

THE PERSON OF CHRIST (2)

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Hebrews 1: 1-4.

We have seen in the first sermon on this subject that there is no more glorious subject than to look at the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. For if He is not the Person that He is described as here, then He will not perform the work that we need Him to do if we are to be saved from our sins.

In our last study, we saw that the Lord Jesus is truly God. All the things that we read about Him in Hebrews 1:1-4 can only be said of Him if He is God. When on earth, He receives the worship of men and He does things, such as forgive sin, things that only God can do. We also saw that His deity is not a lesser deity than that of His Father's.

Now we move on to see that He is also fully man.

1. He is a man

We say of our Lord Jesus Christ that, just as He is fully God, He is also fully man. This is the incarnation, the 'enfleshing' of God, where God, in addition to being God, also becomes man. The gospels in their entirety describe the life of one who is fully human to us. We learn that He was born (Luke 2:6-7), coming into the world as every other human being, and needed swaddling cloths to keep Him warm and safe, as well as a place to be laid, although that turned out in His case to be a manger. Though without sin, He does all that anyone with our nature needs to do. We find that He needs to sleep (Luke 8:23). He eats the Passover with His disciples, just as He needed to eat with them to have the strength for the work He was doing. He is not spared the act of perspiring (Luke 22:44), as though His elevated Person, should be allowed to escape the commoner things and experiences of life. Also, in common with us in our humanity, He has to learn through the various stages of life (Luke 2: 40 & 52; and Hebrews 5:8) and manifest His obedience through new experiences that He would encounter in His life.

Of course, very evidently He dies. This shows that He is fully man. This is contained in Hebrews 1:3 where He purges our sins by His sacrifice. His death is mentioned in Hebrews 2:9. John reports the fact very clearly that He witnessed Him die on the cross, the separation of the water and the blood being evidence that He had died (John 19:34-35).

His full divine nature was present in our Lord along with His full human nature. Neither natures suffered because of the relationship with the other. There was no mixing up of them. Neither was there a strict division and no relationship between these natures in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. He is one Person

While we talk about His two natures, a nature cannot act, or love, or feel or respond. A person can. A person is an actual person who acts, thinks, wills and desires. A person is a subject, someone who is aware of who they are, where they are from, their life history and where they hope to go in the future. A person has self-consciousness, being aware that they are an individual, being someone capable of thinking about themselves, or thinking about themselves in relation to other people or in relation to the world in general.

Some people have said that because there are two natures our Lord has, He is therefore two Persons. There is a divine person and a human person. Sometimes He is aware of being the divine person. At other times He is aware of being the human person. So in the Scriptures He may be switching between one and the other at different points. It is like we talk of people wearing different hats. They are a person with a particular identity at work than when, for example, they are at home with their family. So our Lord is sometimes aware that He has a divine identity, and then at other times, He is aware that He has a human identity.

But we would say that He is one Person, not two. He is aware all the time that He is both God and man. He is not confused or having something of a split personality. He does not flit from one identity to the other according to some hidden rule.

In saying He is one Person leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Why, if he is God, does He seem to need to ask questions and genuinely want to know the answers? Why does He not know the day of His return? These are mysteries but this is what is required in order for the incarnation to be truly the incarnation. We cannot know what it felt like for Him or how the two natures of our Lord worked together in the one Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is both so, so divine, and so, so human.

Calvin was very helpful in setting before us, with clarity, the office of our Lord as our Mediator. He has to represent God and man in order to relate us to God. In being therefore our Mediator, there will necessarily be things we do not understand. This is how the Lord Jesus, while being God, speaks very submissively about His role in being sent by the Father and given words to speak by the Father (John 8:26; John 12:49-50). That is also why our Lord can talk about the Father being greater than Himself (John 14:28).

Yet in saying that the one Person, Jesus Christ, has a divine nature, we have not exhausted all that the Second Person of the Trinity is doing, by believing it is only what the Lord Jesus is seen to be doing and nothing else that the Second person of the Trinity is doing. We learn from John 3:13 that while the Lord has come down from heaven, He is still able, paradoxically, to be in heaven. Here is a quote from John Calvin.

For even if the Word in his immeasurable essence is united with the nature of man in one person, we do not imagine that he was confined therein. Here is something marvelous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be born in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning.

Or as an older writer by the name of Ephraim had said, 'While the conception of the Son was fashioning in the womb, He Himself was fashioning babes in the womb.' These are deep and very wonderful truths, beyond our comprehension to grasp.

3. Application

Here are a few brief points of application.

Firstly we should not be afraid if we find ourselves challenged and out of our depth. It has always been a mistake of people to try to oversimplify the Person of Christ to make it fit human reason. In so doing it has actually lost for us, the actual real Person of Christ. We should not be impatient because we do not fully understand. Our Mediator will always have aspects to His being that defy easy understanding and we should not be ashamed of this.

Next, we should not despair. The Lord has been pleased to put much truth within our reach if we are prepared to think and ponder a little. We should be grateful for what He has given to us.

We should always hold ourselves responsible for trying to gain better and clearer understanding about the Lord Jesus. The Father would have us honour Him. To neglect to try to grasp His Person better would be to fail to honour Him.

In addition, such study makes us wise against the teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christadelphians and Islam, among others.

Most importantly it helps us, when we better appreciate the true Person of the Lord Jesus, to better appreciate what He accomplished at the cross and to see the glory and wisdom of that work. For the Person of Christ reveals the depth and the reality of the work our Lord did for us at Calvary.