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The Person Of Christ

We return to our basics class. After the Trinity and the Person of Christ you'll probably conclude it's not so basic, at least not in the sense of simplistic, and it's true, the Trinity and the Hypostatic Union are not simple to understand, but they are essential, essential to the Christian faith. Now the first essential we covered in our Basics class was Scripture. And Scripture is the traditional place systematians have started. We concluded that the Scriptures originate with God, they are God-breathed, they are given through men as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, they are sufficient for every good work and they are authoritative whenever they speak to any subject area. Then traditionally systematians examine the Trinity and we concluded that there is one God, eternally existing in three co-substantial, co-eternal, co-equal Persons. Then traditionally systematians will explicate the Father. You'll notice we don't have a doctrinal statement regarding the Father. And I suggest we seek to formulate a statement about the Father in the future. Our statement moves straight to the Son and then to the Spirit. So we won't add anything today with respect to the Father. What we'll do is move to the Son and here we are dealing with the second Person of the Trinity, God the Son.

Now traditionally when you study God the Son you divide it up into the Person of Christ and the Work of Christ. And that's what our statement does; the Person of Christ is declared in point 3, the Work of Christ is declared in points 6 and 7. So we've done what is traditionally done and it's done this way to clarify because fundamentally we can't separate the Person of Christ from His work, both are involved in the other. So we divide them up simply to speak about each but understand that both the Person of Christ and the Work of Christ are intimately involved in one another. And since Christ is the heart of the salvific message then both His Person and His Work are essential to the gospel. Whatever it is that a human must believe in order to

be saved must involve content related to both His Person and His Work. For example, if you misunderstand His Person then you have to really question whether you're saved or not. Because Jesus said to know Him was to know the Father and to see Him was to see the Father. Yet if we don't know the true Jesus then we don't know the true Father. And then we're not really saved. So traditionally the Person and Work of Christ have been united to form the gospel message.

Now I mention all this because right now there is a group of people in the Free Grace movement that have departed from this gospel. They are arguing that the quote 'saving message' is distinct from the quote 'gospel message,' that the saving message and the gospel message are not the same, by which they mean the 'saving message' is simply a subset of the gospel propositions that one must believe in order to be saved. Their claim is that the quote 'saving message' is simply this; "believe in Jesus for eternal life" whereas traditionally the saving message and the gospel message are seen as equivalent; believe in Jesus as the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again. That they say is not the 'saving message,' but the gospel for believers.

Their argument is that John in his gospel, which is written to unbelievers records statements of Jesus like, "Truly, truly I say to you, He who believes in Me has eternal life," and they say, aha, see, there's no cross there, just believe in Jesus for eternal life. So, not only do they not define the Person of Christ they don't even include His Work on the cross, and so they say, if you do add things about the Person and Work of Christ to that simple message then you're adding to the 'saving message.' Now they do believe Jesus died on the cross for our sin and rose again and is the Son of God, but that they say is not part of the 'saving message,' that is part of the "gospel message" which is for believers only.

The traditional free grace people, like me are saying, no, you cannot separate the 'saving message' from the 'gospel message,' and limit the saving message to believe in Jesus for eternal life. The saving message and the gospel message are one and the same message, believe in Jesus, the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again; believe in both His Person and His work. But to say believe in Jesus for eternal life hardly has any content, it certainly

does not speak of His Person and His work. So by separating the 'saving message' from the 'gospel message' I think they're preaching another gospel.

Surely you have to have some content about who Jesus is. I don't put my trust in someone I don't know anything about? And I hope you don't either. You've got to know something about the nature of the person you're putting your trust in. And surely you have to have some content about what Jesus did. Why would I put my trust in someone for eternal life when I don't know what He did for me? So it's just absurd to me for someone to say, just believe in Jesus for eternal life. Who in the world is Jesus and what did He do such that I should believe in Him? This isn't dismissing what Jesus said in the Gospel of John, believe and you have eternal life, it's just saying, don't take Jesus out of context, those are not stand alone statements, they are found in a context and in the greater contexts His Person is made clear and His Work is made clear. So you can't rip these verses out of context and just say, the gospel is, "Believe in Jesus for eternal life." Some people have an itch to search for the least common denominator, that's not the point of a gospel presentation, the point is to present clearly the Person of Christ and the Work of Christ and the necessary human response for salvation, which is faith alone. That's what I find over and over in Peter's sermons in the Book of Acts, that's what I find over and over in Paul's sermons in the Book of Acts, that's what I find in Stephen's sermon. I don't find just believe in Jesus for eternal life, I see a clear presentation of many truths centering on the Person and Work of Christ including believe in Jesus for eternal life. So the whole debate is poorly framed in my humble opinion. It's basically an attempt to define the lowest common denominator of a gospel presentation and I just don't see that as the interest of Scripture. So understand these crossless gospel people are now out there and I say they are completely out to lunch, but they are part of evangelicalism. This isn't happening in some cult, this is right in the middle of evangelicalism.

