

## Hypostatic Union – Part 1

Let us start with a short review of a couple of points from Romans 1:1-2.

**Romans 1:1 Paul, a #1 bond-servant of Christ Jesus, #2 called as an apostle, #3 set apart for the gospel of God,**

**Romans 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,**

Up to this point, Paul has identified himself in three ways:

1. Bond-servant of Christ Jesus
2. Apostle (of Christ Jesus)
3. Set apart for the Gospel

Starting in verse 2, Paul describes or explains the gospel which is centered on the person of Jesus Christ. Arnold Fruchtenbaum identifies three points Paul makes concerning the gospel<sup>1</sup>.

1. Gospel of God. The gospel is from God, He is the author.
2. Gospel of Promise. God promised the gospel in the Old Testament.
3. Gospel of Christ. God the Son is at the center of the Gospel.

Now, verses 3-4 amplify the gospel mentioned in verse 2.

**Romans 1:3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,**

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Romans, San Antonio:Ariel Ministries, p 23-24

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**Romans 1:4 who was declared the Son of God  
with power by the resurrection from the dead,  
according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus  
Christ our Lord,**

Now in verses 3-4, Paul identifies Jesus Christ as that which the gospel concerns. In verse 3 He is identified as fully human, a descendant of David “according to the flesh.” Then in verse 4 Paul says He was “declared Son of God...” Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one person. This opens the door for a discussion of the “hypostatic union.” Herman has taught on this previously in the Colossians series. I will use his notes as well as information from a variety of other sources. I had anticipated completing this study in one lesson. It is obvious now that is not possible.

**Declared the Son of God.** From Robby Dean:

“Note there that this phrase “declared the Son of God,” is a bad translation. He is not “declared,” that is not the meaning of the Greek word. The Greek word is HORIZO from which we get our English word “horizon.” Horizon is a definition, it defines the end of our sight; we can only see to the horizon. That is the meaning of the word, it is something that has boundaries; it is something that is set, something that is appointed or determined. So the best translation is that “He was appointed, not to be the Son of God, but to be the Son of God with power. He has always been the Son of God but with the resurrection and His ascension to the right hand of God the Father He is now in hypostatic union, and is awaiting the time that the Father will give Him the kingdom. The phrase “according to the Spirit of holiness” is the only time Paul uses it and it is another term for the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy

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Spirit who is the one who enabled Him in His spiritual life during the incarnation<sup>2</sup>.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says something similar:

“Verse 4 shows His divine side: *who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Messiah Yeshua our Lord*. What does it mean that Yeshua was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection? Does it mean that He became this Son by means of the resurrection? The answer is no. Yeshua was already the Son before the resurrection, but the resurrection powerfully asserted His Sonship and proved who He was.

Let us take up some points on the hypostatic union. I make no claim that this is comprehensive. It is presented in a different manner than some others. One of the questions I want to answer, is why there was a need for the hypostatic union. It is nice to know that Jesus Christ was both God and man in one person. But the next question is, so what?

**I. Definition.** Before proceeding, let us examine a definition provided by Herman Mattox: “In the person of Jesus Christ are two natures, inseparable, united without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal.” Jesus Christ was both fully man and fully God. There was a single person, not two. Two natures combined into one person. This is an important doctrine over which many early church leaders fought leading to splits in the Church. Much of the discussion misses the point of why this union of God and man was necessary. Why did God do this? Why was it so important. We’ll get into that.

