

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 22. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

Scripture References: John 1:14. Luke 1:31,35,41,42. Heb. 2:14.
Matt. 26:38. Gal. 4:4. Heb. 4:15. Heb. 7:26.

Questions:

1. Was Christ's birth a voluntary act of Christ?

Yes, it was a voluntary act. He took upon himself the human nature so that he might be fitted to be our Redeemer.

2. Did he assume the nature of a real man?

Yes, he assumed the nature of a real man. He had the two essential parts of a man, possessing a real body of flesh and blood and bones and that of possessing a soul.

3. How can we prove that he had a real body?

The Bible tells us that he is called "Man". He was subject to hunger, weariness and thirst like other men. He was also crucified, dead and buried and rose again in his body. Luke 24:39 teaches that his was a body, not just mere spirit.

4. How can we prove that he had a soul, a reasonable soul?

The Bible tells that he had such and that his divine nature did not take the place of, or supply the place of, a soul. Matt. 26:38 teaches that his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

5. Was the birth of Christ like the birth of other men?

No, his birth came about by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

6. Why was Christ born of a virgin?

Christ was born of a virgin in order that he might be conceived and born without sin, that he might be free of the original sin which was passed on to all Adam's posterity by natural generation.

7. Is it really important that we believe Christ was born of a virgin?

Yes, this is very important. (This is treated in the article on the opposite page.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

In many church courts today the question is asked, "Is it really necessary for a person to believe in the virgin birth of Christ?" The statement, or sentiment, behind the question is the thought that it is not necessary to believe in this doctrine to become a Christian, or, it is not necessary to believe in this doctrine to be ordained to the Gospel ministry. Actually, the answer to the question is very simple if the one answering regarding his belief in the virgin birth is a member of a church subscribing to the Westminster Standards. Our Bible-Founded Standards teach the virgin birth and if a minister does not believe in it he is not qualified to be in the Presbyterian church.

Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield answers these important questions regarding the virgin birth when he says, "It is only in its relation to the New Testament doctrine of redemption that the necessity of the virgin birth of Jesus comes to its full manifestation. For in this Christianity the redemption that is provided is distinctly redemption from sin; and that He might redeem men from sin it certainly was imperative that the Redeemer Himself should not be involved in sin." Could it be stated in a clearer fashion that the redemptive work of Christ depends upon His virgin birth?

It is very difficult for a person to end up with much at all when he starts to doubt essential doctrines of the Christian system. There are strong connecting links between the different doctrines of Christianity and the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is an integral link. Certainly it is true that a person need not have a perfect understanding or conviction regarding the virgin birth to be saved but anyone that ignores it or denies it is a person that is denying the divinity of Christ and is therefore a person without hope in this world. Such a person has no business in the pulpit, pretending to preach the whole, redeeming Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to note that the fourth General Council, convened in Chalcedon in 451 A.D. stated: ". . . our Lord Jesus Christ . . . begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten . . ." Our Confession of Faith affirms the same in Section II. This we believe! And for it we praise God!

Published By:
THE SHIELD and SWORD, INC.

Dedicated to instruction in the Westminster Standards for use as a bulletin insert or other methods of distribution in Presbyterian churches.

For information write to: **The Shield and Sword, Inc., French Camp, Mississippi.** A non-profit religious organization.

Vol. 2

No. 22

October, 1962

Price

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To Churches — \$2.00 per 100
Individuals — \$1.35 per year

Back Copies

To Churches — \$2.25 per 100
Individuals — 15c each