Alright, today we're going to look at just one side of what is necessary to the gospel, namely, the Person of Christ. In a few weeks we'll look at the other side, the Work of Christ, both are necessary to the Gospel. On the Person of Christ our doctrinal statement says;

3. We believe in the holy incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever was the Son of God, but who, that He might do the will of His Father (John 16:8-

11), condescended to become a man (Phil. 2:5-7), being sinlessly begotten of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:35), and of her brought into the world (Gal. 4:4), - very God yet truly man (Titus 2:13).

A good statement but there is something wrong with it. Anybody see what's wrong? There's nothing wrong in the wording, what's wrong is one of the verse references? Anybody see which one it is? John 16:8-11. John 16:8-11 does not support the claim that Jesus Christ came that He might do the will of His Father. It's a reference to the Holy Spirit's convicting ministry and is correctly placed in point 4 of our doctrinal statement. So you can mark that reference off, for some reason or another it accidentally got stuck in point 3. It belongs in point 4. But apparently nobody has been reading this very closely the last couple of years, so you might consider reading it thoroughly, going through all the verse references and checking it out.

Alright, there are three things we're going to look at today, the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ, the Kenosis and the Virgin Birth. These are all essential to the Christian faith. Let's start with the expression, "We believe in the holy incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever was the Son of God," notice, who ever was. This points back to before the incarnation, prior to the incarnation and it's stating what is called the doctrine of Eternal Sonship. So let's define Eternal Sonship. Dr Chafer says, "The relation of the Second Person to the First Person has from all eternity been that of a Son, and, like all else related to the Godhead, is not only eternal but is unchangeable. He did not become a Son of the Father, as some say that He did, by His incarnation, or by His resurrection, nor is He a Son by mere title, nor is He temporarily assuming such a relationship that He may execute His part in the Covenant of Redemption." I want you to notice something very important about this definition; Jesus Christ is the Son of God is a part of the very essence of God. Chafer says it is necessary to the Godhead; such that if Jesus Christ were not eternally the Son of God but became the Son of God, for example, at His incarnation, then God Himself would be substantially different. And his point is to wipe out a lot of heresies that say that Jesus became the Son of God at some point in time, either at His incarnation or at His resurrection or it's just a title and not a part of His essential being as the Second Person of the Trinity because this issue gets to the very heart of who God is, God's essence. So a very simple definition of Eternal Sonship is that

Jesus Christ is eternally the Son of God and did not become the Son of God at any point in time.

Now the point of stating it this way is not to affirm that Jesus Christ is eternal, people who reject the Eternal Sonship accept that He is eternal, they just deny that His Sonship is eternal. So you have to watch it. There are people who hold to what is called Incarnational Sonship, that Jesus became the Son of God at His incarnation and is not eternally the Son of God, but is exclusively a title related to His role in salvation.

Let's deal with this because there's been a heated debate over Eternal Sonship beginning in the 1970's when John MacArthur started denying it and teaching Incarnational Sonship instead. You've probably heard of MacArthur as the guy who holds to Lordship Salvation and we don't hold to Lordship Salvation but that's not his only flaw. One of my seminary profs who graduated from Dallas did his dissertation on the 17 heresies of John MacArthur. So it's not just Lordship Salvation, there's a whole truckload of heresies MacArthur has taught. One of them people seldom hear about is Incarnational Sonship, and I'll let him say it, this isn't me, this is John MacArthur in a sermon in 1972. "Christ was not the Son of God in eternity past...Nothing in the Bible speaks of the eternal Sonship of Christ, nothing!...He never became a Son until His incarnation...Before that He was no Son...Don't let anyone tell you that He is the ETERNAL SON."ⁱ Right here, whether he realizes it or not He's violently attacking the Person of Christ and in fact, the entire Godhead. He's subtracting an essential component of the Person of Jesus Christ who is a full member of the Godhead.

