

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 18, Systematics, Humanity of Christ, Proofs

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 18, Systematics, Humanity of Christ Proofs.

We continue our study of Christology, specifically of Jesus' humanness, and we're into the book of Hebrews, this time with another demonstration of our Lord's humanity, His being made perfect.

Three times, Hebrews, uniquely, only Hebrews in all of scripture, used this language, telling us that the Son of God incarnate was made perfect or became perfect. First, it's in Hebrews 2.10, for it was fitting, after quoting Psalm 8 and saying the ultimate, Psalm 8's the creation Psalm, and the honor and glory with which our first parents were crowned, and the dominion they exercised. Those things were diminished in the fall, so now we don't see everything in subjection to Him, that is humanity, verse 8. But we do see Him, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. It was fitting for the Father, in the sense, to make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. From this, we learn that the Father makes the Son perfect in some sense and that this being made perfect has to do with the Son's suffering.

I'm going to skip 5, 8, and 9 because they're the place where we try to unravel the mystery somewhat, the best we can, and go to 7:28. 26, for it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, Psalm 110, verse 4, you are a priest forever, the Father told the David's Lord, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. But the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. Once again, God, through the word of the oath in Psalm 110, verse 4, appoints a Son to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek, and this Son has been made perfect forever.

What does that mean? It's even a little bit troubling. How can God be made perfect? Peterson, you certainly taught us that that kind of language, being made perfect,

does not pertain to Jesus' deity, and here in the notes, it's under the humanity of Christ, so certainly it pertains to his humanity, but still, how could his humanity be made perfect? He never sinned. If he's sinless, how can he be made perfect? Chapter 5, verses 8 and 9, help us.

Verse 5 of chapter 5, so also Christ did not exalt himself to be made high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, you are my son, quoting Psalm 2, today I have begotten you, as he says also in another place, Psalm 110, verse 4, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him, who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, my understanding is that's a divine title; he learned obedience through what he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Here we have more information. Jesus being made perfect has to do with him learning obedience through suffering; remember, 210 said combined is being made perfect and suffering. Here we have another element: he suffers, he learns obedience, he is made perfect; and it's also in this context of Gethsemane in which he offers up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, asking God to save him from death, and he was answered because of his reverence.

What do you mean? He wasn't spared the cross; he wasn't answered by being spared the cross; he was answered by being raised from the dead; that's how he was saved from death. Although he was a son, verse 8, he learned obedience through what he suffered; it was God's will for his son to learn obedience, to experience genuine human life, and to obey the father day after day after day. He learned his obedience, including through suffering.

Although he was the eternal son of God and very God of very God, he learned obedience through the things he suffered and was made perfect. God did not send his son down as a 33-year-old to die; he sent his son to be conceived as far as his human nature is concerned in the womb of the Virgin Mary and to be born as an infant. My understanding that Jesus was made perfect accents his humanity; surely his deity didn't need to be made perfect, and neither did his humanity in the sense that it was ever sinful; it wasn't; it was always sinless.

From the moment of his conception, he was holy, and that which is born of Mary was holy because of the spirits overshadowing her and coming upon her and so forth. In what sense was he made perfect? He was made perfect in experience through suffering and obeying the father. I like to illustrate with a little imagination and hopefully a little humor, as my students would say. Probably, and sons, there is very little humor, but I'll make an attempt at it.

If there was a Jerusalem Gazette in the first century, all right, and there was a want ad for a job, and the job is the savior of the world, redeemer of humankind, a mediator between God and man. The job description would have three parts. Number one, all candidates must be God, and none others need to apply. The job pool is reduced to three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Number two, not only must the candidate to be redeemer, savior, and mediator be God, he must become a man. There's now only one candidate, the Lord of Glory, who became the son of man.

But here's the point of the passages that teach Jesus was made perfect in my understanding, and that is there's a third qualification for a mediator between God and man, for redeemer of humankind, for the savior of the world, and that is on-the-job training. God did not come and indwell a 33-year-old. He had his son born, conceived as to his human nature in Mary's womb, born as a baby, grew up, started his public ministry at 30 and at 33 and a half perhaps, I don't know the exact chronology here, he dies on the cross for our sins and three days later is raised.

Jesus learned obedience through suffering; that is, it was God's will, not only for him to be divine, not only for him to be human, but to experience human life with all of its sufferings, obediently, positively, succeeding where Adam failed, that he might be fully qualified to save us. Again, we marvel at the love of the son of God for us. At once in his earthly ministry, he cries out, how long must I stay with you? When I trained pastors, I said it was good for them to work in the world for a time because they were going to minister to people who worked in the world every day.

