

Doctrine of the Trinity, Part 4

We have seen how the virgin conception served the very practical purpose of keeping the Messiah free from the sin nature and the taint of the original sin of Adam, which is normally imputed to the sin nature at birth. Some denominations attach all manner of meanings to the fact that Mary conceived while still a virgin and attempt to make virginity a synonym for holiness. In the process, they demean the birth of Christ, bringing it to a Victorian puritanical level, and make sex seem somehow inherently evil. Unless abused, sex is not evil; it was designed by God. The virgin conception was for the sole purpose of preventing the transmission of the sin nature of man to the humanity of Christ. To attach any other significance to it is to create a distraction away from Christ, and guess who might want to do that?

Once Jesus was born, Mary's virginity had served its purpose, so there was no need for her to remain celibate. In fact, the Scriptures indicate that she did not remain celibate and was the mother of other children by Joseph (Acts 1:14; Mark 15:40; 16:1; Matthew 13:55-56; Galatians 1:19). To the argument that these were the children of a previous marriage by Joseph, it should be noted that they are never mentioned before the adult period of Jesus. If the other children were from a previous marriage, where were they when Joseph took Mary and "the young child" and fled into Egypt to escape Herod (Matthew 2:13-22)?

It is true that the word *adelphos*, from which "brother" or "brethren" is translated, can also be interpreted figuratively and need not refer to blood kin. But Jesus Himself differentiates between His own brothers and those who are brothers figuratively in Luke 8, making it clear that in this passage the "brothers" are indeed His blood kin.

Luke 8:19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you."
²¹ But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

John 7:5 For not even his brothers believed in him.

Evidently, Jesus' brothers were not followers until later in life. If this term "brethren" or "brother" does not refer to kin but to believers in this passage, then the passage would make no sense.

In Acts 1, we see "Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" in prayer and supplication.

Acts 1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

This suggests that the brothers of Jesus eventually became believers that He was the Messiah. As mentioned in the last lesson, James, the author of the Book of James, is the brother of our Lord. This was widely accepted by the early Church fathers and expressed in their writings.

Matthew 1 tells us that Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant and considered quietly divorcing her for adultery, an offense under the Law that could have led to Mary being stoned. Under first-century Jewish customs, Mary and Joseph were officially married when the marriage contract was signed. After that, the bride remained with her family for as long as a year while her husband prepared proper quarters for her before the marriage was consummated. It was during this period, before Mary and Joseph came together as husband and wife, that Mary became pregnant. In a dream, an angel told Joseph it was okay to proceed with the wedding, and he did. But note what verse 25 says.

Matthew 1:24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ **but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.** And he called his name Jesus.
(Emphasis added)

"Knew" is *ginosko*, used here as a Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. This is a clear Biblical statement that Mary and Joseph had normal sexual relations after the birth of Jesus. There was no reason for them not to.

It is extremely difficult to consider the massive amount of evidence in Holy Scripture that Jesus had brothers and sisters and still defend the myth of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The evidence is overwhelming.

Furthermore, once you understand the purpose the Virgin Conception served, the perpetual virginity of Mary becomes a nonessential and meaningless concept.

Born without a sin nature and free of the taint of Adam's original sin imputed to man's sin nature, Jesus lived His 33 years on earth in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit and achieved complete victory over sin. That uniquely qualified Him to go to the Cross as the "lamb without spot or blemish," our substitute, to be judged in our stead. God can only accept perfection. The Levitical system of sacrifices demanded it in the animals presented as a picture of the lamb that would come and deal with sin as the only perfect sacrifice. Sin was only hidden or "atoned" before the Cross. With the Cross, sin was judged once and forever. Under the law of double jeopardy, your sins will never be mentioned again as a charge against you – not even for unbelievers. Christ took ALL sins upon Himself and was judged.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, **who takes away the sin of the world!**" (Emphasis added)

I don't care how heinous a sin you can think of; it was judged at the Cross. The worst sin ever committed by any person was imputed to Christ and judged. It is impossible to commit a sin that has not already been judged. Therefore, you cannot commit a sin for which you can't find forgiveness.

