

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

Christ the Mediator (17)

A. Introduction

1. Two things we are commanded to do as elders are to watch and to hold.

We are to watch what we believe, to make sure we are believing what God's Word says.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:16)

We are to hold firmly to the truths taught in God's Word.

"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:9)

It is vital we do these two things, not just for our own sake, but also for the members of this church and in fact those who live in the community God has placed us in.

To help us to watch and to hold, we are spending our elders' meeting working through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith a paragraph or so at a time.

2. The Lord Jesus was chosen and appointed to be the mediator between God and man by fulfilling the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king, for those people He was given as a gift in eternity.

He executed this office of mediator by being willing and obedient; by suffering, dying, rising, and ascending, and by sitting, interceding, and one day returning.

In executing this office of mediator, Jesus offered up His obedience and sacrifice to God for the sake of all those people He had been given by His Father, achieving for them satisfaction of God's justice and securing reconciliation.

And He did this for all the elect who lived before His coming.

3. In chapter 8, paragraph 7, the person of Christ is discussed in more detail, specifically His two natures and the part each of them plays in His work as mediator.

"Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture, attributed to the person denominated by the other nature."

This paragraph is helpful in giving us clarity about how the two natures of Christ relate to His person, and the way this mystery is spoken about in Scripture.

B. We need clarity regarding how to think of Christ with regards to His two natures

1. Christ, the God-man, is the mediator between God and man.

It is Christ as a person who is both God and man, who saves us.

He has two natures, a divine nature and a human nature, but He is one person.

It is not His human nature that saves us; nor His divine nature that saves us; but Him, as a person acting according to both natures, who does.

The natures do nothing apart from the person.

Yet it is because He has two natures, that Christ is able to save us.

"Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself."

2. There are certain things He does according to His humanity and certain things He does according to His deity to save us.

Because Christ was truly human, He could suffer and die and had blood that could be shed for the forgiveness of sins. As God alone, He could not do that.

Because Christ was fully God, He can be the Saviour ('salvation is from the Lord'), by coming down from heaven, being incapable of sinning, and also bearing the full penalty for all the sins of all who believe in Him. As human alone, He could not do that.

C. We need clarity regarding how to speak of Christ with regards to His two natures

1. What is true of either nature of Christ, is also true of Christ in His person as the God-man.

All that is true regarding Christ's humanity, is also true regarding Him as a person.

All that is true regarding Christ's deity, is also true regarding Him as a person.

But what can be said to be true of one nature, can not necessarily be said to be true of the other nature.

2. Yet though distinct in His work as mediator ("*the two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion*"), sometimes in Scripture, what Christ does according to one nature is attributed to Him in reference to the other nature.

"...yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture, attributed to the person denominated by the other nature."

"None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:8)

The Lord of glory (divine) is crucified (human).

"But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43)

Mary is the mother (human) of my Lord (divine).

"No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man." (John 3:13)

Came from heaven (divine) – the Son of Man (human).

"No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)

Son (divine) does not know (human).

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

Church of God (divine), which he bought with his own blood (human).

These examples only make sense if we have in mind, the person of Christ not His natures, because they are all true of Christ as the God-man.

D. How then shall we lead?

1. Acknowledge the mystery.

How Christ can be fully God and also truly human can be confusing to understand and to speak about.

"The union of the two natures in One Person is a mystery which we cannot grasp, and which for that very reason is often denied." (Louis Berkhof)

This is one of the areas that the cults get wrong.

2. Accept the mystery.

Jesus is both God and man and it is wonderful that He is.

Because Jesus is truly man, He can be our Saviour and sympathiser. He is able to be our substitute sacrifice by suffering and dying in our place. He is able to understand by experience what we are experiencing.

Because Jesus is fully God, He is worthy of our worship.