

Belgic Confession Chapter 18 – Necessity of the Nativity

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Christmas, as the West celebrates it, with Christmas trees, Santa Claus, and fruit cakes, is not necessary. But the nativity, the account of Christ's birth, is so important to your survival that you could not be saved without it. You will hear from God's Word about the Necessity of the Nativity.

Our headings are:

The Incarnation: Prophecies

The Incarnation: Principles

The Incarnation: Profanations

Our goals are: **That you will see the extent of Christ's work for you, and that you will then be willing to humble yourself in his service.**

Article 18: The Incarnation: So then we confess that God **fulfilled the promise made to the early fathers and mothers** by the mouth of the holy prophets when sending the only and eternal Son of God into the world at the time appointed. The Son took the **"form of a slave"** and was made "in human form," truly assuming **a real human nature**, with all its weaknesses, **except for sin**; being conceived in the womb of the **blessed virgin Mary** by the power of the Holy Spirit, without male participation. And Christ not only assumed human nature as far as the body is concerned but also a real human soul, in order to be a real human being. **For since the soul had been lost as well as the body, Christ had to assume them both to save them both together.** Therefore we confess, (against the heresy of the Anabaptists who denied that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother) that Christ shared the very flesh and blood of children, being the "fruit of the loins" of David "according to the flesh," "descended from David according to the flesh"; the "fruit of the womb" of the virgin Mary, "born of a woman"; the "seed of David"; the "root of Jesse"; "descended from Judah," having descended from the Jews according to the flesh; descended from Abraham, having assumed descent from Abraham and Sara, and made "like his brothers and sisters," yet without sin. In this way Christ is truly our Immanuel—that is: "God with us."

The Incarnation: Prophecies

1. Consider examples of prophecies of Jesus' coming into the world as a true human being from other human beings.

a. Let's start from the beginning.

Genesis 3:15 - And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed...

What is this verse often called? This is the proto-evangelium.

b. God made the same promise to the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.

Genesis 22: 18 -"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...

c. Isaiah pronounced the sign of the Lord to King Ahaz and to Israel as a whole.

Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: **Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son**, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6 **For unto us a Child is born**, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.

d. Jeremiah in Jeremiah 23:6; Daniel in Daniel 7:13; Micah in Micah 5:2; Zechariah in Zechariah 13:7; and Malachi in Malachi 3:1. These all speak to the fact that Jesus would be incarnated.

2. The New Testament confirmed that these prophecies were about Jesus. Look at a few of examples.

a. Simeon was a man known for his eminence and piety. Simeon was probably the son of the Jewish scholar Hillel, and was the first one who was called Rabban – a special scholarly title. Simeon was not an uneducated man who could easily be fooled by superstitions or customs. He was a scholar.

Luke 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was **Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation** of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And **it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit** that he would not see death before he had seen **the Lord's Christ**.

b. Before Jesus was born Herod asked the Jewish scholars and they confirmed details about Messiah from the Old Testament.

Matthew 2:4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them **where the Christ was to be born**.⁵ So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler...'"

c. Apostle Paul confirmed that Jesus was the "Seed" of Abraham.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, **"And to your Seed," who is Christ**. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

d. Remember some of the other language regarding Jesus: "Fruit of the loins of David" according to the flesh, "born of the seed of David" according to the flesh, "the seed of David," "born of a woman," "a shoot from the root of Jesse," "the offspring of Judah," having descended from the Jews according to the flesh, and "from the seed of Abraham"—for he "assumed Abraham's seed."

The Incarnation: Principles

1. Jesus had to be born fully man, with a real body and a reasonable human soul to be the "suffering servant" who would die for man's sins. He did not have a sinful body, but he had a weak body. (How humiliated he was!) God's law said that if man sinned, man had to die. Animal

sacrifices were not sufficient.

