

Study of the Augsburg Confession

Part 3: The Son of God (Articles 3, 17)

Augsburg Confession Article III (3)

Our churches teach that the Son of God (also named the Word, John 1:14) became a human and was born from the Virgin Mary. The divine nature of Jesus and the human nature of Jesus are joined in one person. Jesus is fully God and fully human and was born from the Virgin Mary, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. He did this to be a sacrifice to satisfy God's anger against sin. His sacrifice forgives the sin we are born with (original sin) and the sins we do (actual sin).

After being crucified and dying, Jesus went down to hell and truly rose alive three days later. Then He went up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. There He began to rule over all creatures. His rule over all creatures will continue forever. He makes everyone who believes in Him holy by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and make them alive. Everyone who believes in Him, He defends them from the devil and the power of sin.

This same Christ will come again publicly to judge the living and the dead, the same as it says in the Apostle's Creed.

Augsburg Confession Article XVII (17)

Our churches teach that at the end of the world Christ will appear to judge the world and raise all the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:2). He will give eternal life and joy to Christians, the people He chose. But He will send ungodly people and demons to eternal suffering (Matthew 25:31-46).

Our churches disagree with the people called Anabaptists who believe that the suffering of ungodly people and demons will end, and they will leave Hell after a certain time.

We also disagree with everyone who says that Christians will control all the governments of the world before the resurrection of the dead.

Explanation

Who is Jesus Christ? Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). So if we will belong to God, if we will have salvation, we must rightly understand who Jesus is.

The church teaches that Jesus has two natures united in one person. What does that mean?

One person – Jesus Christ.

Two natures – Jesus is both true God and true man.

The Son of God is part of the Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Son of God has always been God. The Father didn't create the Son. Several groups today say that Jesus is not true God – Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Unitarians.

The Son of God became human when the Holy Spirit made the Virgin Mary become pregnant. The Son of God became true man, with flesh and blood, a human soul and a human will. He was like us in every way, except that He didn't sin.

In Jesus, true God and true man were completely united. In the early church, and also some today, people said Jesus was not true God and true man. Some said He was God, but not man. Other people said He was man, but not God. We reject those false teachings.

Article 3 also describes Jesus' work. The Apostles' Creed divides His work into His humiliation and exaltation.

Humiliation – Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born from the virgin Mary, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried.

Exaltation – Jesus went down into hell (to announce His victory), rose alive from the dead, went up into heaven, sits in power at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again to judge all people living and dead.

Article 17 explains more about Jesus coming to judge at the end of the world. We believe the Bible's clear teaching that when Jesus comes, all people will rise alive. All people who trust Jesus will go to heaven to live with Him in peace and joy forever. All unbelievers and demons will go to hell where they will suffer forever.

There are some churches that don't believe this. Some churches teach that all people will go to heaven, no matter what they believe. Other churches teach that believers go to heaven, but unbelievers don't go to heaven or hell. They are annihilated, which means their souls are completely gone; they are no longer alive. Other churches say unbelievers go to hell for a while, then they can go to heaven. The Lutheran Church rejects all these false teachings.

Churches have different teachings about the end of the world. Millennialism is the teaching that Christ will rule on earth for 1000 years. That will be a time of glory, peace, and blessing. The Lutheran Church rejects this teaching. Jesus said that He didn't come to make a kingdom on earth (John 18:36). Jesus sits in power and authority with the Father and He rules His church on earth. We will see His kingdom when He comes again on the last day.

For more, see these pages online.

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article3.html>

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article17.html>

Questions

1. What Bible stories or verses show that Jesus is true God?
2. What Bible stories or verses show that Jesus is true man?
3. Why must Jesus be both God and man?

4. Use Article 3 and the Apostles' Creed to give a detailed answer to this question. What did Christ do to save you?
5. According to some Christians (not Lutherans), what is the Millennium?
6. Someone says they think Jesus was a good man who taught much about God. What is wrong with that belief? What can you say to teach them the truth?
7. We often talk about what Jesus did for us. Why is it important to also preach and teach about who Jesus is?