

## **Orthodoxy - Jesus, Two Distinct Natures**

New City Catechism Question 21: What sort of Redeemer is needed to bring us back to God?

Answer: One who is truly human and also truly God.

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6

In Part 2 of the New City Catechism we move from “God, Creation and Fall, Law” in Part I, to “Christ, Redemption, Grace”. When we speak of Christ, the long awaited Savior of the world, we cannot speak of him as we imagine him, but as he is revealed. He is revealed as being both God and man. There is a perfect union of his human and divine nature without any confusion. Therefore, he does not possess a dual personality, but a perfect human and divine nature as the person Jesus Christ.

Isaiah prophesies of him as “a child” who would be born. He was prophesied longer ago to our first parents in the garden of Eden as one born of a woman (Gen.3:15). The revelation of God concerning our Redeemer tells us he was fully human, born of a woman. He is the the true human being. Why did he have to be a man?

The Redeemer who could bring men and women back to God had to be man to identify with and rescue our humanity. In our humanity we are separated and alienated from God in our sinful condition. Therefore we suffer as we live with ours and others sin. This causes us and others to suffer in our humanity. If we are to be rescued back into a living relationship with God and a meaningful relationship with creatures and creation, we have to have a human Redeemer. Jesus is the only Redeemer who can by his humanity represent us to God (Heb.2:17), understand our lives in suffering (Heb.2:18), give us a living relationship with himself where we can “obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb.4:15-16), and lead us in a new humanity according to his will (1Pet.2:21).

Isaiah also tells us of the Redeemer’s divine nature. He is “Mighty God”. In Jesus of Nazareth the fullness of deity dwelt (Col.2:19). What do we believe when we say Jesus who is man is also God?

J. Gresham Machen, wrote, “The Christian believes that there is a personal God, Creator and Ruler of the universe, a God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. So when the Christian says that Jesus Christ is God, or when he says that he believes in the "deity of Christ," he means that that same person who is known to history as Jesus of Nazareth existed, before He became man, from all eternity as infinite, eternal and unchangeable God, the second person of the holy Trinity." Why is it necessary that Jesus who is human should also be divine?

Only Jesus as divine could bear the wrath of God in his body as he suffered for man’s sins and live again.

Only Jesus as divine could satisfy the righteous requirements of God’s justice.

Only Jesus as divine could pay the debt of our sin and carry out a positive righteousness for us to secure God’s eternal covenantal love toward us.

Only Jesus as divine could redeem his people by his righteous works and sacrificial death.

Only Jesus as divine could ascend to heaven to pour out the Spirit on his people he redeemed.

Only Jesus as divine could save his people from their enemies - Satan, the world, and sin leading to death.

Only Jesus as divine could lead his people to an everlasting salvation.

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Jesus the Redeemer is the perfect God and perfect man. He accomplished everything necessary for our salvation by becoming like us in our humanity and doing all that was necessary as our God. He does all we need, understands all that we need, and provides all we need.

## Money, It's a god

Would you replace God with money? We live and breath in a culture of greed. Yet, we have trouble seeing greed in ourselves. You have probably had numerous occasions to talk with friends and neighbors about things they are struggling with in this world. Personal struggles are shared and you hear about despondency and depression, anxiety and fear, impatience and anger, pride and broken relationships. But has anyone told you they are struggling with greed? Why don't we hear about it in others or see it in ourselves? We live as classes. Most Americans see themselves as "middle class". Yet, what most Americans enjoy as the necessities of everyday life, the majority world recognizes as materialistic comforts. But we don't see it that way. We live out life in our socioeconomic bracket while we're surrounded by people who have more than we do. We justify ourselves by saying, "My life is modest compared to theirs." We don't see greed in ourselves because the money god blinds us to our own hearts.

Greed is idolatry (Col.3:5). People like Zacchaeus, the rich young ruler, and the Pharisees told about in Luke's gospel believed their lives consisted in the abundance of their possessions (Lk.12:15). These are examples to us of people who, if they lost their wealth, lost all meaning to their life. Their personal worth was their personal self. They tried to serve God and money, but God is not fooled by the human heart, man is (Lk.16:13-15). These people are examples to us of those who love, trust, and obey wealth and money. They fantasized about how to have more wealth. They felt secure and safe in their wealth. They served their wealth and were controlled by desire, anxiety, despondency, and anger.

No wonder Jesus tells us to watch out and be on guard against all kinds of greed in our own hearts (Lk.12:15). Even though we would say we live and breath in a cultural drunk on materialism, self consumption, and greed, no one thinks it's true of themselves. We're addicted to our wealth and we're in denial. We need an intervention that only the grace of God in Jesus can bring. Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the tree (Lk.19). Jesus looked at the rich young ruler, loved him, and called him to follow him (Mk.10:21). Jesus never stopped confronting the Pharisees in their self justifying greed. All these greedy people had one thing in common. They sought Jesus. Maybe not for all the right reasons, but while he was in their midst they sought an audience with him. Jesus comes to us in our greed so that we can go to him with our covetous hearts. This is the beginning of the grace needed for our wealth addicted hearts. We must go to Jesus who is near to all who call on him, and confess our greed. The beauty of God's grace toward us in our greed is that he actually wants to sit at the table with us and talk about our hearts and his salvation for people who don't deserve it. But he doesn't want to talk to us about money. He wants to talk about what lies beneath the surface of our want and need, or wealth.

Why do we want money? What do we need from the wealth we want? Do we want security, control, and protection from wealth? If so, we will strive to get it and hoard what we get. Do we want approval from others from our wealth? If so, we try to get it and then spend it on being attractive and getting access to places and people. Do we want the power that we believe comes from having money? If so, we will be driven to possess wealth and use it to exalt ourselves over others. Money is an idol that functions at the deep levels of our hearts shaping the patterns of our lives. Therefore, you can't take a vow of poverty, simply decide to de-emphasize wealth in your life, or learn how to practically handle money. The only way to see change in our lives at the depths of our hearts is through the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith. Faith in the saving grace of Jesus led Zacchaeus away from stealing people's money to giving back to people what he stole compounded interest. The saving grace of Jesus Christ came to his house. Zacchaeus repented of his idolatrous heart and overflowed in generosity toward others. It became better to give than receive for Zacchaeus because of all the grace he received from Jesus Christ. In Jesus he had all the security, approval, and power he would ever need. Through Jesus' poverty in his coming to earth to rescue him, he received all the wealth he would ever need. You can read all about this in Luke 19. As you read it ask God to pour out his grace in your heart as he did in Zacchaeus'.