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, **God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh**, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the **righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled** in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Philippian 2:7 but made **Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Do you know how a rich father feels who has to go to jail to bail his son out for a petty theft?

He has to swallow his pride. While he knows that he has been guilty of other things also, he swallows his pride and does what he needs to do to free his son. It is humiliating. Imagine how humiliating it was for the Jesus who never did anything wrong to have to give up much of his glory (take a low reputation) to become man to save his bride who **deliberately walked away from him and committed spiritual adultery**.

2. Regarding his body:

a. Jesus' family line is listed in Matthew and Luke.

b. Jesus was the oldest of Mary's many children. Christ's human nature was from Mary, a virgin. Christ was real flesh and real blood. Christ had appeared before (pre-incarnate form) but never from going through process of taking human flesh from another human. He miraculously appeared to Adam in the Garden in the cool of the day, to Abraham in his tent in the heat of the day, to Moses on the mountain and in the burning bush, to the 3 Hebrew boys in the fire, etc. But, when the time was right, he took on a full human nature. He had to have a fully human nature to take on the full responsibilities of the covenant.

Matthew 1:24...she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Galatians 4:4- But when the fullness of the time had come, **God sent forth His Son, born of a woman**, born under the law,

c. Jesus was seen, felt, and touched by those around him. He was like his brothers. He was circumcised.

John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we **beheld His glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

d. Jesus had to obey and suffer in our nature. He had to become your scapegoat.

Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was **in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

Yes, the love letters were not enough. Jesus had to make a personal appearance.

1John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ...

Jesus showed other evidence of humanity. Briefly:

e. He grew tired – especially after long hours of working.

Mark 4:38 - But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

f. He was hungry.

Matthew 4:2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

g. He was thirsty.

John 4: 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

h. He was sad and disappointed especially when he disciples were stubborn.

Mark 3:5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts

i. He cried when Lazarus died. (John 11) He would have cried if he were hurt as a child.

3. Regarding his human soul...Jesus grew in wisdom and stature.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

The Incarnation: Profanations

1. Anabaptists– which include some Baptists today, deny that Christ took on real human flesh of his mother. Instead, they believe that the human flesh was miraculously created. Some other people believe that Jesus was really purely human and others believe he was purely a ghost... a spiritual being only.

2. Why are these views problematic?

a. If you believe that Jesus did not take on human flesh from his mother, then he is not a natural descendant of Adam and therefore not fit to die for your sins. A real man sinned; a real man had to die.

b. If Jesus were fully human only and not fully God also, then he would not have had the power to release the whole world from sin. One ordinary man could only die for one ordinary man. If Christ were only fully human, then the whole world would still be their sins. But praise God he is not only human but God also.

c. If Jesus were only a spirit and not fully man, then he would not be either fully God or fully man. He would not be fit to redeem man, Jesus had to man and feel the pain of betrayal) and nails to be fit to die for the world. Jesus had to be God to bear the immense weight of man's wickedness.

Conclusion:

Jesus' coming was prophesied and so specific that it **leaves man without doubt as to who he would be.** Jesus **taking on a human body and a reasonable soul was provable and necessary.** If he were not fully human, he would not be fit to die on the cross as a substitute for man.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Seeing the humiliation and suffering of Jesus in your nature for you (He paid the debt he did not owe, you owed the debt you could not pay.), how then shall you respond? You respond in service. **You serve because you are saved; you don't serve in order to be saved – which is liberal "imitation" Gospel!**

2. You must respond with humility. *Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

3. But humility is not just a state of mind; it is seen! You show your humility by how you serve the Lord – the zeal you have for his worship. You show your humility by how you serve each other!

Finally, if you are not a Christian, I have a message from God for you: Jesus came to die for sinners...all kinds of sinners. It doesn't matter how bad you are! It doesn't matter how embarrassing your sins have been. He came and lived and died for the sins of the world. You can get him to count your sins as his sins (and set you free) if you only ask him with sincerity of heart.