

John 1:14-18 (Part 1)

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[0:00] Intending to debate that out this morning, but in fact, God the Son became a man, but also to clarify the nature of it.

! What is the reality of this God-man?! Since the beginning, all of those errors that I mentioned to you, Christians have gathered together and they have made statements to make it clear what the Bible teaches about the Incarnation.

An example, in 451, in the former city of Chalcedon, now part of Istanbul, a council convened for just this purpose and adopted the Chalcedonian Creed.

I'm going to read to you an English translation of it. I'll try to do so carefully for your edification, and then I'm also going to lay out some summary points to clarify. But listen to what they wrote. This is the translation of it.

We then, following the Holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1:22] The same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood. Here's a key phrase. Truly God and truly man. Of a reasonable soul and body, co-substantial with us according to the manhood, in all things like unto us without sin.

Begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days for us and for our salvation. Born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. According to the manhood. One and the same Christ, Son, Lord only. Unchangeable, indivisibly, inseparably. The distinction of nature's being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved.

And concurring in one person and one subsistence. Interexistence. This is called the hypostasis or hypostatic union of Christ. Not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him.

And the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us. End quote. Now, you go, I didn't catch any of that.

[2:39] That's fine. The point being, they were very careful in defining the nature of the embodied Christ. They saw it as important.

They were pushing back against unbiblical falsehoods, and we need to do the very same thing. So, six summary points that we can derive from the Chalcedonian Creed, which is coming from the scriptures.

Number one, Jesus Christ is one person, one being, with two natures. Once again, he is truly God and truly man.

Some people will say fully God and fully man. Like 200%. Not half God, half man, but completely, fully both.

The divine nature was not diluted by the incarnation, nor was the human nature somehow abstract or incomplete. Right?

[3:39] Truly both at the same time. Number two, two natures united without confusion, change, division, or separation.

Divine and human natures are distinct yet united in one person. This is a mystery, to be clear. Right? Again, this is the hypostatic union.

It's a thing for us to marvel over. I don't know that we're going to fully comprehend it, this side of glory. But we should try as best we can to understand this nature of Christ.

They are not mixed, not divided, and not reduced to a third nature. Thirdly, the human nature was fully assumed.

Jesus had a real human body, mind, soul, and will. Everything essential to true humanity. Right? He was like us in that way, and the clarification is, yet without sin.

[4:48] That's the part of the human nature that he did not take on. Right? Born of a virgin, he didn't inherit the line, the sin line and the sin nature. That we have. Fourthly, the divine nature remained fully intact.

So even though he took on human flesh, at the incarnation, Christ did not lay aside his divine attributes. Fifthly, the person of the Son is the subject of both natures.

Right? By that I mean, Jesus is not two persons or a split consciousness. Right? The eternal Son is the acting subject of both divine and human experiences.

So, to make that more real for you, he hungered as a man. He got tired as a man. He experienced the pain of suffering as a man.

And yet he worked miracles. He walked on water. He raised people from the dead. He forgave sins as God. Yet, always as one person who we most often call the Son of God, as we're thinking about his incarnation.

[6:08] The incarnation, sixthly, was for our salvation. And we'll talk about that more in our third point. But, briefly here, Jesus became man, not merely to reveal God, but to redeem sinners through his substitutionary death and victorious resurrection.

The unity of his person ensures the efficacy. Right? That it actually worked. That his work was the work that he said it was.

Yes, only one who is God could save and only one who is man could die in our place. Again, the incarnation is not easy to grasp.

But it is good. And it is a necessary reality to be grasped. In order for us to be saved, we must repent of our sins and place faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I don't know if that phrase has ever puzzled you. I say it all the time. What do we place faith in? Not just the work, but the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[7:20] Because if Jesus is not who he said he is, then the work itself wasn't effectual. Right? Jesus has to be who the scripture says that he is in order for it to have its proper effect.

We are concerned with the person of Jesus because it makes possible the work of Jesus. And so we need to believe in both.

And we need to be clear about what the scripture says those things are. Cyril of Alexandria, who was a 5th century church leader.