His confusion, apparently, was over this term "Son" because he thought of the word "Son" as implying something less than the Father, as implying subservience, so he made that exclusively during the incarnation. Now it doesn't do anything like that. The very point of the term "son" is to show the same essence as the father who begot the son, not something less than the father. You know, I had a JW pull this same stunt on me earlier this year, he said, well, Jesus isn't God, He's the Son of God. I said if you have a son does that make the son lesser in essence than you. No. And that's my whole point. A son implies identical essence, not a lesser essence, not lesser in any way. But John MacArthur had this problem of thinking that in some way Jesus as

Son of God made him lesser than God, so he limited it to the incarnation. Since then he repented of this heresy but the problem is still around for those who are interested because if you look at the Statement of Faith at Grace Bible, the church MacArthur pastors and the Master's Seminary, the Seminary where MacArthur is president, they both clearly teach Incarnational Sonship.

And let me remind you, there's more here than just Sonship, this cascades into a ton of other issues, like the Kenosis. What does it mean Christ emptied Himself, what did He empty Himself of at the incarnation? His divine attributes? Because if He did that now you are rejecting the deity of Christ. And this is the stuff the JW's are into, absolute heresy. Why is it heresy? Because if you reject the deity of Christ and you say, I know Jesus Christ, then do you know anything about the Father? How could you know the Father who is God when you only know Jesus who is not God? You know nothing more than a creature named Jesus Christ, but you do not know anything about God. So these issues are all related and that's why people get very emotional about these issues, they realize something massive is at stake.

Notice what MacArthur's church and seminary still state on their websites. "We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God," now I don't even like that too much, this is their way of stating the kenosis and I don't like it, I don't like the phrase "laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God" because it sounds too much like He laid aside His deity, especially when you add to that the next phrase, and "assumed the place of a Son..." Well when did he assume the place of a Son? The statement says "in the incarnation." So what are you saying Jesus did at the incarnation? Set aside His deity and became a Son. I don't think so. He never laid aside a single divine attribute for a single second. He always and everywhere had every attribute of God, all the kenosis is saying is that He gave up the independent use of His divine attributes, but He never laid them aside in the sense of dropping them. He never became non-God because if the Son became non-God then the Godhead was no longer the Godhead, there was an essential change in the nature of the Godhead. So you have to be very careful talking this way, using this non-traditional terminology like "laid aside." And using this terminology makes me wonder if MacArthur even

knows who Jesus Christ is. There are many people that think that because MacArthur keeps teaching these things that He doesn't really know who Christ is. And if you don't know who Christ is you don't know who? You don't know the Father. And if that's the case, are you really saved? So I don't see that he really repented of this heresy. Their statement says they teach it at the seminary.

Now there are implications to denying Eternal Sonship. It doesn't stop here. It's linked to other doctrines. And what I'm trying to do is show you that all of Scripture is linked and if you start down a path then logically you end up way out in the tullies somewhere. For example, let's say you deny Eternal Sonship and you believe Jesus didn't become a son until the incarnation. Question; when then did the Father become the Father? At the incarnation too. A denial of the Eternal Fatherhood of God. See, the logic flows, you can't stop it, once you've started down this path, bang, bang, bang you're suddenly into more heresy. A second implication, and MacArthur even suggested this because he followed the logic of his position; when the decision was made in the divine councils with regard to which member would be incarnated, any of the three members of the Trinity could have been incarnated. And that means the Father could have been the Son, the Son could have been the Spirit, etc...in other words, their Persons, who they are as distinct Persons, was not established from all eternity and is not a necessary part of the essence of God. That's very dangerous to say. I am not comfortable with that at all.

Jesus Christ is eternally the Son of God, not temporally. It relates to His essential Person and inherent identity as distinct from the Father and the Spirit and that's what our doctrinal statement is protecting in the first two lines. We believe in the holy incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever was the Son of God.