Here is another explanation of the hypostatic union from GotQuestions.org that might be helpful:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-004b/read>

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“The doctrine of the hypostatic union is an attempt to explain how Jesus could be both God and man at the same time. It is ultimately, though, a doctrine we are incapable of fully understanding. It is impossible for us to fully understand how God works. We, as human beings with finite minds, should not expect to totally comprehend an infinite God. Jesus is God’s Son in that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). But that does not mean Jesus did not exist before He was conceived. Jesus has always existed (John 8:58, 10:30). When Jesus was conceived, He became a human being in addition to being God (John 1:1, 14).<sup>3</sup>”

There was a Satanic attempt at duplicating the hypostatic union: Satan possession. Actually, there are many throughout history. For instance, there is Judas Ischariot who became indwelt by Satan. Judas was fully man. In his case he also had a sin nature. At one point, Satan “enters into him” and possesses him. But here, there are two persons, not one. The human nature is directed by Satan. It is perhaps helpful to read that episode in John:

**John 13:21 When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”**

**John 13:22 The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.**

**John 13:23 There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.**

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3 <https://www.gotquestions.org/hypostatic-union.html>

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**John 13:24 So Simon Peter \*gestured to him, and \*said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.”**

**John 13:25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom, \*said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”**

**John 13:26 Jesus then \*answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He \*took and \*gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.**

**John 13:27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus \*said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”**

**John 13:28 Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.**

**John 13:29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor.**

**John 13:30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.**

II. History of the Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union.

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The doctrine we have from the Bible was developed over centuries. The Bible is not a textbook providing lists of doctrines and explaining them point by point. It was written to address specific events in history. As a result, there were many heated discussions on what the Bible taught. For instance, today we easily talk of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God in one essence with three personalities. It is difficult for humans to understand God since He is infinite. Language of accommodation is used to help us understand to a limited extent. But the doctrine of the Trinity was also fought over. Were there three Gods? That would mean Christianity was not monotheistic, i.e. a single God. How is it possible for God to be “three in one?” Many in various “monotheistic” religions reject the Trinity because of this misunderstanding. God has used language of accommodation in order to give us puny humans some idea of the magnitude of God’s greatness.

The human being could be used as an illustration of a multifaceted being. Unbelievers are “dichotomous” in that they have a body and a soul. One person, two essences; one seen and one unseen. A believer is “trichotomous” having body, soul and a human spirit all united in a single person.

So with the hypostatic union. Jesus is fully God and fully human in a single person. Associated with this doctrine is another doctrine, “kenosis.” This indicates that Jesus Christ set aside His divine powers in order to go to the cross as a man.

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**Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,**

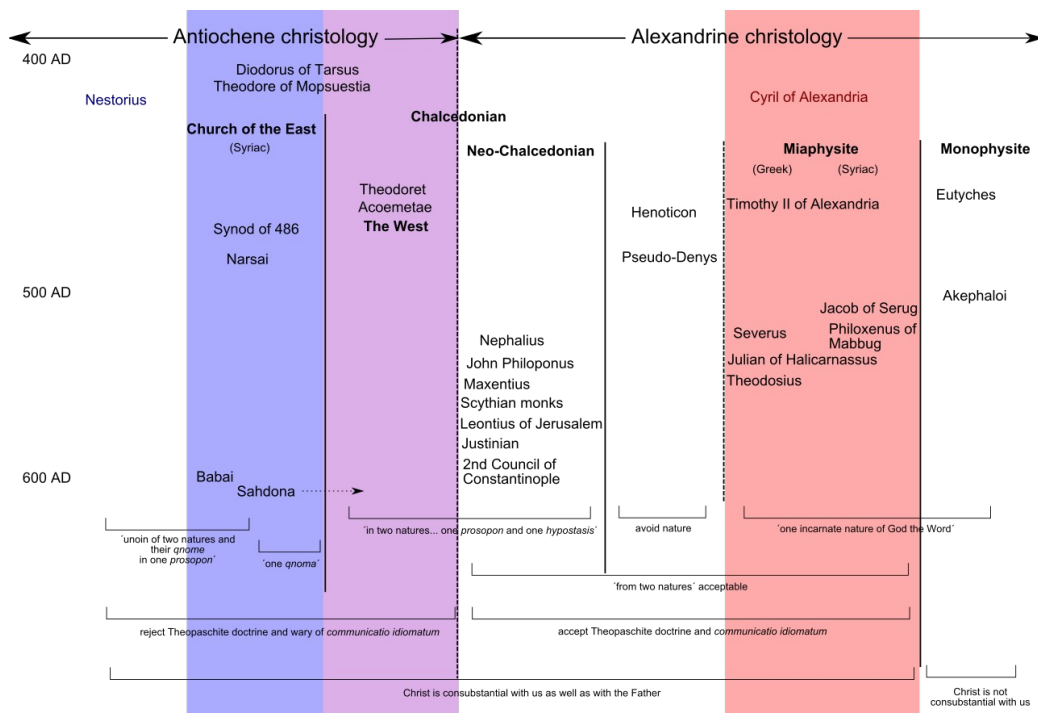
**Philippians 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