He died a couple of years before the Council of Chalcedon. I think he would have been there had he not passed a few years before. Said this, and this is the quote on the back of your bulletin today. He said, And I love this quote particularly for the phrase, And I love this quote particularly for the phrase, They're inexpressible and inexplicable concurrence into unity.

[8:36] That person has made possible the work. And it's by that, both person and work, that we declare Jesus the Lord and Son of God.

God. The word became flesh. Not only that, but it became flesh and dwelt among us.

Dwelt is a form of a Greek verb that means literally to live in a tent. We can read in Exodus the account of God tenting with Israel as his glory dwelt in the tabernacle.

Of course, later this same presence dwelt, same word usage in Hebrew, in the temple. God dwelt among us in the incarnate Christ, and he will dwell with his people again.

John picks up this language in Revelation chapter 21. Verse 3 and following, he says, And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

[9:49] The tenting place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away. He came and he dwelt.

He dwells in us now by his Spirit, and one day fully we will dwell together with him. John goes on to say, He dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.

Glory as of the only Son from the Father. Jesus manifested God's glory during his earthly existence in a more magnificent way than ever before.

Right? I mentioned a couple of these ways that God's glory dwelt. Right? In the tabernacle, and then in the temple. But now in person, in flesh.

[10:54] Jesus' tenting was more glorious than previous tenting, but still a shadow of the things to come.

Jesus' human flesh still veiled his full glory. John, the author of the words that we're reading, along with Peter and James, were invited to see Jesus' unveiled glory at the transfiguration.

That's what's so significant about it. Interestingly, John doesn't record anything about the transfiguration. I'd like to wrap my head around why. But we can read in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 2, Jesus was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

John and Peter and James beheld God's glory. His magnificence. This was glory as of the only Son from the Father, because the Son and the Father have the same nature.

So I think when John says, we, we have beheld his glory, we have seen his glory, he is most certainly referring to himself and Peter and James.

[12:22] He has to have that in his mind. But he is also, although perhaps unwittingly, maybe it's just that he's being carried along by the Spirit, he's referring to all of us who have seen Christ in the Scriptures and placed our faith in him.

Why can I make such a claim? That we, we share in this we that he's talking about here, beholding the glory. If there is an event in history, I think I would want to be on that mount and see the transfigured Christ.

I think that's the one I would want to be whisked away to, to witness. But listen to the astounding thing that Peter says with reference to that very same event in 2 Peter chapter 1.

You may enjoy joining me there. It's a little bit longer text. This is verse 16 and following. Listen to what Peter says. For we do not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We weren't following just some teaching when we told you about the power and coming of Christ. Why? But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

[13:45] We were eyewitnesses of his glory. How do I know he's talking about the transfiguration? Because he goes on in verse 17. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven for we were with him on the holy mountain. Right? So he's talking about the transfiguration there. He's talking about the voice that's recorded for us that came from heaven.

He's saying we heard that very voice. So we're not appealing to you. We're not trying to teach you Christ about his power and his coming because we heard somebody else say it. We were actually there.

We were eyewitnesses of the transfiguration of Christ. And then he says this. How I read the Bible as a young man, read it through time and time again and wasn't arrested by this, I do not know. But when it arrested me, boy, did it. Verse 19. Peter says this. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.

[15:00] We have the scripture more fully confirmed then standing on the mountain and watching Christ be transfigured and a voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed. Why? How is that possible? Right? Have I experienced God's word in the way it must have been to stand on that mountain?

It's hard to say that I have. He says, to which you will do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts knowing this first of all that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever

produced by the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So how do we have the word more fully confirmed? Right? It was written by the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Christ illuminates him to us as we take it up and we read.

That's incredible. Right? We get to behold the glory of God in the Son as we take up and read and understand who he is. We have seen his glory.

[16:19] Glory as of the only son from the Father. We live in an age of great consumerism. Emotions lead the charge.

We're looking for experiences all the time and I just want to say to you beloved Christians do not downplay the ordinary means of grace.

God has given to us the gathering of his church the opening of his word the singing of true songs the praying in and day out week by week by week. This is regularly normatively how God grows his people.

Just because you're not having a transfiguration kind of moment when you come to the church week in and week out recognize that Christ is being exalted from the text and Peter says this is better than standing on the mountain.

