

Salvation—The Person and Work of Christ

(4th)

(Today we continue studying the Person and work of Christ in connection to salvation. We are discussing the incarnation and the hypostatic union of Christ.)

In previous podcasts relating to the Person and work of Christ, we discussed somewhat that salvation is either by grace or works; that in the wisdom and unchangeableness of God there could be only one plan of salvation and this is the one described in the Holy Scriptures; seeing that man cannot save himself and that the justice of God demands payment for each sin, it is obvious that a substitute is needed for salvation; that the substitutionary payment for salvation must be by blood; that the Second Person of the Trinity was incarnated to make this blood sacrifice for sin; that the incarnated God-man—Jesus Christ—was impeccable. Furthermore, we showed that the incarnation was by a virgin birth and that such a birth is only by the wisdom, power, and will of God. Scholars of all description have gone to great length to explain how Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary and remain sinless while Mary was a sinner. The Scriptures do not give us details as to how the incarnation of the Son of God by the virgin Mary came to pass and before we seek human reason and logic we should remember the counsel of the Lord to Job: “Who *is* this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2.) When Mary wondered how such a thing could happen, the angel Gabriel simply said, “For with God nothing shall be impossible,” Luke 1:37. Mary gave the simple but submissive reply, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,” Luke 1:38. I think it is interesting, to say the least, that the English words “nothing” and “word” in both verses is the Greek word $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ (*rhēma*, *hray'-mah*) which means “that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, thing spoken, word.” In other words, whatever God speaks comes to pass, even the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of trying to explain the unexplainable, let us believe and rejoice in the truth of “the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,” I Timothy 3:16.

We ended the previous podcast by mentioning again Isaiah 9:6 as introduced in a previous podcast. The verse says, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” We further referred to the visit of Gabriel to Mary and he told her that she would not only be with child but it would be a son and His name was Jesus. Jesus was not only the son of Mary but He was also designated as the “Son of the Highest” and as the “Son of God,” cf. Luke 1:26-35. Let it be noted that He did not become the “Son of the Highest” or the “Son of God” at birth, but the One conceived in the womb was the Son; that is, He was the Son sent. See Galatians 4:4 where it is declared that “God sent forth his Son.”

Another passage that gives some insight regarding the mystery of the child that was to be born is Jeremiah 31:22, “How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.” Note particularly the latter part of the verse: “for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.” Listen to the comments of John Gill regarding this: “a mighty one, a mighty man, the man Jehovah’s fellow; conceived, contained, and encompassed, in the womb of the virgin, the woman, whose seed he was to be of, and of whom he was: this was a ‘new’, unheard of, extraordinary thing, a ‘creation’, a work of almighty power! the human nature of Christ was formed and prepared by the power of the Holy Ghost, without the help of man.” John Calvin said of this: “Christians, almost with one consent, explain this of the virgin Mary.” And Matthew Henry likewise wrote: “Many good interpreters understand this *new thing* created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God an eye to in bringing them back to that land, and which had sometimes been given them for a sign, **Isa** 7:14; 9:6. *A woman*, the virgin Mary, enclosed in her womb *the Mighty One*; for so *Geber*, the word here used, signifies; and God is called *Gibbor*, *the Mighty God* (**Jer** 32:18), as also is Christ in **Isa** 9:6, where his incarnation is spoken of, as it

is supposed to be here.” I believe this can be joined to the quote from Psalms 40:6-8 as given in the book of Hebrews: “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me,” Hebrews 10:5. In many Bibles there is a marginal note supplied for “hast thou prepared me” as “thou hast fitted me.”

Many other passages could be supplied to give insight concerning the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity for the purpose of saving His people from their sins, Matthew 1:21. The wonder of the incarnation of Christ and the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures to the Logos (the Word) is so profound that it seems to us that we are a mere child pretending to explore the ocean while playing in a small puddle of water. Nevertheless, God stated in no uncertain terms that He “sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law,” Galatians 4:4. Men and scholars may question this or try to supply human genetics as to how this could (or could not) be, but the Scriptures affirm that the eternal Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, John 1:1-3, 14. That Christ had a genuine human body is further established when John was inspired to write as follows: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,” I John 1:1-3.

In discussing the importance of the Person of Christ Jesus in the work of redemption, we must give some attention to the human nature. Obviously, this has been assumed in the previous studies regarding the incarnation. Thus far, we have been focusing our attention toward the divine side of the union of the Divine and human nature to the Divine Person.

Earlier we mentioned the hypostatic union of the Son of God. The word hypostatic comes from the Greek word ὑπόστασις (*hypóstasis*, *hoop-os'-tas-is*) that is translated “person” in Hebrews 1:4. In fact, it is the same word that is translated “substance” in Hebrews 11:1 regarding faith being “the substance of things hoped for.” You may remember that we reviewed this in our previous podcast in showing the importance of the proper interpretation of the Scriptures and the confusion produced by the abundance of modern translations. Furthermore, we showed that the meaning of this Greek word is “is the real *existence*, the *essence*, the *essential part*, the *vital part*, the *stuff*” of the thing under consideration. In Hebrews 1:3, when the Son of God is said to be “the express image of his person,” it is saying that Christ is the exact likeness of God; that is, He is the same as the Father in being. While this is still considering the divine side of the incarnation, this Greek word is used in a theological sense to describe somewhat the union of the human and divine natures to the eternal Word. Without going into a great deal of theological discussion, I will simply give the meaning of “hypostatic union” as supplied by John McClintock and James Strong in their *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*: “Hypostatical Union the *subsistence* (ὑπόστασις) of two natures in *one* person, in Christ.” After giving this simple definition, the article continues with the following wise remarks: “While the reality of such a union is established by the Scriptures, ... it is to be lamented that many intricate and fruitless metaphysical questions have been debated among different sects of Christians as to the divine nature of our Lord, and the *manner* of the union between the Deity and a man—the parties engaged in these questions being too often hurried into presumptuous as well as unprofitable speculations—on points as far beyond the reach of the human intellect as colors to a man born blind; and forgetting that the union of the soul and body of any one among us can neither be explained nor comprehended by himself or any other, and appears the more mysterious the more we reflect upon it.” With this in mind we must remember that often things are said regarding Christ that only refers to the human nature while at other times it can only apply to the divine nature, but in either case they all are connected to the Second Person of God, the eternal Son or Word. Regarding the divine nature, John 2:24-25 says, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them,

because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” His human nature broke forth when Jesus said regarding the end of time, “But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,” Mark 13:32. Then there are times when the one is spoken for the other as in Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” It is obvious that God does not have blood, but the Second Person of God took on human nature and thereby gave His life on the cross. Therefore, understanding the fundamentals of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, we are able to understand the meaning behind such passages without creating erroneous ideas with human reason. It is enough that we simply believe those things taught to us by the Scriptures without creating “profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called,” I Timothy 6:20. With this being said, we shall try to focus more on the necessity of the human nature of the sacrifice for sin. However, we will have to postpone this because our time is up for today. Farewell.