Turn to Matthew 16:15. This is the great who am I passage, who do you say Jesus is? It's a question of His essential Person. In verse 13, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They go through the responses, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Verse 15, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon," because you ached the question, you know me; I am the Son of God. And "this

has been revealed to you by My Father in heaven.” Jesus didn’t become the Son of God; He is the Son of God eternally, that’s who He is. Some people get hung up on the Son terminology; every time people think of the word “Son of” they think “offspring of.” However think of my example earlier with the JW’s, if a father has a son, is the son of lesser essence than the father? No, he’s of identical essence, that’s why when people see the son they’ll say, he looks like the father! If you want the same idea technically, Ryrie says, “The designation “Son of God” when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full deity. It does not imply any subordination; it implies equality and identity of nature.” So to steal MacArthur’s words, “Don’t let anyone tell you” Jesus became the Son of God. He most emphatically did not! Jesus is eternally the Son of God, meaning of the same order of God.

Look at John 1:18. This is a good one. “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has exegeted Him.” There’s the word for exegesis, *exegeomai*, He has perfectly explained God to us. Who has? The only begotten God? Well who is the only begotten God? Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ is the perfect explanation of God. He Himself is “the only begotten God. But if begotten means born, how can God be born? He can’t. God is eternal. So “only begotten” cannot mean born here, it must mean the other Greek definition of this word which is “unique (in kind),” Jesus Christ is “one of a kind.” He’s eternally the Son of God. And later Jesus says what? Why do you ask me to see the Father, if you have seen me you have seen the Father, I and the Father are one.” So then that which is invisible, God, has been made visible in the Son. But this Son is God, He is eternal, He did not become the Son at His incarnation, He was forever the Son. What happened at the incarnation is God was made known by the Son who came in the flesh.

Finally turn to Col 1:13. This passage, according to Chafer is the most conclusive on Eternal Sonship. “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,” so there’s no argument here, the Son is in view. Verse 15 declares the nature of this Son. “He is the image of the invisible God, and the firstborn of all creation.” Firstborn, the heir, it doesn’t mean the Son of God was born, the Son of God was never born, He is however, the heir. The firstborn was always the heir in Hebrew thought. Clearly the title Son was not assumed at His incarnation

because he already had it as creator of all things. Verse 16, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Who’s Him? The Son of God. So the Son of God was present at creation, long before the incarnation. He didn’t become the Son of God at the incarnation, He came as the Son of God. Verse 17, “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” In who? In the Son of God. So the bottom line is that Son of God is a name of Jesus Christ that refers to His essential Person and to deny Him this is to detract from the essential nature of God.

Now we might ask, well, what did happen at the incarnation between the Father and The Son? The Son took to Himself true humanity; a true human body, a true human spirit, a true human soul. So in Jesus’ humanity the Father became the God of his humanity. Only from his humanity could Christ address the Father as, “My God.” As for example when Jesus said from the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34) and after His resurrection, “I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God” (John 20:17). Jesus didn’t say those out of his divine nature, He couldn’t say that out of his divine nature, as divine He’s co-equal, co-eternal, co-substantial. He can only say that out of His human nature.

Alright, so much for Eternal Sonship, that is being protected very beautifully by our statement, “We believe in the holy incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever was the Son of God.” Now let’s move to the incarnation and kenosis proper. “but who, that He might do the will of His Father, condescended to become a man (Phil. 2:5-7).” Turn to Phil 2. Phil 2 is where we find this strange Greek word *kenoo* from which we get the word *kenosis*. Phil 2:5 “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself,” there’s the verb *kenoo*, translated “emptied.” “but emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Now it’s interesting he drops this huge theology in the midst of a very practical issue. What’s the practical issue? Verse 5, the proper attitude, what’s your attitude when you face trials and difficulties in life? And what is the proper attitude according to verse 8? Humility. Christ is the

archetype of the proper attitude of humility. Well how did He demonstrate humility? That's what the kenosis is all about, this emptying.