There is one sin, and only one, that can fail to receive the grace of God and not find mercy. That sin is simply the rejection of Jesus as the Christ and of what He did at the Cross for all of us. Salvation is a free gift by grace through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Rejecting Christ is rejecting the free gift, and since we are already born condemned (John 3:18), that leaves the unbeliever lost and in a state of condemnation unless and until he receives Christ as his personal savior. That condemnation is lifted from those "in Christ" (Romans 8:1).

We have seen that it was necessary for the Messiah to be without sin in His life. He must be free from the slightest hint of sin to be qualified to go to the Cross and be judged as our substitute, so that we would not be judged. All men are sinners, as Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The passage makes no exceptions

for any man or woman. Every single human being is a sinner! But we have seen that it was possible for one man to be born without a sin nature, Jesus of Nazareth. As a result of the virgin conception, Jesus was born without a sin nature and thus not identified with Adam's sin.

Adam was created without a sin nature, and Jesus was born without one. The only way Christ could have acquired a sin nature was the same way Adam did, through personal sin. But Jesus did not sin during His time on earth. The Scriptures are very clear on this.

1 Peter 2:22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Also Isaiah 53:9; Luke 23:4; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 3:5.

Furthermore, Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He "was tempted as we are, yet without sin." A serious hypothetical question arises about whether Christ, being human, had the ability to sin. Was He truly like us and tempted as the Scriptures say, or was what He experienced nothing like what we must deal with during our lifetimes? Was He peccable or impeccable?

If He was God, how could Jesus be tempted? God can have nothing to do with sin except to judge it. But in the hypostatic union, Jesus was also true humanity. That is, as a man, He experienced the same things we do, including hunger, thirst, anger, sorrow, pleasure, weariness, pain, and temptation. Through the hypostatic union, God identified Himself with humanity and all of humanity's trials and temptations.

In the hypostatic union, Jesus was also undiminished deity. That is, none of the attributes of deity He possessed were lost or diminished. As God, Jesus possessed every attribute of deity, including omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. With such power, He could easily have avoided sin. But He set aside His deity and depended entirely on the Holy Spirit for His guidance, sustenance, and power (Matthew 4:1; 3:16; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1, 14, 18; 3:32; Hebrews 2:7-9; Isaiah 11:2; 61:1). In the hypostatic union, Jesus lived as a man and **did not use His own divine power** to resist sin. He was made "a little lower than the angels," and **He**

used the power of the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to achieve complete and utter victory over sin.

Even the miracles He performed were not done in the power of His own deity but in the power of the Spirit. Thus, Jesus of Nazareth, though He was God, “walked in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16) and proved that victory over sin was possible. **Jesus test-drove the prototype spiritual life, proved that it worked, and left it for us to use** (John 14:16-26; Acts 1:8).

Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers today have access to the same power source Jesus used. This was not available universally before the Cross. From then on, all believers will have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and divine enablement. When we use this power source, we too can have victory over sin, just as Jesus did.

He was tempted in His humanity far beyond anything we could understand. That is why His temptation in Matthew 4:1-10 was so unique. With no sin nature, all temptation to the humanity of Jesus Christ came from without. Because we have a sin nature, our temptations can come from both within and without. We are tempted by mental attitude sins from within and by overt sins from without. The human nature of Christ was temptable, but the divine nature was not.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Christ resisted the greatest temptation in Gethsemane when He faced the Cross (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:35-36; Luke 22:42). The first Adam failed the volition test; the last Adam passed with flying colors!

In Matthew 4:1-10, Christ resisted the temptation to use His divine attributes and thus to act independently of God the Father. He could have turned the stones into bread by His omnipotence, but His humanity, filled with the Holy Spirit, refused. He could have thrown Himself off the Temple roof and called upon angels to save Him, but He did not.

Born without a sin nature, Christ was not identified with Adam’s sin. Depending entirely on the Holy Spirit while in hypostatic union on earth, Christ's humanity was able to achieve victory over sin. These two facts left

Christ completely free of the taint of sin and uniquely qualified as a man to go to the Cross and be judged for our sins in our place.

