Athanasian Creed # 2; Rom 1:1-6; Heb. 2:17-18; The Only True Savior; Athanasian Creed: 29-44; I. False Views Exposed II. Fully Human III. Fully Divine

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity along with that of the Incarnation are often called wondrous mysteries. The doctrine is so deep and profound that we end up saying- I cannot fully grasp this. God becoming man- the infinite taking on flesh- the eternal having a birthday! But it is also a doctrine of faith! Yes, we do not fully understand but that does not mean that we question it! Rather, we believe it as true since this is what the Bible reveals. As we read last week in art. 1- whoever desires to be saved must hold to this catholic faith. In other words, if you do not believe the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christology, then you are outside of the true church. So again art. 29 begins by reaffirming this truth- it is necessary for eternal salvation for one to believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. So as we return to the Athanasian Creed this morning, we see that not only is God one in essence and three in person; it is also true that Jesus is fully God and fully man. So we consider this theme: the incarnation of Jesus Christ is for the salvation and comfort of His people.

**I. False Views Exposed**

In our first point, we will start by exposing false views concerning the identity of Jesus. So what is the nature of Jesus? Is He God or is He man? The first heresy exposed is that of Arianism. Arius was an early church heretic who was often refuted and whose teaching was ultimately rejected. Arius taught that Jesus was like the Father- or of “like” nature to the Father. Jesus was not seen as the same or equal to the Father in regard to His divinity. So Jesus was not seen as fully God- Jesus was viewed as the first created being. Thus, in this view, Jesus had a beginning and was not of the same substance of God the Father. This teaching is carried on today in the Jehovah’s Witness and Morman teaching- Jesus is a god but not the same God as the Father. He is a lesser, created being in their view. The second, related teaching is that of Adoptionism. In this teaching, Jesus was just a normal man who was adopted or chosen by the Father. Usually seen in his baptism, Jesus become the Son of God as the Father adopted him and gave him power by the Holy Spirit. So Jesus became the son of God during his earthly ministry. These teaching are united in their thinking that Jesus is not fully God or not fully divine. On the other side, there was the teaching of Docetism. This heresy taught that Jesus was not fully a man. He only appeared or seemed to be human. Jesus was fully God, but his human nature was a phantom, like a vision or ghost. So the body that Jesus had was not a real or true human body. There were other heresies like Nestorian and Monophysite- these denied the distinct, two natures of Jesus and sought to blend them together or completely separate them. But overall, the main heresies concerning the person and nature of Jesus either denies his deity or denies his humanity. So we have to answer this question- why must Jesus be both fully God and fully man? This is the very question that LD 6 of the Catechism asks- but remember that our creed was written around 1000 years before the Catechism was written. So the early church needed to wrestle over this- so also we still need to embrace the truth concerning the incarnation.

**II. Fully Human**

Let’s move on to consider what the Bible teaches concerning the incarnation. Who is this man who died on the cross? What was He like- or whose nature did he share? Our text from Rom. 1:3 says that the son of God descended from David according the flesh. The incarnation of Jesus is linked to his lineage. In other words, the family tree of Jesus proves where He came from- and whose nature he shared. He is rightly called the son of David- as to his flesh- he came in the direct line of David. As Matthew 1 opens, Jesus is the son of David the son of Abraham. So the birth of Jesus happened in such a way as to prove his lineage from David- making him the rightful heir to the throne and the king of Israel. Added to that, we can find in Luke 3 that Jesus’ lineage is traced all the way back to Adam. In this way, the physical flesh that Jesus shared is one and the same with Adam. To make this clear, the body of Jesus he received was a true, human body. He took on this flesh from his mother, Mary. Or as John 1 states, He took on flesh and dwelt among us. The point of this taking on flesh is to make it clear; Jesus did not lose anything as we will see in our next point. The Son of God retained his deity even when he took on flesh. As our art. 35 puts it, the deity of Jesus was not turned into flesh but rather God took on humanity to himself! Now this is what we call a divine mystery! God took on flesh! The creator took on part of his creation! By the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus tabernacled with us- becoming one of us! Like us in every way as Heb. 2:17 says. To be qualified as a High Priest for men, He had to become a man! Everything that makes us human, Jesus received- or He took on what was necessary to be our savoir! Man had sinned- therefore Jesus has to be a man to pay the penalty for sin!

Further proof of His humanity could be found in what He experienced- He hungered, thirsted, and even wept. He was tempted as we are, exposed to pain and trials, even experiencing death! These are things that only a man can do. He has a human body and soul- so that in his body and soul he would suffer as one of us! He is not ashamed to call us brothers- because He really is our brother! He made this point to Thomas in John 20- behold my hands, my feet, my side! Do not doubt- only believe! Interestingly, after beholding the body of Jesus Thomas proclaimed- my Lord and my God! We can pause for a moment of application here- why is it so important that Jesus has a body like you? That He suffered- that He experienced life as you do? Well, the application given in our reading from Heb. 2:17 says that his humanity is what enables him to be merciful! Since He too suffered and was tempted, He knows how to best help those who are being tempted! In other words, his humanity is what makes him the best High Priest! Compassionate and merciful- because He has been where you are, and He has endured what you are enduring! He knows your burdens and has carried your troubles! To take this a step further, some of the members of our church have carried great burdens and troubles this past week. What a privilege it is to pray to Jesus knowing that He is merciful and compassionate! He too knows what it is like to weep- to have sorrow and pain! And because of this, He knows how to best help! As a compassionate friend, He gives the grace, comfort, and Spirit that we need in our times of weakness and pain!

**III. Fully Divine**

Now that we have considered the proof and benefit of the incarnation, in our last point we can briefly summarize how we know that Jesus is and remains God. At issue is what is called the “Hypostatic Union.” How can Jesus be fully God and fully man? Jesus is one person and yet He has two natures. Consider article 30- our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man equally. And again in article 32- completely God and completely man. 100% God and 100% man and yet only one person. Jesus does not have a split personality- He is one person. So Jesus is not only fully man, He is and remains fully God. We saw this last week so we can be brief. We know that Jesus is God because He is called God in John 1- the Word was with God and the Word was God. Distinct from the Father- and yet He is true God. Or consider the “I Am” statements that Jesus makes in the gospel of John. He takes on the divine, covenantal name of God when speaking to the Pharisees. We can also consider the work that Jesus performs. His power proves His identity. Jesus is able to forgive sins, raise the dead, heal the lame and cast out demons. Our passage from Rom. 1:4 says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power by His resurrection. Jesus needs to be God- because only God has the power to save! Only He can forgive sins that are committed against His holiness! Only the Lord of Life can grant us the power of indestructible life. In other words, if Jesus was not God, he could not save us to the uttermost! His divinity enables him to bear the weight of wrath which we could not. Particularly today as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. The body that was broken and the blood that was shed on the cross was human. It was our flesh that died. But by the power of His divinity, He was able to conquer death and rise again victoriously! He needed to be infinite so that He could satisfy our infinite death! Being God, the death of Jesus is of infinite worth and value! In this way He secured the complete forgiveness of our all our sins!

As we close, Jesus must be one with us and yet more than just a man! Very God and very man. Or as Art. 32 puts it- completely God and completely man. Titus 2:13 calls Jesus our great God and Savior! The incarnation of Jesus Christ is for the salvation and comfort of His people. This is true faith- Jesus is both God and man! We believe this firmly and faithfully; and those who would be saved must believe this as true.