And if the pastor was, went to a Christian school, was home-schooled, and then went to a Christian college, and then went to a Christian seminary, and then became a pastor, he's got no idea what people go through. And it is hard to live in the world. If it's hard for us, can you imagine what it was like for the Son of God, even with his disciples? Ah, I'm going to the cross.

And Peter says, no, you're not. My word, get behind me, Satan, Peter, Jesus says, my goodness. Or the Son of Man's going to go to Jerusalem, be betrayed to the chief priests and elders, and be crucified, and the third day raised again.

And what are the disciples talking about? Which one of them is the greatest? Oh really? James and John argue about which one is the greatest. The other ten are no better, and they're indignant at them. Can we sit on your right hand in the kingdom? My word, how long must I stay with you? Jesus loved us and gave himself for us.

But before he did that, part of his qualification, part of the necessity of his divine work, was being made perfect experientially to be qualified to be our redeemer.

Being God wasn't enough, being the God-man wasn't enough. He had to successfully live a human life, whereas the first Adam failed.

Wow. Make no mistake about it, he was sinless. We're not proving his true humanness now, and we're affirming its purity.

In John 8:46, he looks his enemies in the face, and says, which of you can convict me of sin? Again, I don't recommend you and I do that. There'd be some takers there, none of them can convict him of sin. It's astonishing.

2 Corinthians 5:21, one of the great justification texts that teaches, implies the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner's spiritual bank account. God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. This is Luther's verse, in which he taught the great exchange.

God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us. Our sin is imputed to Christ, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. His perfect righteousness is imputed to our spiritual bank accounts.

God made him who knew no sin. The son of God knew temptations we'll never know, but he never gave in. He never knew sin experientially.

Hebrews 4:15, he was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin, he was sinless. He not only took to himself a sinless human nature, he maintained it as it were. Am I denying the work of the spirit in his life? Of course not, but it was the spirit in the life of this person, the God-man, the theanthropic person if you will.

1 Peter teaches the same thing, quoting Isaiah 53. 1 Peter 2:21 to 25. For to this, you have been called, Peter says.

1 Peter 2:21, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. Jesus is our example. Is he, first of all, our example? No, he's first of all our Lord and Savior, but he is, as Lord and Savior, our example.

He committed no sin; there it is; neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him, who justly judges.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed, for you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. He committed no sin, and as Isaiah said, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

Isaiah further says he calls him my righteous servant. 1 John publishes the sinlessness of our Lord in a number of places. 1 John 3, in two places right there.

Already, in chapter 2, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is righteous. 1 John 3:5. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning, verse 4, also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness.

You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him, there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. He knew no sin, and he was righteous.

The Son of God is a sinless Savior, and that is exactly what we sinners need. I want to conclude the demonstrations of Jesus' humanity by saying a little more about what I mentioned yesterday. There are three places, it seems to me, I've never seen anybody else say it just like this, so I always say if I'm ever original, you better be careful, watch out.

Anyway, perhaps there are more places than these, but I find three places where Jesus' humanity is so stark, my word is raw, and it has rankled the feathers of the church. His temptation, the Spirit led him out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Surely, he is vulnerable; he is weak.

As a matter of fact, angels get involved. Oh, not in helping him with the temptations, but the Spirit drives him out. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.

No kidding. He drank water, and he had to drink to live, but wow. Be gone, Satan, for the final temptation, verse 10.

For it is written, that's the words that he used introducing the Old Testament: you shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. Matthew 4:11, at the end of the temptation account, then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. That was necessary.

As the God-man, he was weak. Jesus was truly tempted by the devil. Did he sin? No, he didn't sin, but he was tempted.

Hebrews 4:15, he experienced every kind of temptation that we do. I have heard of wonderful believers, and now they're reacting to portrayals of this in movies about the life of Christ. And I don't justify everything in those movies, but I cannot stand to see him groveling before the devil. Well, I guess I wouldn't like to see that either,

right? And I don't know how it should be portrayed, but I'll tell you one thing: he was tempted.

There was a genuine solicitation to evil from the devil's perspective, and he was hungry. my understanding is he had the power to turn stones into bread, so Satan exactly wants, if you are the son of God, do it. The temptation was for him to use the power that he had, divine power, outside of the Father's will, and it was a real temptation. He was famished, but he refused the temptation.

He said no to Satan, and we are the benefactors of his being made perfect, his lifelong purity. Should we recoil? Should we be embarrassed by his suffering in this way? No, we should love him because the one who loved us and gave himself for us suffered in every way as we suffer, yet victoriously. He is one of our race.

He's the God-man, and as such, he died in our place. Especially problematic is Matthew 24:36. No one knows the day of the hour.

