

Lord Jesus, our perfect saving Substitute, you became man, in order to be placed under the Law for us and suffer and die in our place and as the Son of God you have an everlasting righteousness to bestow upon the world of sinners and were able to suffer the eternal punishment for all sin of all mankind, cause us ever to be grateful for what You have secured for us as our God-Man Savior and make us steadfast unto our end that we may inherit eternal life which You secured for us by Your holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death. Amen.

So the Jews grumbled about [Jesus], because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me-not that anyone has seen the Father except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

In Christ Jesus, who provided us perfect substitution, so that we might be found justified before God now and forever, dear fellow redeemed:

On the one hand, many of the Jews knew that the Christ would be God and so rejected Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ since it was so obvious He was a man. On the other hand, when He showed forth His divinity in His miracles, like the one He had just performed by feeding the 5,000, they still questioned it and said: "How does He now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Today many reject Jesus as God because they do not witness His miracles firsthand and see Him only as a famous human teacher who admittedly made an impact on the stage of world history, but was merely an example, not a Savior. Believers, like you, know Jesus to be both God and Man, and because of that you believe He is your Savior. So let us review for ourselves today this blessed truth: **God Made Flesh Alone Gives New Life.**

### I

We might object that the Jews of Jesus' day had every reason to know that the Christ would be a true human being. After all, it was prophesied that He would be born, yes, through a virgin, but He would arrive just as we all do. It was prophesied that He would be made to suffer, even die and then rise again. But to the natural mind that was awaiting this promised Rescuer, He would need divine

qualities and abilities. The notion of a person who was true God and true Man at the same time was thought to be a logical fallacy.

You might recall that on Tuesday of Holy Week, the religious leaders in Jerusalem asked Jesus several questions hoping to trip Him up. But they all failed. Jesus then turned the table on them by asking: “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They answered together – “The Son of David.” Then quoting Ps. 110 Jesus asked them: “How can David, His Father call Him ‘Lord’?” They had no answer, because they refused to admit that the Christ must be both the Son of Man and the Son of God!

Then there are the self-righteous sinners of today who have not been awaiting such a Savior. They would tend to look for a very good person who would teach motivating lessons backed up by a life worthy of emulation – perhaps such people as Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Billy Graham and the like. Since all of them are now dead, they certainly are not to be looked as a Savior as such, but exemplary persons who rose above the rest of us and give hope that we can improve our lives by patterning our lives according to them.

How about you my fellow believers, faith in our God/Man Savior is promised to bestow eternal life upon you, do you believe in Jesus aright? Or do you primarily see Him as one or the other – God **OR** man? Beware if that is happening for you, Satan is deceiving you and you may be in danger of forfeiting the eternal life Jesus eagerly desires you to have with Him.

## II

God became man in the person of Jesus, is foundational to our Christian faith. Our Lord Jesus is fully divine, the eternally begotten Son of God, and fully man, born of the Virgin Mary. And for our salvation to be accomplished, He must be both. He must be a man to be put under the Law of God in our place and to suffer and die in our place. In addition He must be God for Him to have the eternal righteousness to give to us and for His death, especially suffering our eternal death, to count as payment for all the sins of all people.

Luther said something like this: *“We Christians should know that if God is not in the scale (of divine justice) to give it weight, we, on our side, sink to the ground. (So) if it cannot be said that God (lived and) died for us, but only a man, we are lost; but if God’s (eternal righteousness and) death lie in the balance, His side goes down and ours goes up like a light and empty scale. Yet He can also readily go up again, or leap out of the scale! But (Jesus) could not sit on the scale unless He became a man like us, so that (our Substitute would be obligated to live perfectly under the Law and) it could be called God’s dying, God’s martyrdom, God’s blood, and God’s death.*

*For God in His own nature cannot (be forced to live under His own Law nor) die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is called God's (life and) death when the man (lives and) dies who is one substance or one person with God."*<sup>i</sup>

It is hoped that you see why it was necessary for our Substitutionary Savior to be both God and man. Even though God could have created a perfect person again, who would be able to remain perfect. Such a person could only substitute for just one of us. So each one of us would need a perfect person who would never sin and then sacrifice himself in death and it would take all eternity to suffer it for us. This would have to happen so we the sinners might live forever in heaven, and each one of our holy substitutes would suffer eternally in hell. But what sense would that make? – sinners would inhabit heaven and the righteous would inhabit hell!

God alone could not do the work we needed done, He needed to be born under the Law and then be able to die. Neither of these is the living righteous God able to do. The person and work of Christ Jesus are so intimately connected; the work required to save us had to be done by this God/Man Savior.

So foundational are these truths that as we ponder them constantly anew in our lives as Christians we grow in our faith so that we continue to plumb the depths of the knowledge of God for our salvation. But this gets to the heart of the Christian faith, since we are confronted with our severe problem of sin and death. It required God to become flesh, our brother, to rescue us from our lost condition.

### III

Without God becoming flesh and sacrificing Himself in our place under the Law and unto death, we would suffer death everlastingly. Instead we have life. Christ came down from heaven as the bread of life, which we take within ourselves and thereby possess life.

You are not grumbling like those who ate the miracle bread the day before which could not give them life for more than a few days. The heavenly Father, your Creator, drew you by His Spirit to believe in His Son, the living Bread sent down from heaven. Every time our Lord Jesus comes to you through Word and Sacrament He gives you life. Since in these means you receive the forgiveness of sins and you know well wherever there is forgiveness there is life and salvation.

So when our Lord places in your mouth to eat and to drink His very body given for you and His very blood shed for you, you receive Him not only as the crucified Lord Jesus but also as the risen

Lord Jesus. He promised He would raise you up on the last day based on this saving work performed in your behalf.

If you have now realized that you have **not** pondered deeply the person of Christ Jesus, do not despair. What you have heard today has refreshed your memory, which is a blessed thing. You have truly been taught by God, since His Son has come from Him and has revealed Him to you as your loving savior God. What is more, by just hearing these profound truths, your faith in Christ your Savior has been strengthened, your sins of doubt and ignorance are all forgiven. God continues to perform His saving work upon you and you should know that He is committed to doing the same all your life. Our bread of life has come down from heaven, now eat and live. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> *On the Councils and the Church*, quoted in the *Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration VIII:44*, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, McCain et al., Eds. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005, 2006) pp. 588-89