction

Having addressed the covenants in Chapter 7, we are now reaching the doctrinal “mountaintop” in Chapter 8. Much of what follows in the rest of the Confession is “details”—the *outworking* of the Mediatorial office of Christ in relation to his elect.

Paragraph 4 reads much like the Apostles’ Creed. Since it describes the twofold ministry of Christ in his “humiliation” and “exaltation” we will consider it in two parts, each with its corresponding catechism questions.

Opener

- What do we mean when we talk about being “humiliated”?
- How much can a clay pot be humiliated?
- If the intrinsic condition of the creature is humility *by definition*, then what do we really mean when we use the word?

WLC Q/A #46-50

Q46: What was the estate of Christ’s humiliation?

A46: The estate of Christ’s humiliation was that low condition, wherein he for our sakes, emptying himself of his glory, took upon him[self] the form of a servant, in his conception and birth, life, death, and after his death, until his resurrection. [1]

1. **Phil. 2:6-8** - Who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave, by being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **Luke 1:31** - And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. **2 Cor. 8:9** - For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though being rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. **Acts 2:24** - But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

- Read Genesis 11:1-9; 28:10-22. Compare John 1:47-51.
- Man is always trying to build *up* to heaven. But for man to have communion with God, heaven must build *down* to man.
- Christ clearly describes himself as that ladder (or stairway) in Jacob’s dream. And as a bonus we have the promise of angels moving between heaven and earth in service to God and man.

- The typical description of man “in trouble” and needing some help is a bit inadequate for describing man’s true condition and his own powers. Man cannot build a single step that gets him closer to heaven. In fact, man’s best efforts only pave the road to hell.
- Hence, nothing is harder than *salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone*. It requires abandoning up every attempt to reach heaven by your own effort!

Q47: How did Christ humble himself in his conception and birth?

A47: Christ humbled himself in his conception and birth, in that, being from all eternity the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, 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.[1]

1. **John 1:14, 18** - And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. **Gal. 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. **Luke 2:7** - And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guest room.

- Read Luke 2:21-24, 39, 41, 51. Compare to Leviticus 12.
- The ceremonial law of purification made what allowance?
- Jesus was born to a poor family—and yet he was born a King.
- Isn’t it ironic that today we treat poverty as a *sin* that must be cured by socialism?

Q48: How did Christ humble himself in his life?

A48: Christ humbled himself in his life, by subjecting himself to the law,[1] which he perfectly fulfilled;[2] and by conflicting with the indignities of the world,[3] temptations of Satan,[4] and infirmities in his flesh, whether common to the nature of man, or particularly accompanying that his low condition.[5]

1. **Gal. 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

2. **Matt. 5:17** - “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” **Rom. 5:19** - For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were appointed sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be appointed righteous.

3. **Psa. 22:6** - But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. **Heb. 12:2-3** - Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary, fainting in heart.

4. **Matt. 4:1-12** - Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’” Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; and ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’” Jesus said to him, “Again, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE

TEST.” Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He departed into Galilee. **Luke 4:13** - And when the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

5. **Heb. 2:17-18** - Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to help those who are tempted. **Heb. 4:15** - For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin. **Isa. 52:13-14** - Behold, My Servant will prosper; He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were appalled at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men.

- When Jesus was a child, Mary and Joseph fulfilled all that was required by the Law (including the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover).
- When Jesus was a child, he subjected himself to his parents.
- Read Matthew 3:13-15.
- Jesus baptism by John was necessary “to fulfill all righteousness” (i.e., *under the law*) and to formally inaugurate his public ministry (anointing by the Holy Spirit, which parallels the anointing of the priests with oil)

Q49: How did Christ humble himself in his death?

A49: Christ humbled himself in his death, in that having been betrayed by Judas,[1] forsaken by his disciples,[2] scorned and rejected by the world,[3] condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors;[4] having also conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God’s wrath,[5] he laid down his life an offering for sin,[6] enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.[7]

1. **Matt. 27:4** - Saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!”

2. **Matt. 26:56** – “But all this has taken place in order that the Scriptures of the prophets would be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

3. **Isa. 53:2-3** - For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4. **Matt. 27:26-50** - Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him over to be crucified. Then when the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, they gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. When they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He did not want to drink. And when they had crucified Him,

they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. And those passing by were blaspheming Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words. Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." And immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. But the rest of them were saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. **John 19:34** - But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

5. **Luke 22:44** - And being in agony He was praying very fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. **Matt. 27:46** - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

6. **Isa. 53:10** - But Yahweh was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If You would place His soul as a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of Yahweh will succeed in His hand.