Now I would like to make a little translation note at this point. I'm preaching from an English Standard Version we've kind of encouraged others to have the same some of you may not have the same translation.

[17:29] Some of your translations in the place of only son as I have it before me may say only begotten God or some variation of that.

And if your translation says that it's actually a more word for word translation from the Greek. So I want to commend the translation for doing that. ESV is trying to tidy up some potential confusion at that point.

We could argue whether that's a good thing or not. To always be clear the original text is the inspired text. These are just translations of that inspired text.

So we've got to do work as we come across things like this in the text. Again that only begotten son is a more literal translation of the Greek phrase found there.

But it does bring to the surface this word begotten. This word begotten. If you are a careful listener perhaps you heard the same word used in the Chalcedonian Creed although I imagine you glazed over as I was reading that.

[18:38] But maybe you heard that word found there as well. The challenge of the word is that it can mean to generate or create. It can mean just simply that.

It could be said that my sons, my earthly sons are begotten. They were created. A misunderstanding here has led to all sorts of error concerning the incarnation.

A lot of Greek words have a lot of elasticity to them. We have English words that are the very same. This Greek word can also mean unique, radically different, and without equal.

So what John is doing is distinguishing Jesus as the Son of God from others who by faith will be called Sons of God.

I can't remember which song it was but we sang a song just earlier this morning about being called children of God. By faith that's what's accomplished. We, believing in the Son of God, have the privilege of being adopted sons of God.

[19:56] And ladies, you want to be sons of God because you want inheritance in him. The language is communicating to us. But we will never possess the status that he possesses.

He is unique, radically different, and without equal. He is the Son of God. And when you see that word begotten, that's what it's communicating to us.

Not that he was created, but that as he is God the Son, he is different. That title is not given to anybody else in that way.

And John goes on, just after this, to say that he is full of grace and truth. More on this in a minute, that Jesus is the full expression of God's grace and the necessary truth for us to place our faith in and be saved.

It's found in his person and his work. We need not look further. Jesus, full of grace and truth. Second point, the witness to the incarnation.

[21:02] Very briefly, we see this insertion, verse 15, John bore witness about him and cried out, this was he of whom I said, he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me.

John the apostle inserts this parenthetical about John the Baptist bearing witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ. This, I think, is a summary of the witness that will be detailed more fully beginning in verse 19, so we don't need to spend much of our precious time here this morning. something worth noting, though. When John the apostle wrote his gospel, there was still a group that claimed John the Baptist as the Messiah.

It wasn't a very large group as far as we can tell, but there was still a John the Baptist cult out there. So John seems to be addressing that here at the very beginning of this account.

John makes clear in verses 7 and 8 that John the Baptist was not the Christ. He was not the light. He came to bear witness about the light. And he does so again here in verse 15, but this time he does it in John's own words.

[22:23] So perhaps to some of these John the Baptist followers of the day, they may have taken up this writing and seen that John himself said, John the Baptist, this was he of whom I said, he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me.

The one whose ministry starts after my ministry is actually greater than me. John the Baptist acknowledged the supremacy of Jesus Christ and boldly proclaimed so by appealing to his eternal preexistence.

Jesus was born six months after John. So he can't possibly be referring to their birth order. He recognizes that Jesus is the eternal God.

So I think John the apostle is being careful inserting that here at this point and he takes back up what he's trying to teach us of Christ. In our third point, the accomplishment of the incarnation.

There is so much to unpack here. Here is what we are going to do. It is almost noon. We are going to do a part two of John chapter 1 verse 14 through 18 because I don't want to rush through this.

[23:49] It's way too good to rush through it. I want to carefully show you why the incarnation, the proper understanding of it matters for all of the work that it accomplishes on our behalf.

Let me try to give you a really quick. I'll do a brief. Let's focus in on verse 17 for just a moment. John says, the law was given through Moses.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Two characters bringing different things to the table.

The law is given through Moses to bring about the conviction of sin not the salvation of souls.

We'll unpack that more next week. The law comes to bring about the conviction of sin, show us our need of salvation, our need of a Savior. Jesus Christ is that Savior.

It's meant to aim us at him. Here's a text that may help us understand that. Paul writes in Galatians chapter 3 verse 23 through 26, Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law.