Being born without a sin nature, not having been imputed with Adam's original sin, and having spent His entire life without committing any personal sin, Jesus Christ, the God/Man in hypostatic union, was the only sacrifice acceptable to the perfect righteousness of God. This "lamb without spot or blemish" who knew no sin was totally undeserving of condemnation. He would go to the Cross and stand in our place. He would take upon Himself the sins of the entire world, not just those of the elect, but every member of the human race, every sin, including the sins of the most evil person you can imagine, even the sins of Joe Stalin and Adolph Hitler – and even yours.

It all began about midnight, when a detail of soldiers, Temple Guards, and Romans, guided by Judas, came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley from the Temple Mount. He was immediately whisked through a series of six trials. Four were under the greatest system of jurisprudence at that time, and that system broke down! Had the trials been conducted according to Jewish Law as handed down to Israel by God, Jesus would have been found innocent. These four trials were nothing more than a legal sham.

The remaining two of the trials under Pontius Pilate were less rigged, but the weak procurator of Rome wished to avoid problems with the Jews and attempted to wash his hands of the whole miserable affair, yet failed to do so.

The First Trial

John 18:12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³ First, they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

After his arrest, Jesus was taken to Annas, a former high priest and current political boss of Jerusalem. Religious Jews were behind the move to arrest Jesus. They included the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees.

The Pharisees were one of Israel's religious and political parties. They arose in the second century BC to put into practice, as exactly as possible, all the details of the Mosaic Law as traditionally interpreted. The Pharisees are what we would call "legalists" today. They were zealots for the application of the Law, as well as self-righteous and arrogant in their zeal.

Because Annas was no longer the high priest, he was not a judge; but as a political boss, he had to be consulted on all matters before they went to court. Annas approved the case and, following Caiaphas's counsel, decided to "railroad" Jesus.

Note the phrase spoken by Caiaphas in verse 14, "it was expedient that one man should die for the people." In the minds of the religious leaders, Jesus's death would be good for all Israel. The phrase is dripping with irony! Indeed, the death of one man would make the salvation of all possible.

The Second Trial

Matthew 26:57 Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.

This was the first trial that was supposed to be legal. Jesus was already considered guilty because Annas had so pronounced him. It was technically illegal because it was held at night. Furthermore, there was no defense attorney.

Under Jewish law, two witnesses must agree in their separate testimony; otherwise, there is no case. Many could have been called to testify to His miracles, but they were not. Instead, numerous false witnesses lied in this court, but none agreed. Finally, two gave testimony that was taken as agreement, and on this, they tried to form an indictment.

Matthew 26:59 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last, two came forward, ⁶¹ , and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.' "

Jesus was, of course, speaking of His own body as the Temple of God and His death, and His resurrection three days later, not the Temple on the Temple Mount. Caiaphas demanded a response, and Jesus refused to answer the charge.

Matthew 26:63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

This may not seem like a very strong answer, but what Jesus said was, in effect, an emphatic “yes” affirming that He was the Christ! Caiaphas recognized the answer for what it was.

Matthew 26:65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”

The penalty for blasphemy was death. Now the violence began. They spat on Him, punched Him, and pulled out His beard. They beat the Man to a pulp! By the time they were finished, it would be hard to recognize Him, yet He uttered not a word, as a lamb to the slaughter (paraphrase of Acts 8:32 and Isa. 53:7).

Third Trial

Luke 22:66 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷ “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸ and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” ⁷⁰ So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” ⁷¹ Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

The elders and religious leaders realized the second trial was illegal and held another after sunrise. They tried to get Him to convict Himself by

asking, “Are you the Son of God?” His answer was true and the admission they were seeking. Once again, they pronounced Him guilty.

Fourth Trial

John 18:28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor’s headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor’s headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

Jesus was taken to Pilate, but because they did not want to defile themselves on the day of Passover, they did not enter Pilate’s house. The Jews could not enter a gentile dwelling on a holy day. Pilate had to come out to them.

John 18:29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?”

