

LD 14; John 1:14-18; Luke 1:26-38; The Word Became Flesh I. The Son's Nature II. The Spirit's Work III. The Believer's Benefit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when did you start working? When did you have your first job? I like to tease my parents when I tell them that I was doing chores as soon as I could walk- but most of us got our first real job when we were in our teens. But the question before us this morning is this- when did Jesus begin His work as our mediator? Today as we continue through the HC we are moving from the titles and names of Jesus to begin our focus on His work. And we are literally starting at the beginning of His earthly life- Jesus began His work as our mediator when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. His work began in the womb. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ was conceived so that He might secure our complete salvation.

### **I. The Son's Nature**

In our first point we consider the natures of the Son of God. Here we confess that the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity is and remains true and eternal God. So Jesus remains fully God- this aspect does not change. But without losing anything that made Him God, Jesus added something to Himself. He became something that He was not before- without taking away or losing what He already was. He added human flesh to His Divine nature. We call this the hypostatic union- Jesus is fully God and fully man at the same time without losing any trait or characteristic! 100% percent each- two nature, and yet He remains one person. Our reading from John 1:14 says that Jesus become flesh. Our HC says that He took on our flesh- or took to Himself a truly human nature. The older translation of this QA says that Jesus accepted- or that he received. But we need to keep in mind here that Jesus is not passive in all this. We will consider the HS and His work in the next point, but the process of the incarnation is not one that was imposed upon Jesus without His choice. Rather, Jesus took to Himself. Or He placed upon Himself this human nature. He clothed himself with our very flesh. As Jesus said in Heb. 10, behold I have come to do your will. And a body you have prepared for me. So there is no conflict here- the Son

and the Spirit together are at work. In this work- in His incarnation- Jesus becomes one with us and like us in every way. Whatever makes us man- whatever is necessary to be human being- was taken on by Jesus. So that He truly is flesh of our flesh- or our flesh and bone. He becomes a member of the human race, like us in every way, except for sin as Heb. 2:17 says. The human nature that Jesus took on was taken directly from the flesh and blood of Mary. And yet, the flesh of Jesus was not polluted by sin. Yes, Jesus would take on a limited- finite and human flesh. But He would remain free from sin and the stain of transgression would not touch him. Being one of us, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. So that during His life He would experience the pain and suffering- the trials and temptations that we endure He would endure. And yet He would not fall into sin or be polluted in any way. And since He was born in the line of Mary- or taking from the flesh of Mary His human nature- Jesus would then be born in the correct and necessary lineage. The two lineages of Jesus given- one genealogy given in Matthew and the other in Luke- make it clear which line this Christ-child would come from. He would be of the house and lineage of Joseph- of David – of Seth- of Adam. Meaning that He is a true man in the line of Adam. But He would also be the covenantal line of Mary- of David- of Abraham. In this way His physical descent could be traced to David and Abraham- fulfilling the promises made to the patriarchs. Specifically- in keeping with Genesis 22- through the seed of Abraham- meaning Jesus- would all the nations be blessed. And to fulfill the promise made to David in II Sam. 7- one of the sons of David would sit on his throne and rule over an everlasting kingdom. In other words, the necessary requirements would be kept- the promises fulfilled- and the seed of the woman who was foretold in Gen. 3- would come forth who would crush the head of the serpent. So the eternal Son of God becomes the Son of Man being born of Mary's womb.

## **II. The Spirit's Work**

But that brings up a pressing question- how can this be? Even as Mary asks in our passage from Luke 1- how can I – a virgin- give birth to a Son? The answer is found in the operation of the Holy Spirit. The