[24:58] imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, he says in verse 24, the law was our guardian until Christ came.

And the picture of guardian is like a schoolmaster meant to teach us something. A guardian, this Greek word would have been used of a father, a wealthy father, hiring somebody kind of like a tutor for his son.

Like while he's a child, he's meant to help him, nudge him along, take him towards manhood. That's the unpacking of that word in brief. So the law serves as that for us, pushes us toward, shows us our need of Christ.

The rest of verse 24 says, in order that we might be justified by faith. The law being insufficient to save us, but showing us our need of salvation, it could never justify us.

How are we to be justified, declared righteous before God, restored to relationship with him, saved from the penalty of our sin, delivered to life forever by faith.

[26:10] By faith, believing in the person and work of Christ. So verse 25 says, but now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, lowercase sons of God, through faith.

So the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. So I have up here with me in closing my two favorite books.

The Bible is my first favorite book, book, and it is my favorite book in much, much higher order, infinitely higher order than the other book.

It is God's inspired word. It is his word itself to us. This is to be treasured. I also like The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan.

Not nearly as much, but I do rather enjoy it. And if you've been around for very long, I often joke, I'll eventually read the entire thing to you. In little bits and pieces.

[27:19] If you're unfamiliar with it, it's such a work. It's so Bible rich. It's so very helpful. If you don't like allegory, don't do it. But I hope I can convince you to really, really love and appreciate this work.

I want to read just a little bit of it to you. I think I've read this to you before, but I think this helps us think about the law being given through Moses and grace and truth coming through Jesus Christ. And so, there's an account, the main character's name is Christian and he meets a man named Faithful who travels with him for a portion of his journey.

So hear this, Faithful is already a Christian in this allegory. He's already in Christ. He's repented and believed. And so, I don't want the point of this to be lost on somebody who has yet to do that, but the word here and the encouragement here is for that person who has repented and believed in Christ and yet, and yet, still been tempted by their flesh, right?

Still has that word of Moses working in them to show them their wretchedness. And Faithful is recounting some of his journey to Christian.

[28:40] Both of them came to a hill called Difficulty. And in Christian on his journey, he fell asleep on that hill. He took a rest and he left behind a promise. He went on on his journey and had forgotten something and he had to go back and retrieve it.

You'll see a little clue of that in here. But Faithful, before he goes up the hill called Difficulty, encounters a character by the name of Adam the First.

And Adam the First lives in the town of deceit. And he tries to convince Faithful to come and work for him. And Faithful is tempted to do that very thing, but then he perceives that Adam the First is going to make him a slave.

And so he flees from him, he doesn't do it, and he heads up the hill called Difficulty, saying, O wretched man, and he heads on up the hill.

And then he says this, and I quote, Now when I had climbed about halfway up, I looked behind and saw someone coming after me, swift as the wind. Soon he overtook me just about the place where the arbor stands, and Krishna interjects, that is the place where I sat down to rest, fell asleep, and lost my scroll.

[29:57] And Faithful says, dear brother, hear me out. So as soon as the man overtook me, without saying a word, he struck me and knocked me down unconscious. When I came to, I asked him why he had thus assaulted me.

He said that it was because of my secret inclination to follow Adam the first. And with that he struck me with another deadly blow on the chest and beat me down backward, and I lay at his feet as if I were dead.

So here, this man overtakes him, knocks him down unconscious. When he comes to, he says, why did you do that? And he said, because you were tempted by sin. So when I came to, I cried to him for mercy, but he said, I do not know how to show mercy.

And with that he knocked me down again. He would have beaten me to death, except one came by and told him, to stop. Now, I'm reading for you, and I know you can't see it, but in my copy, one is capitalized as a proper noun.

One came by and told him to stop. So a Christian asked Faithful, who was it that told him to stop? Faithful went on, I did not recognize him at first, but as he went by, I saw the wounds in his hands and in his side.

[31:23] Then I concluded that he was our Lord. So, I continued up the hill. Christian then explained, the man who overtook you was Moses.

He spares no one, and he does not know how to show mercy to anyone who transgresses his law. And Faithful said, I know that very well. It was not the first time that he had met with me.

The law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.
Let's pray together. Let's Thank you.