Pilate wants to know what Jesus did. The Jews reacted indignantly!

John 18:30 They answered him, “If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.”

Notice that they did not mention blasphemy. Jewish theological issues would be of no concern to Pilate. Romans worshiped only Caesar.

Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”

They implied that Jesus was setting Himself up as King and trying to lead a revolt against Rome. Pilate remained calm and interrogated Jesus. According to Timothy 6:13, “...Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.” Jesus answered Pilate’s questions truthfully, and Pilate listened attentively. Pilate decided Jesus was innocent but tried to evade responsibility and turned Him back over to the Jews. But the Jews put more pressure on Pilate to act. Pilate wanted an out! Upon discovering that Jesus was a Galilean, he decided to pass the responsibility to Herod, who was king of the northern kingdom, with Galilee in his district. Herod happened to be in town that day.

Fifth Trial

Luke 23:8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.

Herod hoped Jesus would perform a miracle for him and entertain him. When Jesus refused, Herod angrily ordered Him tortured. Then, after a beautiful robe was placed over His shoulders, Jesus was returned to Pilate.

Sixth Trial

John 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

Again, Pilate interrogates Jesus. We know little of what Jesus told Pilate, but note that Pilate calls Him “King of the Jews.” Pilate seems to understand something of Jesus’ claim to rulership, even though the Jews do not. Knowing that Jesus was innocent, Pilate made an ingenious attempt to secure His freedom, but it failed. He offered the Jews a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, a thief. The crowd chose to have Barabbas released. Interestingly, Barabbas means “son of the father,” so the Jews chose the criminal son of the father in place of the Eternal Son of God the Father.

Pilate was vexed, as they say. No matter how hard he tried, the legalistic Jewish leaders outsmarted him.

Matthew 27:19 ... while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream."

Pilate's wife had a dream, probably of Satanic origin, because Satan did not want Jesus to go to the Cross but wanted Him stoned to death under Jewish law, thereby frustrating the Plan of God. She also knew He was innocent. Pilate then subjected Jesus to scourging, another form of "interrogation." Scourging is a most horrible form of questioning. A whip like a cat-o'-nine-tails was used, with bits of bone and metal platted into it. This cut through the skin and muscle of the back down to the bone. Salt was then rubbed into the wound, adding to the misery.

John 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³ They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.

Pilate interrogated Jesus and again found no fault in Him.

John 19:4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

Pilate declared Jesus' innocence again! "Behold the man!" (ecce homo) is an interesting phrase, dripping with irony. "Ecce homo!" is Latin, but Eve said the same thing in Hebrew in Genesis 4:1 when Cain was born, believing he was the promised redeemer.

When the Jews heard this, they recognized it as a prophecy about the Messiah, yet they deliberately rejected Him. They wanted the crown but not the Cross. They wanted the King but not the Savior. They rejected God's Plan.

John 19:6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

Pilate declared once again, “Innocent! You will have to do it – I cannot!” He was determined to release Him, even anxious to do so.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him.

In Matthew 27:24, Pilate literally washes his hands in hopes of ridding himself of this problem, but it is to no avail. Pilate finally succumbs to pressure from the religious Jews and fear of losing his political prestige. To release Jesus would place him in the embarrassing position of being declared an enemy of Caesar. Pilate is trapped. He condemns Jesus to the ignominious death of crucifixion reserved only for the vilest criminals in the Roman Empire.

Note the magnificent poise of Jesus throughout the six trials. Did He attempt to defend Himself? Did He retaliate? Did He declare the trials unfair? Did He attack His accusers? NO! Jesus relied on the power of the Holy Spirit and chose not to sin in the face of incredible attacks on His person, His honor, and the truth. He withstood the temptation magnificently! Jesus entrusted the problem to God and fulfilled God's Plan by going to the Cross. Did He suffer? Yes, horribly! He endured incredible physical abuse, more than any of us could have stood. Did He cry out during the spitting, the punching, the beard pulling, the scourging, and the salt rubbed in His wounds? Other than answering questions, He uttered not a word, as a lamb unto the shearers, as predicted by Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.