**Philippians 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

**Philippians 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

The following illustration provides an overview of the various views on the nature of Christ. The point is to show that understanding of Christ's nature is littered with difficulties. Some of these views led to false doctrines from gnosticism to worship of Mary as the "Mother of God." This controversy led, in part, to a Church Council in 431 A.D. at Ephesus.

## Hypostatic Union Part 1 Romans 1:3-4



### Christological Spectrum<sup>4</sup>

## III. The Rationale for the Hypostatic Union

Often missed in all this discussion is the “why.” God doesn’t do something without a reason. God is not a God of chaos but of order. There is a reason that Jesus Christ had to be both God and man in one person.

### A. There is a need for salvation

I find it surprising that when I am referring to the need for salvation, I seem to go back to the Book of Job. It is there in the “ten questions of Job” that the essential problem is expressed. Knowing from Genesis 3 that Adam sinned, and from Romans 5:12 that Adam’s sin is imputed to everyone in the human race as a result of DNA from the man.

Genesis 3:6-7 → Ten Questions of Job → Romans 5:12

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council\\_of\\_Ephesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ephesus)



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**Genesis 3:6** When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

**Genesis 3:7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

**Job 14:4 (#6)** “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Job identifies the key issue: righteousness. Once righteousness is lost through the sin of Adam, how can it be regained? Or is that even possible?

**Job 4:17 (#1)** ‘Can mankind be just (righteous) before God? **(#2)** Can a man be pure before his Maker?

It is obvious that a perfect God and an impure man cannot have fellowship. But if God kept man around after Adam’s sin, there must be something more. A song I heard years ago asked the

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question, “Is that all there is?...” No, God provided the followup to solve the problem.

**Job 8:3 (#3) “Does God pervert justice? (#4) Or does the Almighty pervert what is right (righteous)?**

The point is that God cannot unilaterally declare sin to be judged unless someone is judged for sin. That judgment requires death. Otherwise, God would pervert His righteousness and He would no longer be God. God cannot be judged for sin. But if all sinned, who is left that can make man clean?

**Job 9:2 “In truth I know that this is so; (#5) But how can a man be in the right (righteous) before God?**

From human viewpoint, no one can make the clean out of the unclean. This is true from man’s fallen perspective. There would seem to be no hope. But God can do the impossible. But He must do it.

**Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

Paul says the same thing from a different perspective. All.

Here is a summary of why salvation is needed from GotQuestions.org:

“In God’s plan of salvation, first we must understand why we need to be saved. Simply put, we need to be saved because we have sinned. The Bible declares that everyone has sinned (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). Sin is rebellion against God. We all

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choose to actively do things that are wrong. Sin harms others, damages us, and, most importantly, dishonors God. The Bible also teaches that, because God is holy and just, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. The punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23) and eternal separation from God (Revelation 20:11–15). Without God’s plan of salvation, eternal death is the destiny of every human being.”

#### **B. God Must Provide Salvation**

If man could provide salvation, then God is not needed. Jesus Christ is not needed. Only God can provide salvation.

**Colossians 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,**

**John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

**John 3:17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.**

**John 3:18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

**Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of**

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**death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**

- C. Only A Perfect Man Can Be Judged for Sin
- D. Hence Only Jesus Christ, the God-Man can provide salvation.  
God plans, executes and provides salvation through Jesus Christ.