

1) THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN CHRIST

a) Introduction

- i) The central doctrines of Christianity are those about Jesus Christ.
- ii) How God is in Christ is a deep mystery we will never fully penetrate. But as we reflect on it we learn a bit more each time.
- iii) It is important to remember that we believe in a Person, Jesus. We do not "believe" in doctrines in the sense that our trust is in him and not them.
- iv) Much "Christology" is done in abstract philosophical or theological language. The Bible, however, mostly speaks of Jesus by telling stories.

b) The Doctrine of the Incarnation

i) Introduction

- (1) Guthrie wants to speak of the incarnation from the point of view of "He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary". He prefers this approach to, say, beginning with John 1:1-18.
- (2) To say that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit is to say God is present in Jesus in a unique way. In Jesus, a human being, God is truly with us.
 - (a) This is not a metaphor
 - (b) This is not a spiritual presence.
- (3) Jesus was born at a particular time and a particular place. See Luke 2. God enters into the darkness of the world, into its politics and economics.
- (4) Jesus is not half-divine, half-human like some of the Greek and Roman heroes whose father was a god and whose mother was a human (e.g. Hercules).
 - (a) "Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary" means that Jesus had no human father.

- (b) Jesus was created in the womb of Mary in a way similar to the way God created everything in Genesis 1: "And God said, 'Let there be light...'"
- (c) In the virgin birth affirmation, Mary is portrayed as the ideal human being...she hears God's word and obeys, bending her will to God's.
- ii) Jesus was a real human being
 - (1) Among other things, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth affirms the humanity of Christ
 - (a) Mary gives birth to a real baby...not a ray of light!
 - (b) Jesus was a Jew
 - (i) He was a member of a "despised race"
 - (ii) He was a descendent of Abraham
 - (c) Jesus was male but the NT focuses not on his maleness but on his humanity
 - (d) Jesus experienced human limitations, even death.
 - (e) Jesus was tempted to sin and had to struggle against it.
 - (f) Jesus was sinless thus again revealing that sin is not a part of human nature. Man is not by nature a sinner.
 - (g) Jesus' sinlessness did not correspond to what Jewish religious leaders thought of as sinlessness... "He eats with sinners..."
- iii) In Jesus, God is with us
 - (1) In Jesus of Nazareth, God is present in a unique way.
 - (2) Jesus was not just a great teacher.
 - (3) Jesus was not just a political revolutionary
 - (4) Jesus was not a hero, a uniquely brave man
 - (5) Jesus was not simply the founder of another religion.

- (6) To know Jesus is not to know a great human being, but to know God.
- (7) What Jesus says and does is God's word and God's action.
- (8) Early Christians did not believe this because they believed Jesus was born of a virgin. They believed it because of what he said and did and because of his resurrection. Faith in Jesus comes first, then ideas about miraculous birth follow.
- (9) What do we mean when we say Jesus is the Son of God?
 - (a) It is a title of Majesty, in fact it was the title given to the ancient Kings of Israel. So it means Jesus is a King.
 - (b) For Jesus this title was mostly a sign of his servanthood to God, his weakness in suffering and dying. In the temptation stories Jesus shows himself to be the true son of God, not by exercising power or claiming special privileges, but by trusting in God's providence. In Mark's Gospel Jesus is first confessed by the Centurion when he sees how Jesus dies.
 - (c) God has become small and weak to reveal the value of human life as life loved by God. God thus puts His stamp of approval on human life. God is not so "high and mighty" that He will not come down and dwell with human beings and share our life on earth.