



Formula of Concord Session Seven: The Person of Christ & Descent into Hell

- How are we to understand who Christ was when on this earth? How about now?
- What difference does it make?

Person of Christ: Status

The objection was raised against [Luther] by the Zwinglians that, if Christ's body were present at the same time in heaven and on earth in the Holy Supper, it could be no real, true human body. For such majesty was said to be peculiar to God alone. They said Christ's body was not capable of it.... They said that nothing should be credited to the human nature in the person of Christ that is above or contrary to its natural, essential property (SD VIII.2-4, p.581)

- At first glance, is this a very important distinction/argument? Why or why not?

Person of Christ: Affirmative and Negative Statements

We believe, teach, and confess that God's Son from eternity has been a particular, distinct, entire, divine person. Yet He is true, essential, perfect God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, he received also the human nature into the unity of his person.

We believe, teach and confess that now, in this one undivided person of Christ, there are two distinct natures: the divine, which is from eternity, and the human, which in time was received into the unity of the person of God's Son.

We believe, teach, and confess also that both natures mentioned remain unmingled and undestroyed in their nature and essence. (SD VIII.6-8, p.582-3)

- **Read and discuss:** Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:15-19

The properties of the divine nature are these: to be almighty, eternal, infinite, and to be everywhere present... to know everything, and so on. These never become properties of the human nature.

The properties of the human nature are to be a bodily creature, to be flesh and blood, to be finite and physically limited, to suffer, to die, to ascend and descend, to move from one place to another, to suffer hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and the like. These never become properties of the divine nature.

The two natures are united personally... this union is not the kind of joining together that prevents either nature from having anything in common with the other personally. It is not like when two boards are glued together, where neither gives anything to the other or takes anything from the other...

From this personal union, the highest and indescribable communion results. There flows everything human that is said and believed about God, and everything divine that is said and believed about the man Christ... God is man and man is God... Mary conceived and bore not merely a man and no more, but God's true Son... it was not a mere man who suffered, died, was buried, descended into



hell, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and was raised to God's majesty and almighty power for us... God's Son truly suffered for us... the Son of Man really is exalted. (Ep VIII.7-10, p.492)

- **Read and discuss:** Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 2:8; Hebrews 2:17

Christ always had this majesty according to the personal union. Yet He abstained from using it in the state of his humiliation, and because of this He truly increased in all wisdom and favor with God and men... Then, after His resurrection, He entirely laid aside the form of a servant, but not the human nature, and was established in the full use, manifestation, and declaration of the divine majesty... So now not just as God, but also as man He knows all things and can do all things.(Ep VIII.16, p.493)

Christ may give His true body and blood in the Holy Supper, as one who is present – and it is very easy for Him to do so. (Ep VIII.17 p.493)

- **Read and discuss:** Luke 2:52; Philippians 2:5-11

Next to the article of the Holy Trinity, this is the greatest mystery in heaven and earth. (SD VIII.33, p.587)

He has revealed this in His Word, as much as is needful for us to know about it in this life. We must simply believe everything for which we have clear, certain testimonies in the Scriptures in this matter... We admonish all Christians not to arrogantly indulge their reason in crafty investigations about such mysteries. With the beloved apostles, they should simply believe. They should close the eyes of their reason and bring their understanding into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and rejoice without ceasing in the fact that our flesh and blood is placed so high at the right hand of God's majesty and almighty power. In this way we will certainly find constant consolation in every difficulty and remain well guarded against deadly error. (SD VII.33,53,96 pp.587-596)

- **Read and discuss:** 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Corinthians 10:5

The Descent into Hell

We simply believe that the entire person (God and man) descended into hell after the burial, conquered the devil, destroyed hell's power, and took from the devil all his might. We should not, however, trouble ourselves with high and difficult thoughts about how this happened. With our reason and our five senses this article can be understood as little as the preceding one about how Christ is placed at the right hand of God's almighty power and majesty. We are simply to believe it and cling to the Word. So we hold to the substance and consolation that neither hell nor the devil can take captive or injure us and all who believe in Christ. (SD IX.1-3, p.596-7)

- **Read and DON'T discuss ☺:** 1 Peter 3:18-20