

**Christ as God** Christmas Eve December 24, 2005 Text: LSC #119

This year our theme for Advent and Christmas has been *Christ as God/man, Prophet, Priest and King*. Over the past Wednesday evenings we have talked about Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King. This evening we will look at Jesus as true God. In order to help us with this theme we go back to our catechism and under the question, “How do you know that Jesus Christ is true God?” (Question number 119) we have the answer, “Because the Scriptures clearly call Him God, teaching the following: A. Jesus has divine names. John 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 1 John 5:20; Note: These names are not mere honorary titles but tell exactly who Jesus is, and they can be true only of God. B. Jesus possesses divine attributes (qualities or characteristics). He is 1. eternal (without beginning and without end); John 1:1-2; 2. unchangeable; Heb. 13:8; 3. almighty (omnipotent); Matt. 28:18; 4. all-knowing (omniscient); John 21:17; 5. present everywhere (omnipresent). Matt. 28:20; Bible narratives: Miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:4-6; John 21:6). Jesus knows the name and character of Nathanael (John 1:48). Jesus and the woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:17-18). Note: See also Matt. 21:1-7; 26:20-25; Luke 18:31-33; 22:8-13. C. Jesus does divine works (which only God can do). 1. He forgives. Matt. 9:6; 2. He created. John 1:3; 3. He will judge. John 5:27; He preserves. Heb. 1:3; Bible narratives: At the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus revealed His glory by turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). He rebuked the storm (Luke 8:22-25). He healed the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8). He called Lazarus back to life (John 11:38-44). He rose from the dead (Matt. 28:6-7). D. Jesus receives divine honor and glory. John 5:22-23; Heb. 1:6; Note: See Phil. 2:10; Rev. 5:12-13.”

So, let us break down what we have just heard. We know that Jesus is truly God because He has divine names, that is Godly names. When Thomas saw Jesus alive after His death and resurrection according to John, “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28). Even the apostle Paul declares, “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:5 (ESV)). Now, these are just a couple passages, I will not read but a couple for each instance. For more passages I will refer you to your own catechism and Bible.

Not only does Jesus have divine names, He also possesses divine qualities. Just as God is eternal, so Jesus is eternal. Again, the Gospel writer John declares, “<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). Just as God is unchangeable, so Jesus is unchangeable. The writer to the Hebrews says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Not only does Jesus have divine names and possesses divine qualities, He also does divine works, in other words, He does miracles. The Pharisees believed that only God could forgive sins and so when Jesus declared that someone was forgiven they believed He was blaspheming. The Pharisees also believed only God could do miracles, so to prove He was God and could forgive sins, Jesus also did miracles. Remember the healing the paralytic? Jesus first forgave the man his sins, to which the Pharisees were upset believing that Jesus was blaspheming. Jesus addressed the Pharisees and said, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he then said to the paralytic—‘Rise, pick up your bed and go home’” (Matt. 9:6). So, according to the logic of the Pharisees, only God could forgive sins and only God could perform miracles, Jesus then performed a miracle to prove He was God and to prove the man’s sins were forgiven. And of course, instead of being convinced, all the Pharisees could think about was that if Jesus kept doing these things then more people would believe in Him and they would lose their positions of power, not that Jesus proved He was the Savior.

The Gospel writer John reminds us that Jesus is God and that He was at the creation of the

world. He says, "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). A little later he tells us that Jesus will judge as God, "And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man" (John 5:27). As God, not only was Jesus there at creation, not only will He be there at the end, on Judgement day, He is also with us each and every day taking care of us. The writer of the Hebrews tells us, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

And finally, not only does Jesus have divine names and possesses divine qualities, not only does He do divine works, in other words, He does miracles, but Jesus also, as God, receives divine honor and glory. Again, the Gospel writer John says, "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (John 5:22-23). And the writer to the Hebrews tells us, "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship Him'" (Heb. 1:6).

What does all this mean? This means that we can be certain that Jesus is who the Word of God says He is, that is He is truly God. Jesus shows Himself time and again to be God. And, although He is God, He did not always nor fully use His divine powers. Jesus did not raise everyone from the dead while He was here on this earth. Jesus did not heal everyone while He was here on this earth. He did not cast out every demon, nor did He feed the whole world. He did use His divine abilities to some degree. He did heal some, as only God can heal. He did raise some from the dead, as only God can do. He did cast out some demons, as only God can do. He even showed His power over all creation, over the storm and the sea, as He calmed the stormy sea. Time and again Jesus showed Himself to be God. He did this through the signs, wonders and miracles He performed.

And why is it important that Jesus is God? Jesus had to be God in order to be perfect. Because we human beings are sinners, because we are conceived and born in sin, we pass that sin on from one generation to the next generation. Because we are infected with this thing we call original sin, there is no way for any one human being to be born without sin. And unless one is without sin, then he cannot pay for another's sin since he owes for his own sin. And really, we cannot even pay for our own sins because the price is too high, namely, eternal spiritual death. And so, Jesus had to be without sin and to be without sin He had to be conceived by God and that He was. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed.

This evening we confess with the Word of God, the Bible, that Jesus is truly God and that He had to be truly God. Tomorrow morning we will confess that Jesus is truly human and that He had to be truly human.

This evening as we gather to celebrate the birth of the Messiah, the Savior of the world we also celebrate that Jesus is truly divine and we bear witness of His divinity. During the season of Advent we hear the stories of the angels getting everything ready first, announcing to Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth will give birth to the forerunner of the Messiah. Next, we hear the announcement of the angel to the young virgin, Mary, that she has been chosen by God to be the mother of God Himself. Then, we hear the angel tell Joseph that it is okay to take Mary as his wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. And now, this evening we bear witness as we hear the angels announce to the shepherds that the Savior of the world has been born in Bethlehem. And we hear the angel chorus, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth." Christ the

Savior is born. Yes, now we do begin our Christmas celebration and we celebrate, not just tonight, not just tomorrow, but we celebrate for twelve days!

We celebrate that God has remembered His promises. He has remembered His people. He has taken care of all that needs to be taken care of, our sins and our forgiveness. Yes, this evening we begin our Christmas celebration and as we celebrate we continue to look to the cross. As it was ever before Jesus while He was here on this earth, so it is ever before us as an accomplished action, for us, for our forgiveness, to bring us back into a right relationship with our Lord who does all and gives all. To Him be the glory. For Jesus' sake. Amen.