The problem here is in verses 6, 7 and 8 things are stated about the person of Christ that are very, very difficult to comprehend, ultimately incomprehensible, like the Trinity. But we try to do as best as we can under the teaching of the Holy Spirit through Scripture. Let's take it apart. Verse 6, "Who, although He existed" that's a present participle, it means He existed and He continues to exist "in the form of God," yet He "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." The JW's try to say that He was only in the form of God and therefore He was less than God; that's not verse 6. "In the form of" doesn't mean mere form, it means in the likeness, in the exact likeness, meaning, with all the divine attributes. He had all the divine attributes before the incarnation and He had all the divine attributes during the incarnation and He has all the divine attributes after the incarnation. So verse 6 is saying Jesus Christ existed in full deity. But the astonishing thing is, yet He "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." The noun grasped means "utilized or asserted," meaning He didn't always utilize or assert His divine attributes. He had them, it's just that in the incarnation He subjected their use to the Father's will, He didn't utilize them at will. He did sometimes, but those were rare times. Instead, what you would have seen most of the time was verse 7; He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men." There was an emptying that happened when Jesus Christ became incarnate, that's the word from which we get kenosis. What does it mean He emptied Himself? Emptied Himself of what? It sounds like a subtraction. Did He lose some of the divine attributes during the incarnation? Or did He lose maybe just some of His divine attributes? The best view is that the kenosis is not really a subtraction but an addition, it's the taking to Himself a true human nature, he ever remained undiminished deity, so the kenosis is a taking to Himself a true human nature. He didn't lose any of His undiminished deity. He took to Himself true humanity, that's what the incarnation is all about, and as a true human the kenosis refers to, during that time, the giving up of the independent use of His divine attribute. He didn't give up the divine attributes, He gave up the independent use of His divine attributes. He had them the whole time. It's just that, in His desire to please the Father, He took to Himself true humanity and put on the attitude of humility in order to do His Father's will all the time, everywhere. But all the time He was walking

around He was co-equal with the Father, co-eternal, co-existent, had all the attributes, but as the God-man, walking this earth, He voluntarily chose to restrictively use His divine attributes in order to fulfill the Father's plan. What decided when He would use them and when He would not use them? Whenever the Father wanted Him to use them, He would use them, whenever the Father did not want Him to use them, He would not use them. He never went outside of the Father's will, He always and everywhere submitted to the Father. That's the kenosis.

How did His incarnation come into existence? That's the next part of our statement, "being sinlessly begotten of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:35), and of her brought into the world (Gal. 4:4), - very God yet truly man (Titus 2:13)." This is the virgin birth. Why did he have to be born of a virgin? Isa 7 is a prophecy; let's take a look at Isa 7. We could go back as early as Gen 3:15. Gen 3:15 is one of the strangest verses in the Bible, it's called the first good news, the first announcement of a solution to the Fall and it's a very gracious announcement because it's made the same day as the Fall. And in that announcement is prophesied that the seed of the woman will conquer the seed of Satan. The strange thing is that the noun seed is masculine, it's sperm, but woman is feminine. The question is how can a woman have a sperm? That doesn't make sense. Looking back we can see it as a hint that this is looking to a virgin birth. Somehow a woman is going to have a sperm. But it's much clearer in Isa 7:14. Starting in verse 10, you had a problem in Judah. Two other kings were trying to get an alliance going with King Ahaz of Judah to team up against Assyria. King Ahaz didn't want an alliance so they plot to take him out. Now Ahaz is of whose house? The house of David. So there's a threat against the house of David. Let's see how the Lord handles it. "Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." Ask, whatever you want and I'll give you the sign. What's the sign going to prove? That nobody, nobody can destroy the house of David. So God says, you name it Ahaz and I'll do it, anything you want. But instead of coming up with something, look at this remark. ¹²But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" It sounds pious, but actually what has Ahaz done? He's rejected the word of God. God said do something and he said, no. So Isaiah at this point gets irritated, and there's emotion in this next verse, because he spots the hypocrisy of that phony religious answer. ¹³Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too

slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? ¹⁴“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:” now this interesting. The sign that is now being given wasn’t asked for. God’s going to give a sign, but the sign is to who? To Ahaz or to the whole house of David? To the whole house of David. This isn’t to Ahaz. Verse 14 is the sign to the whole house of David. And this is confirmed because in verse 14 the “you” is plural, you can’t see that in the English, but in the Hebrew it says, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you,” plural, “a sign.” And then he says, “Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” In the Hebrew the word “virgin” is *almah*; in the Greek translation it’s *parthenos*. The problem is that modern Jews claim that *almah* just means a ‘young woman.’ However, the fact that the Jewish translators of the LXX between 250 and 150BC translated this Hebrew word *almah* by the Greek word *parthenos*, which always means a girl who is a virgin. And that shows you that the virgin birth interpretation of Isa 7 was not a Christian interpretation, it was the traditional Jewish interpretation from before the time of Christ. Did the Jews 250 years before Christ have an axe to grind? They’re not Christians. These were Jews in Alexandria translating the Hebrew into the Greek so that they’d have a contemporary translation and they clearly understood the Hebrew text to be a prophecy of the virgin birth. When Matthew and Luke cite Isaiah 7:14 they weren’t inventing the virgin birth interpretation; they were merely appealing to the traditional Jewish interpretation and seeing it’s fulfillment in Jesus.

