

The Augsburg Confession 4

Lesson Four: Articles III and XXI God's Son—Savior and Intercessor

Introduction

One of the questions that occupied the Christian church for the first three centuries after Jesus' resurrection is: "Who is Jesus?" We know from Jesus' teaching and resurrection that he is the Son of God. How can Jesus be both God and man in one person? Did Jesus' divinity come and go at various points during his earthly life and ministry? Is Jesus still a human being now, in heaven at the right hand of God the Father?

To give you the opportunity to wrestle with this issue, consider and answer the following question:

- Is it correct to refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the "mother of God"?

Article III: The Son of God

¹ It is also taught among us that God the Son became man, born of the virgin Mary, ² and that the two natures, divine and human, are so inseparably united in one person that there is one Christ, true God and true man, who was truly born, suffered, was crucified, died, ³ and was buried in order to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins and to propitiate God's wrath. ⁴ The same Christ also descended into hell, truly rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, and sits on the right

hand of God, that he may eternally rule and have dominion over all creatures, that through the Holy Spirit he may sanctify, purify, strengthen, and comfort all who believe in him, ⁵ that he may bestow on them life and every grace and blessing, and that he may protect and defend them against the devil and against sin. ⁶ The same Lord Christ will return openly to judge the living and the dead, as stated in the Apostles' Creed.

Terms to know:

- **Christology** - The study of the person and nature of Christ.
- **Soteriology** - The study of God's plan of salvation through Jesus.
- **Nestorianism** - The false teaching of Nestorius (AD 386-450) that the divine and the human attributes have no communication with each other and remain separate and distinct. Nestorius' teaching has been compared to two pieces of wood that are glued together, neither of which influences the other. Nestorius' teaching was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in AD 431.
- **Personal union** - Also called the **hypostatic union**, the biblical doctrine that the divine nature and the human nature are united in one person (*hypostasis*), who is Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

Outline of Article III: The Son of God

- I. The two natures of Christ.
 - A. The eternal Son of God (Logos) assumed the human nature. **John 1:14; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 2:14.**
 1. A human being is not being made into the Son of God (Nestorius spoke against the expression "*theotokos*" but used "*Christotokos*.")
 2. The eternal Word took on human nature. (There are not two persons in Christ. The person of the Son of God became flesh.)
 3. The incarnation came about by his birth of a virgin. Jesus was conceived and born without sin. **Matthew 1:20-23; Luke 1:31-35; Galatians 4:4,5.**

B. Two natures in one person.

1. The two natures are: True man, **1 Timothy 2:5**; and true God, **Romans 9:5**.
2. In a single person. Undivided, inseparable. From his conception on, we cannot divide the person of Christ.
3. The two nature are inseparably joined but ought not be confused or mixed.

II. Jesus' redemptive work.

A. Christ's humiliation. **Philippians 2:5-8**.

1. As "true God and true man." Jesus is the Word incarnate.
2. Steps: Conception, birth, suffering, crucifixion, death, burial. Jesus did not always and did not fully make use of his divine attributes, but he never relinquished them or was emptied of them.

B. For the purpose of reconciling the Father to us.

1. The Father's wrath against sin is appeased (not that the sinners receive the power to change their attitude toward God). Difference between "Christ in us" and "Christ for us." **2 Corinthians 5:18, 19**.
2. This is accomplished through a sacrifice. **Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:26**.
3. This sacrifice atones for all sin: original sin and actual sins. **John 1:29**.

Now that we've discussed who Jesus is and what he did for our salvation, give some thought to the following question:

- Is it correct to say, "God died on the cross at Calvary"?

What was the role of sacrifices in the Old Testament?

List the six steps of Jesus' humiliation:

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III. The reign of the exalted Messiah.

A. The four steps in his exaltation, and what they mean for you. **Philippians 2:9-11**.

1. Descent into hell. **1 Peter 3:18-20; Colossians 2:15**.
2. Resurrection. **1 Corinthians 15:4; 12-20; Romans 4:25**.
3. Ascension. **Acts 1:7-12; Luke 24:51**.
4. Sitting at the right hand of God. (Not to be understood locally, as Zwingli did in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper).

B. Jesus rules over the Church.

1. He has dominion over the entire world. **Ephesians 1:20-23**.
2. He sends his Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers. John 16:7; Acts 1:4-8; 2:32f.
 - a. To rule, comfort, and quicken the believers. Romans 8:14-17.
 - b. To defend believers against the devil and the power of sin. Galatians 5:16; 1 Peter 1:5.

IV. Jesus' return to judgment as the conclusion of his work. Acts 1:10-11; **John 5:22-27**; Luke 21:28.

List the four steps of Jesus' exaltation:

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Why is it incorrect to say, "Jesus humbled himself by becoming a human being"?

If Jesus' becoming a human being is not his humiliation in and of itself, then in what did Jesus' humiliation consist?

On Judgment Day Jesus will welcome the righteous into his heavenly kingdom, and he will condemn the wicked to eternal fire. What is your view of Judgment Day? When you think of Judgment Day, what emotions come to you?

Article XXI: Of the Worship of the Saints

¹ It is also taught among us that saints should be kept in remembrance so that our faith may be strengthened when we see what grace they received and how they were sustained by faith. Moreover, their good works are to be an example for us, each of us in his own calling.

² However, it cannot be proved from the Scriptures that we are to invoke saints or seek help from them. ³ Moreover, according to the Scriptures, the highest form of divine service is sincerely to seek and call upon this same Jesus Christ in every time of need. ⁴ "If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Outline of Article XXI: Of the Worship of the Saints

- I. It is a good and wholesome thing to remember the saints who have gone before us.
 - A. That we may follow their faith. Hebrews 11
 - B. That we may follow their example. **Romans 15:4**.
- II. The Scripture does not teach the invocation of the saints.
 - A. We are not to ask help of the saints. (There is no example, no promise, and no command from Scripture.)
 - B. Christ Jesus is our only Mediator. **1 Timothy 2:5**; Romans 8:34

What would prompt people to call upon saints to intercede for them before God?

How did the invocation of the saints get started in the church?

Why is invocation of the saints wrong? Why is it unnecessary?