

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 3 MAY 2009: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 143:8

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: Hymn 12-2:4

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Hymn 1-1(24):7

Scripture reading: Luke 2

Scripture text: Luke 2: 13-14 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 14

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

In the Belgic Confession, article 8, we confess a number of aspects of God. We confess an aspect which the Word of the Lord reveals to us: *God is one single essence in which are three distinct Persons.*

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is one single essence, in which are three persons

- Really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties:
- Namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The host of angels are servants of the Lord – spiritual creatures who are often employed by the Lord to serve us people. That which we confess is precisely what, at God's command, they revealed that night!

- The fact that the angels tore the night apart in song is not just a story told to enhance the Bible.

- In the passage we have read they proclaim the gospel to us
- They announce the fulfilment of God's promises of redemption: the Messiah is born!

Firstly they proclaim in song the glory of God.

Glory to God in the highest!

- Before them a group of dumbstruck shepherds sat listening.
- To them was announced the peace of God and the redemption through the Child who was born!
 ...**on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests!**

All that happened that night is so typical of all that people do wrong!

- Herod was unable to recognise the revelation of God (and with it God Himself!) in the child in the manger.
- Hence God reveals to the shepherds through the angels' song the identity of the Child.

In truth it is nothings else but the fulfilment of the Lord's Word.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1John 4:10)

That is precisely what the angels announced that night.

- God the Father executed His Plan of Salvation
- With it He made true His promises to us: He assumed our flesh and became man.

The Father is the cause, origin, and the beginning of all things visible and invisible

- He created everything – man also to whom He entrusted the cultivation of and the care for His creation.
- But man proved to be unable to perform his task!

But during the course of many years God announced His love and that He would become man and reconcile us with Him.

- The angels announced that during that night the Lord had kept His promises.
- The Saviour is born
- He will restore peace between God and mankind.

The one who was born is the Son of God.

- *The Son is the Word, the Wisdom and the image of the Father.*
- *It is therefore evident that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father*
- *And likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son.*

Nevertheless, these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed, for the Father has not assumed our flesh and blood, neither has the Holy Spirit, but the Son only.

- The child lying helplessly in the manger is the Son of God.
- He is God who was clothed with light but who lay there wrapped in cloths.
- He is God who cannot be contained in the heaven of heavens but who assumed the body of man.

All that happened then (and also the fact that) the Lord Jesus was born as man must not mislead us.

- The Tri-unity of God is an incomprehensible mystery.
- All we can do is to accept it in faith
- *The Father has never been without His Son, or without His Holy Spirit. For these three, in one and the same essence, are equal in eternity.*
- *There is neither first nor last; for They are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness and in mercy.*

How do we reach the point where we can accept and confess the Tri-unity – three Persons but one Essence – of God?

- The answer is: through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit
- He is the third Person of God
- *The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son.*

Nevertheless, God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has His personal existence, distinguished by Their properties; but in such a way that these three persons are but one only God.

Let us read together what we confess about these matters in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 14:

14. Lord's Day

Q. 35.

What is the meaning of these words "He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary"?

A.

That God's eternal Son, who is, and continues (a) true and eternal God, (b) took upon him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, (c) by the operation of the Holy Ghost; (d) that he might also be the true seed of David, (e) like unto his brethren in all things, (f) sin excepted. (g)

(a)

Rom.1:4: And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Rom.9:5: Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

(b)

1 John 5:20: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

John 1:1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 17:3: And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Rom.1:3: Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

Col.1:15: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

(c)

Gal.4:4: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Luke 1:31: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

Luke 1:42: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Luke 1:43: And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

(d)

John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Matt.1:18: Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Matt.1:20: But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Luke 1:35: And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

(e)

Ps.132:11: The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

Rom.1:3: Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

2 Sam.7:12 :And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

Luke 1:32: He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Acts 2:30: Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

(f)

Philip.2:7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Heb.2:14: Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Heb.2:17: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

(g)

Heb.4:15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Q. 36.

What profit dost thou receive by Christ's holy conception and nativity?

A.

That he is our Mediator; (a) and with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth. (b)

(a)

Heb.7:26: For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Heb.7:27: Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Heb.2:17: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

(b)

1 Pet.1:18: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1 Pet.1:19: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1 Pet.3:18: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1 Cor.1:30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

1 Cor.1:31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Rom.8:3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Rom.8:4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Isa.53:11: He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Ps.32:1 <<A Psalm of David, Maschil.>>: Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 139:3.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship if the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen

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Reformed Church Bellville

3 May 2009

Scripture: New International Version