What’s the other reason Jesus was born of a virgin? That was a prophetic reason. What about the legal reasons? Jeremiah 22 says he can’t be of the line of Coniah. That line that came from David was cursed, so He’s got to come from David but not the line of Coniah. Matthew makes very clear He did not come from that line, he was supposedly the son of Joseph, but Luke comes along and shows that Mary was descended by another line of David that did not include Coniah. So the Holy Spirit was very clever in avoiding that line but still He’s of the house of David. So legally, prophetically, theologically, to avoid the imputation of Adam’s sin, to avoid the inheritance of sin, a virgin birth was required.

What about the theological reasons? If he’s born naturally of Joseph and Mary then what’s the problem? Jesus can’t be dying on the cross for our sin, He’s on the cross dying for His own sin. So let’s open this can of worms up for

a minute. There are three categories of sin. The first category is imputed sin. Everyone in Adam is imputed with the sin of Adam. Romans 5:12 shows that even babies have imputed sin because do babies die? Yeah. Well why do babies die? Because Adam represented the human race when he sinned in the garden. It's not altogether clear, all the details, it's just that the Bible says that we're in union with Adam and we share his destiny. So we share his sin, his sin is imputed to us. You don't have to do any personal sin to have imputed sin. Just because you are born you're under imputed sin. The second category of sin is inherent sin, and that's in the flesh. That's the sin principle in our flesh that is behind our personal sin. That's one of the things we're at war with in our sanctification. The world, the flesh and the devil, those are our enemies. And when we say flesh we're talking about inherent sin that is transmitted to us from our father. Adam passed it to Cain, Cain passed it to his son and so forth all the way through the human race, father to son, father to son, that's inherent sin. And the third category of sin is personal sin, and that's what comes out of the flesh. That's the words, thoughts or deeds that we do that come out of our inherent sin. And everyone is familiar with that one.

When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, here's why those categories are important. Jesus has got to be free of all three categories of sin, not just personal sin. In order to qualify as a perfect sacrifice that's going to die for us on the cross, he's got to be "a lamb without spot or blemish." Therefore Jesus Christ has to be free from category one sin, category two sin, and category three sin. The virgin birth is the vehicle through which that miracle takes place.

How's he does that is not fully known because on one hand he's got to be connected to the human race, on the other he's got to be disconnected from the sin that is imputed and inherent in the human race. But that's the miracle of the virgin birth. On the one hand you find list after list after list of genealogy. That must signify some connection to the human race and if He's not connected to the human race then how is He dying for the human race on the cross? So He's got to have that connection. But at the same time He's got to be disconnected from the imputed sin of Adam and the inherent sin that is passed from father to Son. The Holy Spirit accomplished this through the virgin birth.

Alright, enough said, the last line of our doctrinal statement says, “very God yet truly man (Titus 2:13).” The point is Jesus Christ, if you had come into contact with Him in the 1st century, you would have come into contact with the Eternal Son of God, the exact representation of the Father, and to have seen Him would be to see the Father and to know Him would be to know the Father because He was God in the flesh, truly God, yet truly man, as incarnate He humbled Himself, this is the Kenosis, giving up the independent use of His divine attributes, yet retaining them at every moment. At times He would appear to be a fantastically righteous and holy human being, who had all the limitations of humanity, who got hungry, who got thirsty, who got tired and then from time to time you would see His undiminished deity flash forth suddenly and then retract again. That’s the person who the NT challenges us to deal with and every man must answer the question Jesus posed to His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” I hope we’ve answered that question accurately today, because it’s half of the gospel, the Person of Christ as undiminished deity united with true humanity in one person without confusion or mixture forever.

ⁱ Taken from transcription of John MacArthur’s message on Hebrews 1:4-6 in 1972, tape number GC 1602.

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