Spirit will overshadow you as Luke 1:35 says- His power will be at work within you. Now this overshadowing work of the Spirit brings to mind what we find in Genesis 1 where the Spirit hovered over the face of the water. It is the work of the Spirit to bring life where life was once absent. To bring order and structure- to make a house if you will out of the created substance. So the Spirit takes from the womb of Mary and weaves a body- preparing the body for Jesus. Now this is a divine mystery- in many ways- the presence of the Spirit shields from prying eyes exactly how He does it! There is a covering or shade given by the Spirit- as His secret and inner work is done. The conception of the Christ within the womb of Mary is not a trifling thing. Nor is it a work ever performed again. It was one time, special and sacred event. His work of bringing a body forth for Jesus was not attained by the ordinary, human means. In other words, there was no male seed involved. Mary was a virgin- and she would remain a virgin until the Christ child was born as Matthew 1:25 makes clear. Now we need to keep this miracle in mind- the miraculous nature of Jesus' birth is not a light thing! By way of the Holy Spirit's work, Jesus was prepared a body that would be free from sin and stain. As we find in Heb. 4:15- we have a high priest who can sympathize with us in our weakness because Jesus has been tempted as we are, and yet without sin. So Jesus was able to be tempted in the flesh because He has a human nature that can be tempted- and yet He does not have or commit any sin. The Spirit was active in the ministry of Jesus from the beginning- even in the forming of a body for Him! So everything that was necessary for Jesus to receive so that He would be a true man was here provided. That includes not only a physical body, but also a human soul as well. Jesus has a human soul- a spirit that can be yielded up when He died on the cross. So every aspect of our humanity is here covered by the conception of Jesus in the womb. And although Jesus would be called the son of Joseph, He would not have a true, earthly, biological father as such. This fact does not make him less of a man- He is still true and fully human. However, Joseph is more like his adopted or step father. One who has no biological tie with Jesus- and

yet would raise him as his own. As Jesus would be called the son of Joseph- or the carpenter's son in Matthew 13.

### III. The Believer's Benefit

Now that we have considered the two natures of Jesus Christ, in our final point we consider the benefit of this doctrine. As you may have noticed, the catechism often focusses on the great sources of comfort. In many QA you will find a question which asks- how does this truth benefit us? So today we ask- how does the virgin birth and miraculous conception of Jesus by the Spirit benefit us? Well, the benefit is rooted in His identity in work. Being born as a man, Jesus is uniquely qualified to be our mediator. He is one with us and one with God. Like us in every way as Heb. 4 says- and yet free from sin which would disqualify Him from service. So what is necessary is provided- and what would disqualify Him is absent. And when we go through suffering and temptation, we have a compassionate high priest. Jesus can truly say- I know what it is like to be tempted! I know what it is like the hunger- I know what it is like to thirst! I know what it is like to cry tears at the grave of a loved one! I know what it is like to be mistreated, abused, rejected and hated by others. Jesus can say- I know your pain- I have carried your burdens- I know your struggles. Come to me and I will be sympathetic- but more than that- I will be merciful! Sharing our flesh means that Jesus also knows what we need! He knows that we need strength and encouragement! He knows when we need a way out of temptation- and He will provide it! He knows that we need the Holy Spirit for comfort and peace- and He will provide Him! That is the good news- the benefit of having a high priest who is like us! Who has an intimate knowledge of our nature. So Jesus is our perfect, compassionate and merciful High Priest. But He is also our complete mediator. Notice that QA 36 says- Jesus covers my sin with His innocent and perfect holiness. And this sin was mine since I was conceived. The fact is, the parts that Jesus took to Himself are the same parts of us that He is able to save. If Jesus becomes a man later in life- or if He is adopted by the Father at His baptism- that would mean that there was a time when Jesus was not our mediator. But praise God-

Jesus was already our mediator in the womb! That means that we are- in every aspect of our life- covered! Since we were sinful already in the womb- sinful from the time our mothers conceived us as Psalm 51 says- it is necessary for Jesus to be perfect and holy from the time He was conceived in Mary's womb. Where we failed- and when we were sinners- is the same time and place that Jesus must be perfect and remain holy! There is a beautiful reminder of this covering in QA 36. Remember that when Adam and Eve sinned- they knew that they were naked- and they became ashamed. They had lost their innocence and they were now guilty- and they tried to cover their shame on their own. But now we find that Jesus covers our shame and sin with His innocence and holiness! We could say- His active and passive obedience! Free from breaking the Law- and perfectly obeying God's commandments! So the good news is- what was needed for us to be pardoned, forgiven and reconciled has been secured by the God-man; Jesus Christ!

To conclude, although we are a few weeks away from Christmas yet, the Virgin Birth is good news for any time of the year! Jesus Christ was conceived so that He might secure our complete salvation. Remember that there is good news of great joy for all the people- because a Savior has been born to you! A Savior who was born- conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. This is the glory of the incarnation!