

THE WORK OF CHRIST

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Hebrews 1: 1-4.

We have been seeing in the last two studies that the Lord Jesus is fully God and fully man. He therefore has two natures and has them in their entirety. While this is true, He is one Person, not two. He does not think as God one moment and then think as man another moment. The thoughts, the feelings, the words are those of one Person.

We saw that the incarnation, God becoming flesh, presents us with unanswerable issues. By becoming a Mediator between God and man, it meant that there would be occasions when there would be things He said or did which would leave us puzzled. But this is how he had to be in order to be our Mediator and our Saviour.

The incarnation was not something that had a vague purpose as if God coming into the world showed His love in some vague sense or brought peace, again in some vague sense. He had come with a very definite purpose in mind and that purpose could only be fulfilled if He were both God and man. He had come to purge our sins (Hebrews 1:3), in other words, to drive them out, to thoroughly cleanse us of them.

1. What is the work?

In order for us to be saved from our sin, God had to become also a man and come into the world.

Sin is lawlessness. It stems from our nature. We do not and cannot obey the Lord's laws and commands. Our words and deeds arise from an inner attitude and thought life that is in opposition to God's revealed will and character. That this nature leads us to cause trouble and sadness, grief and harm to each other, is bad enough. Our sin is actually more offensive because we are acting against the honour and dignity of God Himself. This is more grave still because God is pure and holy. He can assess properly the damage that sin is to the world that has been made for His glory and which is defiled as a result of who we are. God, being glorious and in a position to weigh sin and the evil that it is, issues the sentence of death because there is nothing else that would adequately carry out His justice in a proportionate way.

To remedy this situation would require someone of equal dignity who would undo the damage done to God's infinite glory. It would require a Person of equal worth as God Himself. Yet it would also need someone who is a man because the penalty for sin is

death and only a man can die. God cannot. Beyond this, whoever undertakes to bring remedy must be able to change the status of sinners so that they are in a fit state, in other words, a holy state, to be able to come into the presence of God.

Obviously, there is only one Person able to meet these criteria. It is our Lord Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man.

So we can see that the incarnation was absolutely necessary if we are to be saved from our sins. It is not something vague and unexplained but very deliberate and able to meet our needs exactly. Not anyone can just die. Nor can anyone change the status of people in the sight of God. He must have the power to change people who are dead in their sins.

2. The work needs a man

In order for sin to be punished, there needs to be death. Only man can die. God cannot. The incarnation proves to us the very real humanity of our Lord Jesus. Having flesh and blood, He is able to die in our place. The virgin birth ensured that He came into the world without the original sin of Adam (See Luke 1:34-35). Then, He does not simply die at the first available opportunity, but lives a life of good works (Acts 10:38). In fact, He needs to live a life of proven righteousness, facing trials and difficulties and responding always in a way that is holy and true. For then He can receive a genuine reward for a life lived for the glory of God, showing the fruits of real godly character and righteousness. He is declared righteous by His Father and that declaration, based on a real life, can then be a gift to give to others so that they are given the status of people who have found favour with God and are beloved of Him.

To make sure that we can see that this Person has died for our sin, in accordance with the will and purpose of God, He is raised from the dead so that there can be doubt about what the Lord has done in and through Him (Acts 2:24).

3. The work needs God

A perfect man could achieve much in the purposes of God but not everything and certainly not the work of salvation. Could the death, even of a perfect man, pacify the wrath of God? Could such a death adequately pay back what was owed to God? But if the man was also God then we have the answer we need. The God-man can atone for the sin of people in the eyes of a holy God. He brings all the dignity and merit of divinity to bear upon His death. That is sufficient to pay for all the infinite demerits of sin.

Could a perfect man, living a righteous life and receiving that commendation from God, be able to have that righteousness cover the lives of sinners and have them to be regarded as righteous? A man alone could not. But one who is also God could. These works would then have infinite value through having Christ's divinity attached to them

and so could be regarded as the works of sinners too so that, by donation of God, sinners could also receive the gift of righteousness from God Himself. So it therefore needs our Lord to be both God and man. In other words it needs the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in the ways that we have been describing Him in these studies.

4. Your assurance rests on the Person and the Work

We are able to have peace of mind knowing all that we know about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work that, in that Person, He is able to perform for us.

We can know that our sins are truly forgiven, beyond a shadow of doubt. The right Person has done the right work to make this so. We look on to the Day of Judgment and know that there is one who can answer for us on that day. The whole matter is settled and secure.

We are able to pray knowing that we have a High Priest who has purged our sins and is now seated at the right hand of God. He is praying for us and has not divested Himself of our humanity but has it still in glory. He is able to help us with our needs here on earth (See Hebrews 2:17-18; and 4:14-16).

We are able to live confidently, knowing that He has been raised and that we will be raised too one day. We are going ultimately to be with Him.

We are also convinced that He has not left us to work it all out for ourselves. He has obtained life for us and it is not left to us to achieve the required standard of holiness in order to qualify for heaven. He has obtained power for us to live for His glory and to fulfill His laws and commandments.