**Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion***

Lesson 14: The Person of Christ (Book 2, Chapters 12-14)

**Chapter 12 – Christ Had to Become Man in Order to Fulfill the Office of Mediator**

1. “What was best for us, our most merciful Father determined. Our iniquities, like a cloud intervening between Him and us, having utterly alienated us from the kingdom of heaven, none but a person reaching to him could be the medium of restoring peace. But who could thus reach to him? Could any of the sons of Adam? All of them, with their parent, shuddered at the sight of God. Could any of the angels? They had need of a head, by connection with which they might adhere to their God entirely and inseparably. What then? The case was certainly desperate, if the Godhead itself did not descend to us, it being impossible for us to ascend. Thus the Son of God behoved to become our Emmanuel, *i.e.* God with us; and in such a way, that by mutual union his divinity and our nature might be combined.”
2. 1 Timothy 2:5 – “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”
3. Hebrews 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
4. “That no one, therefore, may feel perplexed where to seek the Mediator, or by what means to reach him, the Spirit, by calling him man, reminds us that he is near, nay, contiguous to us, inasmuch as he is our flesh.”
5. “This will become still clearer if we reflect, that the work to be performed by the Mediator was of no common description: being to restore us to the divine favour, so as to make us, instead of sons of men, sons of God; instead of heirs of hell, heirs of a heavenly kingdom. Who could do this unless the Son of God should also become the Son of man, and so receive what is ours as to transfer to us what is his, making that which is his by nature to become ours by grace?”
6. “It was especially necessary for this cause also that he who was to be our Redeemer should be truly God and man. It was his to swallow up death: who but Life could do so? It was his to conquer sin: who could do so save Righteousness itself? It was his to put to flight the powers of the air and the world: who could do so but the mighty power superior to both? But who possesses life and righteousness, and the dominion and government of heaven, but God alone? Therefore, God, in his infinite mercy, having determined to redeem us, became himself our Redeemer in the person of his only begotten Son.”
7. “Our Lord came forth very man, adopted the person of Adam, and assumed his name, that he might in his stead obey the Father; that he might present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the just judgment of God, and in the same flesh pay the penalty which we had incurred. Finally, since as God only he could not suffer, and as man only could not overcome death, he united the human nature with the divine, that he might subject the weakness of the one to death as an expiation of sin, and by the power of the other, maintaining a struggle with death, might gain us the victory.”

**Chapter 13 – Christ Assumed the True Substance of Human Flesh**

1. In this chapter, Calvin refutes heresies that deny that Christ took on real human flesh.
2. I touched on this briefly in Lesson 5 on the Trinity.
3. 3 Heresies the deny the true humanity of the Christ
   1. Docetism: Jesus was only divine and His humanity is an illusion.
   2. Modalism (Servetus, T.D. Jakes, Oneness Pentacostalism): God is one and expresses Himself in different modes. Sometimes He is Father, at other times He is Son or Spirit. There is no permanent distinction.
   3. Apollinarianism: Jesus is fully God but only partially human. He had human flesh but not a human mind or will.
4. 2 more heresies
   1. Manicheanism: the Christ was imbued with “celestial flesh”
   2. Marcionism: Christ’s body was a phantom
5. Romans 1:3 – “[the promised gospel] concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh”
6. “Wherefore, our Lord himself, not contented with the name of man, frequently calls himself the Son of man, wishing to express more clearly that he was a man by true human descent.”
7. Galatians 4:4 – “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,”
8. Hebrews 2:14 – “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,”
9. Hebrews 2:18 – “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”
10. Some Scriptures twisted by the ignorant
    1. Philippians 2:7-8 – “but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
       1. “Here, unquestionably, he explains not what Christ was, but in what way he acted. Nay, from the whole context it is easily gathered, that it was in the true nature of man that Christ humbled himself.”
    2. 1 Corinthians 15:47 – “The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.”
       1. “the apostle does not there speak of the essence of his body as heavenly, but of the spiritual life which derived from Christ quickens us,”

**Chapter 14 – How the Two Natures of the Mediator Make One Person**

1. Calvin now begins to explain how the 2 natures of the Mediator can co-exist and relate to each other in the 1 person of the Son
2. “The Son of God becomes the Son of Man, but not by confusion of substance but by unity of person. We affirm Christ’s divinity so joined and united with His humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ.”
3. Analogy: Humans are body and soul. The soul is not the body and the body is not the soul, yet we are one person.
4. “Thus, also, the Scriptures speak of Christ: they sometimes attribute to Him what must be referred solely to His humanity, sometimes what belongs uniquely to His divinity; and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone.”
5. This is known as *Communicatio idiomatum* (“communication of properties”). What this means is that sometimes Scripture speaks about Christ’s divinity or about Christ’s humanity but because these 2 natures are in 1 person, what is said about one is said about the whole.
6. Examples to illustrate this idea: “born of the virgin Mary”; “suffered under Pontius Pilate”; “he suffered and was buried”; “seated at the right hand of Father”
7. John 8:58 – “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’”
8. Luke 2:52 – “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature”
9. Mark 13:32 – “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”
10. Acts 20:28 – “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”
11. John 1:29 – “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”
12. Calvin then begins to refute Christological heresies that deny or confuse the 2 natures or 1 person of Christ. This we also saw in Lesson 5.
13. Errors on the Relationship of Christ’s divinity and humanity
    1. Monophysitism (Eutyches): Jesus’ human nature is absorbed by His divine nature. He only has 1 nature.
    2. Nestorianism: Jesus is 2 persons (divine Christ & human Jesus) living together in Jesus Christ.
    3. Servetus: The Incarnation means Christ’s flesh was turned into God.
14. “But what else is this than to contend that Christ is not man because he is God, not God because he is man, and neither God nor man because he is both at once.”
15. *Hypostatic union* – the union of the 2 natures in the 1 person, the Son of God