

Conceived by the Spirit, Born of Mary

John 10:22–39

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 35–36

Studies in the Heidelberg Catechism #19

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GOD has spoken to us tonight in his Word about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's respond in confession using the words of

Heidelberg Catechism questions and answers 33–34:

Q. 35. What does it mean that he “was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary”?

A. That the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took to himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, a true human nature so that he might also become David's true descendant, like his brothers in all things except for sin.

Q.36. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ benefit you?

A. He is our mediator and, in God's sight, he covers with his innocence and perfect holiness my sin, in which I was conceived.

These questions describe when true God became true man. This is one of the essential doctrines of Christianity that sets it apart from all other religions, philosophers, and worldviews. We've already focused our hearts and minds on the true and eternal divinity of the Son of God, equal to the Father and Holy Spirit. And the Catechism summarizes this saying he is **the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God**. John calls

him “the Word” who was in the beginning with God and who was God (John 1:1). But then John also says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

Our story speaks of this as it describes a time **Jesus was walking in the temple** (v.23) and **the Jews gathered around** to ask, “**If you are the Christ, tell us plainly**” (v. 24). He speaks of **the works that I do in my Father’s name**, which means he’s claiming to be the Son of God right in front of their eyes in human flesh (v. 25). He speaks of himself as a shepherd, which comes right from the Old Testament in Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 36, for example (vv. 26, 27). He speaks as God—**I give them eternal life**—(v. 28), which is something only God could say and give. Then he again speaks of he and Father (v. 29) with the clincher: **I and the Father are one** (v. 30). And what did they do after he said this? They **picked up stones** (v. 31), which was the Old Testament method of death for blasphemy (v. 32). That’s why they say, “**It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God**” (v. 33). Let’s delve into this mysterious truth of the Incarnation tonight.

What Happened?

What happened? This eternal Son of God in perfect relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit **took to himself...a true human nature**. Do you know what that means? He did not cease to be God when he came to earth. He did not meld his divinity into humanity. He did not just add a human being to him to make him two people. We speak this way of the eternal Son of God taking to himself a true human nature into personal union with the Person of the Son. This speaks of the oneness of his Person but the twoness of his natures. This keeps them distinct but not separated. In other words, this is a wonder of wonders that God has become a man! How often do you just sit back and ponder this high and deep mystery? This is what God did to save you!

How Did it Happen?

How did it happen? It was *by the Spirit and of Mary*. He was **conceived by the Holy Spirit** to use the language of the Apostles' Creed. Our Catechism explains this by saying the human nature of Jesus was **through the working of the Holy Spirit** (Luke 1:35). If you know much about Greek and Roman mythology you know that the gods like Zeus could take human form and take wives or do unseemly things that mere mortals did. But Jesus'

incarnation was a miracle by the power of the Holy Spirit to keep him unspoiled from the sinful nature of his parents.

He was conceived by the Spirit and also ***born of the virgin Mary***. This means his human nature was **from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary**. Jesus didn't have a superman humanity, being from another world. His flesh and blood came from Mary. Why is this important? He was a real man, like you and me, to take upon himself our sins.

Why Did it Happen?

That leads us to *why did it happen?* Our Catechism says there are two whys: the first is that he is *linked to David*. ...**So that he might also become David's true descendant**. The Lord promised David that one of his own descendants would sit upon his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11). And this is why the New Testament writers, such as Matthew, belabor his genealogy to link him to David (Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3). The second why is that he is *like us*: **like his brothers in all things except for sin**. This comes right from Hebrews where we learn he is sympathetic of our weaknesses as our high priest. This means we know we have a shoulder to cry on when we struggle. This means we have a powerful priest who prays for us when we are tempted.

So What that it Happened?

So what that it happened? A book a while back speculated if we found out that Jesus actually wasn't born of a virgin but had a human father that it would not matter. What do you think? Would it? If it does matter, why?

This is what question 36 is getting at: **How does the holy conception and birth of Christ *benefit you*?** The answer is that as “the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5–6) he **covers with his innocence and perfect holiness my original sin...in God's sight.**

If he were not truly human, he could not be our Mediator.

If he were not truly divine, he could not be the Mediator sent from God.

But he is, and therefore his innocence covers my guilt; his holiness covers my sin. And so we can say with one writer, “Jesus Christ is the sum and quintessence of the gospel; the wonder of angels; the joy and triumph of saints” (Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 161). Amen.