7. **Phil. 2:8** - Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **Heb. 12:2** - Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Gal. 3:13** - Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE."

- While it was humiliating on one level for God to become man, how much more for the perfect God-man to become the sin-bearer for his people—to suffer the wrath of God and the curse of death?
- "For in the day you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:17)

Q50: Wherein consisted Christ's humiliation after his death?

A50: Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried,[1] and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day;[2] which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, he descended into hell.

1. **1 Cor. 15:3-4** - For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

2. **Psa. 16:10** - For You will not forsake my soul to Sheol; You will not give Your Holy One over to see corruption. **Acts 2:24-27, 31** - But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD CONTINUALLY BEFORE ME; BECAUSE HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT FORSAKE MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR GIVE YOUR HOLY ONE OVER TO SEE CORRUPTION. . . . he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER FORSAKEN TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SEE CORRUPTION. **Rom. 6:9** - Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. **Matt. 12:40** - For just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE

NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- The curse pronounced against man included: “*You are dust, and to dust you shall return.*” (Genesis 3:19)
- But the body of Christ would not suffer the humiliation of decay in the tomb. (Psalm 16:10, footnote 2)
- The simplest understanding of “he descended into hell” is that it refers to the *grave*, not the place of God’s wrath.
- Scripture makes it abundantly clear that Christ fully atoned for sin while he suffered on the cross. Otherwise he could not have said, “It is finished” and “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Nor could he have promised the thief, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”
- No further payment for sin is owed to God by *anyone* who is saved. Nor is saving grace to be found in any ceremony of the church.

WCF 8.4a

4. This office [of Mediator] the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake,^a which, that he might discharge, he was made under the law,^b and did perfectly fulfill it;^c endured most grievous torments immediately in his soul,^d and most painful sufferings in his body;^e was crucified, and died;^f was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption.^g . . .

a. **Psa 40:7-8** - Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my inner being.” **Heb 10:5-10** - Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; IN BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. “THEN I SAID, ‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME, IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME, TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.’” After saying above, “SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them” (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, “BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. **John 10:18** – “No one takes it away from Me, but from Myself, I lay it down. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” **Phil 2:8** - Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

b. **Gal 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

c. **Mat 3:15** - But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. **Mat 5:17** - “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

d. **Mat 26:37-38** - And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” **Mat 27:46** - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” **Luke 22:44** - And being in agony He was praying very fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

e. Matthew 26-27 throughout. (not included here)

f. **Phil 2:8** - Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

g. **Acts 2:23-24, 27** - This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of lawless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. . . . **BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT FORSAKE MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR GIVE YOUR HOLY ONE OVER TO SEE CORRUPTION. Acts 13:37** - But He whom God raised did not see corruption. **Rom 6:9** - Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

- In this paragraph we see the *willingness* of Christ to undertake his office of Mediator: there is no hint of coercion.
- He knew from eternity what this office would require. This was no “uninformed” choice.

“Christ’s voluntary assumption of the Messianic offices entailed the estate of humiliation requisite to the accomplishment of the task.”¹

- “Made under the law” refers to his assumption of the terms of the Covenant of Works.
- Read for example, Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12. Anyone who keeps the law perfectly will live by it.
- The suffering of Christ was in both body and spirit. One cannot reduce his suffering to body alone. He was not *merely* crucified—nailed to a cross—he bore the infinite wrath of God for sin.
- Here we should be reminded that Christ was not killed *per se*. He has the power of life and death. (See John 10:18, footnote *a*.)

Rev 1:17-18 - And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not fear; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”

Concluding Thoughts

- God came down from heaven to earth in the person of the God-man Jesus. If there had been an easier way to save fallen humanity, he would have done it that way instead.
- Next week we will consider the “exaltation” of Christ in his resurrection, ascension, and enthronement. (A fitting lesson to follow our observance of Easter!)

Upcoming Lessons

- April 9: [Easter Brunch]
- April 16: Chapter 8, Paragraph 4b
- April 23: Chapter 8, Paragraph 5
- April 30: Chapter 8, Paragraph 6
- May 7: [Dominic Aquila Q&A]

¹ Williamson, p. 78.

- May 14: Chapter 8, Paragraph 7
- May 21: Chapter 8, Paragraph 8

Resources & Bibliography (new items added to the top of the list / older items removed)

- *Systematic Theology*, Louis Berkhof, 1949. (PDF version [here](#))
- *The Confession of Faith*, A. A. Hodge, 1869.
- *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*, G. I. Williamson, 1964.
- *Roman Catholicism*, Loraine Boettner, 1962. (online version [here](#); PDF version [here](#))

All scripture quotations are *Legacy Standard Bible* (LSB) unless otherwise noted.
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