

Catechism Sec. 5: Christ The Redeemer

by B. S. Poh

Q19. Q. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

A19. God having, out of His good pleasure from all eternity¹, elected some to everlasting life², did enter into a covenant of grace³ to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer⁴.

1. *Eph. 1:4, 9, Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love... ..having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.*
2. *2 Thess. 2:13, But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*
3. *Gen. 3:15, And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*
4. *2 Tim. 1:9, Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*

Comments:

1. Man is incapable of saving himself from the state of sin and misery. God, being all-knowing and all-merciful, has taken the initiative to save him. This involves the following: (i) God choosing certain people, and not all, to be saved; (ii) God making this choice from eternity, i.e. from before the creation of anything, including man; (iii) God making the choice based on His pleasure alone, since there is nothing good in man, nor in anything that he does; (iv) God entering into a covenant of grace with man after the Fall to save him through a Redeemer. This doctrine has been called “unconditional election”.
2. Three common objections have been raised against the doctrine of unconditional election: (i) that God is unfair in arbitrarily choosing certain people while passing by others; (ii) that there may be some people who desire to be saved but is already predestined to be condemned; (iii) that those saved can live as the like, including sinning against God. Against these objections are: (i) God is our Creator and has every right to do what He wants (Rom. 9:14-21; Matt. 20:15); (ii) sinful people do not desire to be saved in God’s way unless God first draws them (John 6:44, 65; Eph. 2:1-4); (iii) those saved would have a renewed nature and would not want to live in sin, although they are still not perfect while in this world (Rom. 6:15-19).
3. The covenant of grace contrasts with the covenant of works, in which man is obliged to keep the law of God perfectly in order to live. Unlike before the Fall, Man is no more capable of keeping

the law of God perfectly. Instead, he stands condemned by the law and, therefore, needs God's mercy to be saved. In the covenant of grace, God shows His mercy to unworthy sinners by providing a Redeemer for him. A Redeemer is needed because sinners cannot be forgiven without the penalty of their sins being paid for, and a righteousness found for him. In other words, the two problems he is faced with needs to be resolved, viz. his guilt before God and the corruption of his nature.

Q20. Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

A20. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ¹, who being the eternal Son of God, became man², and so was and continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever^{3,4}.

1. *1 Tim. 2:5-6, For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*
2. *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.*
3. *Rom. 9:5, Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*
4. *Col. 2:9, For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

Comments:

1. The following must be noted about the salvation of sinners: (i) Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer. There is no other Saviour appointed by God to save sinners (Acts 4:2). This contradicts the universalistic view of salvation held by the ecumenical movement, which teaches that there is saving truth in all religions for those who are sincere and earnest. (ii) Christ, by His death on the cross, saves only the elect (Matt. 20:28; John 17:20; Rom. 5:10-11). This is the doctrine of Particular Redemption. This is contradicted by Arminianism (after Dutch theologian, James Arminius) and Amyraldianism (after French theologian, Moses Amyraut). Arminianism teaches a doctrine of Universal Atonement in which Christ died for everyone in the world, but only those who respond to the call of the gospel are saved. Amyraldianism teaches that Christ's death was "sufficient for all, and efficient for some". It stretches the *extent* of the atonement to include everyone, and restricts the *intent* of the atonement to the elect. This view was held by the 17th century Puritan, Richard Baxter, and by the 18th century Particular Baptist, Andrew Fuller.
2. Jesus Christ is one Person with two distinct natures - a divine nature which has existed from eternity and which remains unchanged, as well as a sinless but true human nature that came into existence when He was conceived in the womb of Mary. These two natures are inseparably joined together "without conversion, composition, or confusion" (1689 Confession 8:2). In the past, there were those who believed that either Christ's divine nature became reduced so that He was not equal with the Father and the Spirit, or His human nature became enhanced so that He was not truly human. Others, like the Jehovah's Witnesses today, believed that the two natures of Christ became mixed so that a new nature midway between the two came into existence. Yet others thought that the two natures resulted in two persons, so that there were times when Christ appeared more like man, and other times when He appeared more like God.
3. The full title, "the Lord Jesus Christ" is appropriate because: (i) it describes His role as Redeemer well, for He is "Lord", i.e. Jehovah, and He is "Jesus", i.e. the Saviour, and He is "Christ", i.e. the anointed (or God-appointed) One; (ii) believers should show proper reverence to Him. Since

Jesus Christ is truly God, we should not represent Him with pictures, for that would be idolatry. Although He is also truly Man, He is perfect Man and should not be represented imperfectly by pictures. Furthermore, the Bible does not give us a description of what He looked like.

Q21. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A21. Christ, the son of God, became man by taking to Himself a true body¹, and a rational soul^{2,3}, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary, and born of her⁴, yet without sin⁵.

Notes: The word “reasonable” has been replaced by “rational”.

1. *Heb. 2:14, Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.*
2. *Matt. 26:38, Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”*
3. *Heb. 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.*
4. *Luke 1:27, 31, 35, To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ...And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ...And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*
5. *Heb. 7:26, For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.*

Comments:

1. In the past, there were the Docetists who held that Christ only appeared to have a physical body, when He was actually a Spirit. Then, there were the Arians and Eunomians, who held that Christ received only human flesh, not human nature, from Mary. Instead, the eternal Word took the place of the human soul. Another group called the Appollinarians regarded man as consisting of three parts - the body, the sensible soul, and the rational soul. They believed that in Jesus Christ, the rational soul was replaced by the Word. The church leaders met at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, and produced the Chalcedonian Creed in which is stated that Christ is “truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body”. Doctrinal errors tend to reappear and it is necessary to define the human nature, of Christ correctly.
2. Jesus Christ did not descend from Adam by ordinary generation (cf. Q15). Instead, He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (not “by the Holy Spirit”, as in human procreation). The human nature of Jesus Christ, therefore, was derived from Mary but without sin. This teaching guards against the error of the Roman Catholic Church that Jesus Christ’s sinlessness is derived from Mary, who remained a virgin throughout her married life. By wrongly equating virginity with sinlessness, Mary is lifted to the higher position of “Mother of God” who must be prayed to in order to influence the Son of God to hear our prayers. The Bible, however, teaches that Mary had other children by Joseph (Matt. 1:25; Mark 6:3). If Mary had remained a virgin throughout her marriage, she would have sinned against her husband and her God (cf. 1 Cor.

7:3-5). The answer also guards against the modernists, who reject the virgin birth and anything miraculous.

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