

Who Is Jesus?

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Week 4
March 11th, 2023



Jesus

"Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" **(Matthew 16:16).**

Hearing this answer, Jesus said that Peter was blessed because he knew the truth. Peter hadn't learned this truth from human beings but from God. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter's answer seems to be simple, but in reality, is summarizes the doctrine of the person of Christ in only a few words. Scripture teaches that Jesus is the Christ: a human being but also the Son of God. **This one person has two distinct natures: a human nature and a divine nature.** But what do these words mean? **(Mueller, p. 174)**

Review Terms:

- Book of Concord: AC Article III p. 32; Apology p. 82; Formula of Concord Epitome, p. 490
- Luther's Small Catechism: page 116, questions 151-161.

New Terms:

- Two Natures – Divine and Human
- Incarnation – God became flesh **(John 1:14).**

Introduction:

Instead of insisting that human beings attain perfection, Lutheran spirituality begins by facing up to imperfection. We cannot perfect our conduct, try as we might. We cannot understand God through our own intellects. We cannot become one with God. Instead of human beings having to do these things, Lutheran spirituality teaches that God does them for us—He becomes one with us in Jesus Christ; He reveals Himself to our feeble understandings by His Word; He forgives our conduct and, in Christ, lives the perfect life for us.

We do not have to ascend to God; rather, the good news is that He has descended to us. Most philosophies and theologies focus on what human beings must do to be saved; Lutherans insist that there is nothing we can do, but that God does literally everything.

*Human sin and God's grace are the two poles of Lutheran spirituality. To be sure, these are intrinsic to all of Christianity, but in Lutheranism they are both heightened. They are resolved in the principle by which, it is said, the church stands or falls: justification by faith. Or, to unpack what that means, we are justified by grace through faith in Christ and His work on the cross. **(The Spirituality of the Cross, Gene Edward Veith, p.29-30).***

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† Our churches teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God **[John 1:14]**, assumed the human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary. ² So **there are two natures—the divine and the human—inseparably joined in one person.** There is one Christ, true God, and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. ³ He did this to reconcile the Father to us and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of mankind **[John 1:29]**.⁴ He also descended into hell, and truly rose again on the third day. Afterward, He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. There He forever reigns and has dominion over all creatures. ⁵ He sanctifies those who believe in Him, by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and make them alive. He defends them against the devil and the power of sin.⁶ The same Christ will openly come again to judge the living and the dead, and so forth, according to the Apostles' Creed **(Augsburg Confession Article III).**

† **Matthew 16:16** (side bar)

† **John 1:1-5, 14, 18** (incarnation)

† It was God's love for creation that moved Him to bring salvation into the world. The way in which salvation would come into the world was set before the foundation of the world. It was only through the Word of God made flesh that sinful man could be saved. God in flesh and blood, Jesus, sent to suffer, and die was the way in which God chose to love the world. There was no other way for salvation – only through God's flesh and blood sacrificed in love.

† **Hebrews 9:22-28**

† **Ephesians 1:3-10**

† **Titus 1:2**



God Died For Us

We Christians should know that if God is not in the scale to give it weight, we, on our side, sink to the ground. I mean it this way: if it cannot be said that God died for us, but only a man, we are lost; but if God's death and a dead God lie in the balance, His side goes down and ours goes up like a light and empty scale. Yet He can also readily go up again or leap out of the scale! But He could not sit on the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be called God's dying, God's martyrdom, God's blood, and God's death. For God in His own nature cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is called God's death when the man dies who is one substance or one person with God
(Martin Luther, LW 41:103-104)

† **God and Man – Personal Union** - It is not surprising that heresies arose to explain the person of Christ. This is a complicated topic. But **when we find scriptural teachings that are in tension or paradox, we are not called to modify God's word.** Rather we are to hear and believe. Since this may be difficult, St. Paul reminds us, "great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: he was manifested in the flesh ..." (1 Timothy 3:16). It is **ultimately a mystery to us how these two natures are united.** We will not be able to figure this out completely, since Christ is unique and not subject to our manipulation. We are not called to solve the mystery of godliness but to believe in our Savior. As we do this, we simultaneously uphold two biblical truths (Mueller, p. 187).

† **Person** – A person is a unique individual who exists as themselves. They think and are self-aware.

† **Nature** – Jesus is one person with two natures. A nature is a description of characteristics. It is the **essential qualities** that make something what it is. To have a human nature is to have those qualities and characteristics that are essential components of humanity. A divine nature consists in **everything that it means to be God.** It is the "godness" of a person.

† *Scripture describes Jesus with two natures: Christ is fully human and at the same time fully divine. Does this mean that there are two Christs? No, there is one Christ—one person—but this single person consists of two natures. The divine nature has existed from all eternity, even before the **incarnation**, but the human nature of Christ never existed independently or without the divine nature. He has a true human nature, but it is not a human person independent of the divine nature (Mueller, p. 174).*

✠ **Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Timothy 2:5**

Q: Why does it matter that Jesus is fully God and fully man?

True Man:

† Jesus was born of a woman in which He received His human nature, yet true God conceived by the Holy Spirit.

✠ **Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35**

† Jesus was made of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Jesus had a soul (Matt 26:38) and He increased in wisdom and knowledge (Luke 2:52). He had emotions (John 11:33; Heb 4:15) and a will (Luke 22:42). He was hungry and thirsty (Matt 4:2; John 19:28); He ate and drank (Matt 11:19). He slept (Matt 4:38), He suffered and died (Matt 20:18-19; John 19:30).

† Although Jesus didn't sin, He felt our weaknesses and was also **touched with a sympathetic "feeling of our infirmities"**

✠ **Small Catechism page 170; Hebr. 2:17; 4:15**

† Jesus has all of our human, physical characteristics but He also has specific necessary peculiarities in His nature: **Virgin birth, Sinlessness, Immortality**

† **Sinlessness** – 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15

† **Impersonality** - Ordinarily a human nature exists as a human person, having its own and individual existence. The human nature of Jesus was from the moment of the incarnation assumed by the Son of God. "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). At no time did the human nature of Christ exist for and by itself, constituting in itself a person; but from its beginning it had its existence in the Person of the Son of God. Nor were the two natures merged into one new person, but the eternal Person of the Godhead, the Son, assumed the human nature: hence, the impersonality of His human nature. The Son of God supplied the personality of the God-man Jesus Christ.

† **Necessity of Jesus Humanity**

✠ **Hebrews 2:14**