I want to chuckle, and then I want to get sick when I hear of good people, for the most part, setting dates for Jesus' second coming. It just tweaks my spiritual beak to no end. Even more than that, it hurts the church.

It hurts the testimony of the Lord. Oh my word, because, of course, that kind of stuff gets press, and they refer to Jesus saying no one knows the day of the hour, and people have honestly said you can know the month and the year. Oh my word, did he really have to say no one knows the second, the minute, the hour, the day, the week, the month, the year, the decade? Come on, it's absurd.

That kind of a study of God's word is embarrassing, and more than that, oh my goodness, sometimes Christians have sold everything they have had and gone to look, and one for the Lord's waiting for his coming, and when he didn't come, some of them committed suicide because they lived in honor and shame cultures, and they couldn't go back and face their neighbors to whom they had given all their possessions. Oh, that is sick. Listen to Jesus' words, Matthew 24:36, concerning that day and hour no one knows.

No one knows, and you don't go give me the, we can know the month of the year. Oh my gosh, not even the angels of heaven know. They're not omniscient.

They don't know all things. God doesn't, apparently hasn't told him everything, nor the son, but the father only knows the time of the second coming. What? Wait a minute.

The cults run right here and say, look, look, doesn't God know everything? Yes. Does Jesus know everything? No. Therefore, he's not God.

Well, from the beginning, the church fudged on this. They couldn't handle it, and you'll have the father saying things like, well, well, he really did know, but for the sake of the disciples, he said that. That's not right.

No. Well, how can we handle this if he is God? He is God in the sense that there's no reduction of powers in his incarnation. As the God-man, he has all the divine qualities and attributes.

He doesn't give up their possession. He gives up their exercise. That is, he only uses his divine powers in obedience to the Father's will.

And for reasons we do not know, while on earth in his state of humiliation, the Lord Jesus Christ did not; it was not the will of the Father for the Lord Jesus Christ to know the time of his second coming. Does he know it now? Of course, he knows it now. Does the Bible ever say it? No.

So the Bible doesn't say it, but as a theological move based upon the distinction between the state of humiliation and the state of glory, yes, he knows it now. Once again, his humanity is raw in this statement of ignorance. We should love him who loved us enough to submit to the Father in such a way.

You see, in Christ, God touches us. As Calvin said, the humanity of Christ forms a bond, a fraternity, he used that word, a communion between God and us. Here's how Paul said it: the man Christ Jesus is the only mediator between God and man.

His being God links him to the Father. His becoming a human being, taking a genuine human nature to himself, becoming the God-man Christ Jesus, links him to us. Thank God for Jesus' humanity.

Get them, and he's the third place we already saw. Please stay and pray with me for I am sorrowful. My soul is sorrowful to the point of death.

Luke records him sweating drops of blood. Matthew 26:36 through 46. Father, if it is your will, let this cup pass from me.

What cup is this? Matthew 25, it's a cup of God's wrath. In Gethsemane, Jesus foresees himself, figuratively, taking the cup of God's wrath and drinking it down. That is, he foresees himself experiencing the wrath of God on behalf of his people, on behalf of whosoever would believe in him.

And he shrinks from it, sinfully, not sinfully. What this shows is the cost of our redemption. We cannot begin to comprehend that the one who said repeatedly, this

is my beloved son, whom I love, that on the cross for three hours the Father turned himself away, as the Christian song says.

He turns his face away. The son bears the condemnation that we deserve. Galatians 3:13, Christ delivered us, redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

It doesn't mean, as I've sometimes heard people with great enthusiasm and little understanding say, that he became some other entity, a curse. No, it means he died as an accursed man. Oh, but there never is a separate man.

The God-man died as an accursed man, bearing the curse of the law, God's threat of punishment, that is, as announced in Deuteronomy, on all lawbreakers. He was not a lawbreaker, but he died in the place of lawbreakers and took that judgment. Romans 3:25-26, God set him forth publicly as a propitiation in his blood, his justifier of the one who believes in Jesus.

Jesus took the punishment that we deserve for our sins on the cross. This is the doctrine of propitiation, out of favor even with many evangelicals today. But it is taught in Romans 3:25-26, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, and 1 John 4, perhaps it's 17 or 20, it's there in chapter 4. Jesus recoiled from the prospect not only of a gruesome, torturous, physical death but he recoiled from the prospect of becoming the sin-bearer and experiencing the wrath of God in order to save people like you and me.

Thank the Lord for Gethsemane. No, we don't need to explain away places where Jesus' humanity is so stark. Rather, we rejoice that the one who loved us was not only God in heaven but God in heaven who became God on earth and loved us and gave himself for us to save us from our sins.

In our next lecture, we'll take up subordination and the peccability-impeccability discussion. That is our plan, Lord willing.

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