

The Baptist Faith and Message:

II. God, Part B: God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

In stating that **Christ is the eternal Son of God**, we affirm that Christ is divine. We can, without hesitation, say that the Son is eternal, that is, He had no beginning and shall have no end. Notice that the *BF&M* rightly does not associate eternality with Jesus Christ because the incarnate Christ did not always exist. Jesus, the incarnate Son, had a beginning; He was born. Although the *BF&M* does not mention it, the Son (or the Holy Spirit for that matter) is not in any way subordinate to the Father, but co-equal. In the early days of the Church, there was much confusion regarding the nature of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. His nature was vigorously debated over four centuries before being “settled” by the council at Chalcedon in 451 AD.

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Southern Baptists believe in the virgin birth of Christ, the miraculous conception. It should not be called or confused with “the immaculate conception,” which is Roman Catholic teaching that Mary was sinless. Since the days of scientific “enlightenment,” the miracles of the Bible have been denied, even from within the Church. Many who identify themselves as Christians do not believe in the virgin birth or the creation account. We can never entertain any suggestion that Jesus was born by the natural union of Joseph (or any other man) and Mary. Belief in the virgin birth is fundamental to Christianity.

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin.

Jesus is God incarnate and, therefore, His every word and deed was a living revelation of God to mankind. Only in Jesus Christ has there been a perfect union of human nature with divine nature. Yet, we must confess that it is a mysterious union, which Scripture does not fully explain. The *BF&M* teaches that Jesus was human in every respect except for sin. He was sinless. Sometimes, His sinlessness is referred to as impeccability, which means no ability to sin. However, to say that He identified Himself “completely” with mankind could be misunderstood. For example, He did not enter into marriage, which is a creation institution and common to humanity. Although He could have married and had children without sinning, He was already betrothed to the Church, His bride-to-be. Also, in using the word “completely”, the *BF&M* leaves open the possibility that Jesus did marry and have children as some of the gnostic “gospels” would have us believe.

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He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin.

More than honoring the law, Jesus perfectly and completely fulfilled the law. His law keeping did not produce righteousness in Him or make Him a worthy sacrifice. He was eternally righteous, eternally worthy and His fulfillment of the law served to demonstrate that fact. Of course, had He failed to keep it, He would not have been a lamb without blemish. It was simply impossible for Him to fail. The *BF&M* affirms that Jesus' death on the cross was substitutionary and provided redemption from sin. By "substitutionary", we understand that He took the place of or substituted for people and He received the punishment for their sins. However, it leaves open to interpretation whether Jesus substituted for all mankind (a general atonement) or for the elect only (a specific atonement). Even though I believe the latter view of the atonement, I can still affirm the *BF&M* because, either way, the statement that He "made provision" is true. I would say that, beyond making provision for redemption, He infallibly secured redemption for the persons for whom He substituted, the elect. The wrath of God was poured upon the Surety and He uttered "It is finished", signifying that the debts of those for whom He substituted were paid in full.

He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man.

The *BF&M* affirms that Jesus had a physical resurrection from death in which His resurrection body was recognized as Jesus and had material substance that was touched by Thomas. Jesus did not recover from a fainting spell. We speak of the resurrection not the resuscitation. Neither was His resurrection only spiritual as some would say. Lazarus and others have been raised from the dead to later die again. Enoch was translated prior to death. Jesus, however, is the only person to be resurrected; He is the First Fruit. His resurrection is essential to our salvation. Without it, Paul says we remain in our sins. In the resurrection, He defeated death. The ascension of the Lord Jesus further demonstrates His divinity and supernatural power. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man. In having both human and divine nature united in one Person, He understands both sides in the dispute between God and man. The *BF&M* states that reconciliation is "effected" in Christ, which means that the reconciliation is effective and accomplished in Him. In other words, God and man are reconciled and, thus, there is no longer a problem. This again raises the question regarding the extent of the reconciliation. Reasonably, the extent of the reconciliation should be no different than the extent of the atonement, which we discussed earlier. The atonement and reconciliation are necessarily connected. To reconcile a debt, it must be paid and Jesus paid it all. If Jesus substituted for and atoned for all men and took upon Himself their punishment to satisfy their sin debt, then hell is surely a place of hideous injustice. Hell becomes the place of the second punishment. Punish the Son and the sinner? May it never be!

He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

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In keeping with the Scripture promises, the *BF&M* upholds the return of Christ and that He will judge the world. In terms of when or how He will return, the *BF&M* makes no clear commitment. Notice that there is no mention of Christ having an earthly millennial kingdom or His returning secretly to rapture the church before the “great tribulation.” Given that pre-tribulational, premillennialism predominates in the SBC, it is not surprising that many in the convention have desired to amend the *BF&M* to reflect this particular view of the end times. More on that topic later when we cover the Section X: Last Things. Finally, in the sense that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, Christ does indwell all believers. Christ lives in us through His Spirit. However, indwelling of believers is more typically attributed to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.