

The Creed – Part 4

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, ***who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit born of the virgin Mary. . .***

Introduction:

- How many of you own a purebred dog of some kind?
- Researchers at the University of California, San Diego produced a study showing that people and their dogs often look alike.
- In the study, a panel of student judges were able to match 16 out of 25 purebred dogs to their owners.
- Do you know why they were able to do that? Dog owners tend to choose a dog that looks or acts like them in some way.
- The study identified similarities such as physical characteristics, personality traits or both.

For example, happy, outgoing, and affectionate dogs tend to be owned by warm and friendly people.

- Hairless, pop-eyed, pug-nosed pooches tend to be owned by...you get the idea.
- I did some research on the internet to see if I could find some examples of dogs resembling their owners. Take a look at some of these.
- Then I began thinking about my own dog Zoey
- And then I thought about her temperament and behavior – a mixed evaluation.
- She's well behaved, obedient, happy and always looking for the next meal. This momentarily boosted my self-esteem.
- But there were also troubling signs. She tracks her muddy feet on mom's clean floor, begs shamelessly and loves to roll in dead smelly things. Sometimes she will sneak off to run with the other neighborhood dogs when I'm not looking.
- Just when I began to get discouraged by that, I remembered that technically, Zoey still belongs to my son.

Bridge to Message

- Today as we continue in our series – we're going to continue to look at the person of Jesus – and we're going to discover that the God that we worship and serve went way beyond just kind of resembling us or relating to us. He didn't come down and spend a week to talk to us and conduct interviews and see what it was like to be human and then travel back to heaven. No, out of complete humility he voluntarily laid aside the glory and perfection of heaven and took the plunge to earth and entered

our world as a man in total weakness, – he became one of us through the process of birth.

Last week – Andy introduced the person of Jesus Christ in the Apostle’s Creed when he talked about the portion of the creed that says, ***We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.***

- He talked about the reality that Jesus was both 100% divine and 100% human.
- Theologians refer to this as the “Hypostatic Union”. It comes from the Greek word “hypostasis” which has to do with the foundation or the underlying or essential part of anything – it’s essence.
- The fundamental essence of Jesus is He is one person with two distinct natures, human and divine, and in which the two are united.
- These two natures in the one Person are inseparably united, yet not mixed, so as to lose their distinctiveness.
- He wasn’t kind of half-and-half. He wasn’t kind of a hybrid like Wolverine, the Incredible Hulk or Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde who was kind of part human where one time he’s acting as God and the next time he’s acting as a human. No. He was completely God and he was completely human.
- This was a big deal in the first and second centuries because of a heretical teaching promoted by a group of people known as the Gnostics. That word comes from the Greek word – *gnosis* - “knowledge”
- The Gnostics believed they had secret knowledge that nobody else had. They believed in a concept known as Docetism, which said that everything in the world that was physical or material was evil.
- We don’t believe that. Jesus never taught that. The Bible doesn’t teach it.
- We learned through Brian’s message 2 weeks ago that when he created the physical universe and everything within it, He made a pronouncement on it and that pronouncement was that it was good.
- But Gnostics believed that if it’s physical and if its material then it’s bad. It’s sinful.
 - As a result they thought sex was bad.
 - They thought the physical body was evil.
- Therefore, if he was sinless and he was divine, he could not also be human. So he must only appear to be a man. They believed Jesus was some kind of phantom man, a ghost in a man's costume.

- That's why the writers of the Apostle's Creed said, "Wait a second!" That is not what the scriptures teach. Then they List ten things that Jesus did physically: he was conceived, he was born, he suffered, he was crucified, he died, he was buried, he descended, he rose again, he ascended, he's seated and he'll come again.

Today as we continue in our series on the creed, I want to drill down on the human dimension of the person of Jesus a little more.

- Let's read out loud together the portion of the Apostle's Creed that we have covered so far

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, ***who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit born of the virgin Mary,***

- And as we think about the importance of Jesus' humanity I want you to think about two words
- Identification and Restoration

Do you know what it means to identify with someone? You can relate to them - totally appreciate or understand their life or circumstances.

- Do you know what is so incredibly meaningful to me? The fact that the God that I worship and serve identifies with me. He gets it. There is nothing that I go through in life that Jesus doesn't relate to or empathize with.

From start to finish, Jesus can identify. He entered this world the same way everyone single one of us did. He was born.

- 3 out of 4 gospels plainly tell us this

Read John 1:14

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- "dwelling" – literally means pitched a tent - God moved into our neighborhood.
- "became flesh", became human.

This is what we feel we need in our relationship with God.

- If we just had someone from God or God himself who could truly identify and understand, if he felt our pains and our hurts and our disappointments and our emotional strain.
- If he could just know the weight of fatigue.
- If he could know what it's like to receive the news of the death of a loved one, and he could know the frustration of living with the injustice and greed of man.

Jesus Christ gets it. He understands and he cares.

Hebrews 4

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- He identifies with us, but he does so much more than identify. Jesus is the only one uniquely qualified to also restore us and reconcile us to God.
- Why? Because not only was Jesus fully human, he also never sinned? **This ancient creed tells us that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Luke 1:34-35

³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

- Jesus' prenatal development within Mary and His birth were as natural as what any parent has experienced and witness.
- **But His conception was uniquely and radically different from any other person in human history.**
- Mary did not become pregnant through sexual intercourse with another man.
- It was the result of divine intervention and the direct activity of the Holy Spirit.
- Why is this necessary?
- As members of the human race we are all descendants of Adam. We're all relatives. Look around and see who's in your extended family. How does that make you feel?
- Sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience in the garden of Eden – Adam's original sin has been passed on from generation to generation. Theologians call this imputed guilt or sin. The word imputed is a mathematical term which simply means that Adam's guilt has been charged to our account and as such we enter this world as guilty sinners.

Romans 5:12

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned

- But Jesus was not a product of human conception.
- Let's look at something that my former theology prof in Bible College wrote in his one volume book entitled "Practical Christian Theology".

"The Lord's unique conception prevented His receiving from a human father the hereditary corruption and imputed guilt of Adam's initial sin. Being absolutely sinless, Jesus was qualified to bear our sins and to pay their awful debt." – Floyd Barickman

- Because Jesus was "conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit", he broke the chain and was and is unstained by sin.
- Jesus Christ was not stained with sin because he was not the product of human conception.
- That's why John wrote in chapter 1 and verse 14 of his gospel that Jesus was and is "full of grace and truth."

He alone is qualified to be our substitute, to take our place and suffer the judgment we deserve

- 1 Timothy 2:5 – There is one God . . .

Hebrews 2:14-15;17

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), **15** and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.

17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. What's the reality of our situation as people who are Adam's relatives and who came into this world corrupted and deeply impacted by sin?

- Romans 3:23
- Ephesians 2:8-9 - As sinners we do not have the ability to fix or pay off the debts that our own sins have wracked up before a holy God, let alone the sin debts of others.
- We don't have the capacity to fix the sin problem through our own efforts.
- Illustration of my knee injury and my inability to move the lower portion of my leg because the tendon was shredded.
- 6:23

Questions:

- Have you ever come to the place where you fully acknowledged your sin problem and where that places you?
- Would you like to invite Jesus to be your restorer, to take the punishment you deserve and to set you free from your sin.
- That's what this table is about today.