

Salvation—The Person and Work of Christ

(3rd)

(Today we continue studying the Person and work of Christ in connection to salvation. We are discussing the virgin birth of Christ as given to us by God in His inspired Word.)

In our last podcast we discussed the impeccability of Christ and began studying about His virgin birth. It was pointed out that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would conceive and bear a child and He would “be called the Son of God.” This was a mystery to Mary since she had not known a man. Various conjectures and speculations have been presented in the past and, no doubt, will be presented in the future as how a sinless person could be born of a sinful person. It is not our place to weigh the positives and negatives of human reason and logic concerning the virgin birth of Christ. God does not give us specifics and details about this and it is wise to simply believe what the Holy Scriptures declare and avoid “fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith,” I Timothy 1:4. We are equally taught to avoid “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called,” I Timothy 6:20. As believers, we are to believe God and He has given to us what we are to believe in His Word. Man may devise opinions and ideas about God, His salvation, and all of His works, but unless those thoughts and suppositions are clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures they are not to be considered or believed.

For any who might question that the Scriptures are the Word of God I will give one example that should be plain and clear to any Bible believer. In Exodus 9:13-16, God commissioned Moses to tell Pharaoh that the Lord put him on the throne of Egypt for the purpose of displaying the power and name of God throughout the earth. Give attention to the following: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that *there is* none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” God, in Romans 9:17, interprets this passage from Exodus by saying, “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” Therefore, whatever is taught in the Scriptures is that which God is telling us and no more. Equally, whatever the Scriptures say about the virgin birth of Christ Jesus is what God would have us to know and where the Lord is silent concerning this we should also lay our hands over our mouth and remain silent rather than darken “counsel by words without knowledge,” Job 38:2. How a sinful virgin can be with child and give birth to a sinless being is a mystery hidden in the wisdom of the trice holy God. As with many other things, the truth of Deuteronomy 29:29 applies here as well: “The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are* revealed *belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.” As stated before, many more passages can be supplied to support and prove the truth that the Scriptures are the words of God and are to be considered as such. Obviously, we are talking about the original Hebrew and Greek texts, and as I have said more than once in previous podcasts, our position is that the best English translation of those original manuscripts is the King James Version of 1611. The plethora of modern translations has caused many, if not the majority, of professed believers to question and in some cases deny the trustworthiness of the Scriptures.

As previously noted in a previous podcast, I will give one example of different translations of Hebrews 11:1 to show this confusion. The King James Version (KJV) reads, “Now faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The New International Version (NIV) states, “Now faith is *confidence* in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” The New American

Standard Bible (NASB) says, “Now faith is *the certainty* of *things* hoped for, a proof of things not seen.” The New English Translation (NET) declares, “Now faith is *being sure* of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.” The American Standard Version (ASV): “Now faith is *assurance* of *things* hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” The list could be enlarged but this should be enough to show why so many people are confused as to what the Bible teaches. All who believe the Bible agree that salvation is by grace through faith and that it is the gift of God, Ephesians 2:8. Therefore it is essential that we know *what* faith is. By looking at the different translations of Hebrew 11:1, we find that they do not agree at least regarding one part of the verse. This is seen in the how the Greek word ὑπόστασις (hypostasis) is translated. The KJV says *substance*; the NIV states *confidence*; the NASB gives *certainty*; the NET says *being sure*; and, the ASV supplies *assurance*.

Thayer gives the meaning of this Greek word as follows: ... 1. *a setting or placing under; substructure, foundation*: ... 2. *that which has foundation, is firm; hence, a. that which has actual existence; a substance, real being*: ... b. *the substantial quality, nature, of any person or thing.* [Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967). pp. 644-645.] Richard Soule in his thesaurus gives the following synonyms for substance: reality, hypostasis, ... essential nature, real being, real existence, ... essence, ... soul, chief part, essential part, vital part, body, ... stuff, ... (*Theol.*) divine essence, divine being. (Richard Soule, *A Dictionary of English Synonymes*, rev. ed. by George H. Howison (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1891, 1920). p. 413.) “By this we find that *faith* is the real *existence*, the *essence*, the *essential part*, the *vital part*, the *stuff* of things for which we hope. Faith is not a dream. It is not self-persuasion. It is not the product of one’s imagination or something which has been conceived in the mind by emotional desires. This would be mysticism and existentialism. However, this is usually the contemporary concept of faith: a leap in the dark. But faith cannot actually be unless that in which faith rests is an actual fact.” (*Justification: The Heart of the Gospel* by Jimmy Barber, page 102.) From this we are told that faith is *reality, real existence, essence, or stuff* of that which is “hoped for” or of that which one expects to receive, it is not derived by the *confidence* or *assurance* that is conjured by a person’s inner thoughts, mental process, or human will.

With all of these different ideas of faith as given by the various translations (and many other examples could be given), the average person is confused as to what faith is. One person thinks one thing and another person believes it to be something else. Multiply this by the many different ideas presented by the different translation and the average person in the pew is perplexed as to what faith really is. This small example reiterates the importance of knowing the truth of the Person and work of Christ in the salvation of His people. Scripture affirms the virgin birth and the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity and we are to believe and proclaim this truth as stated in the Word of God whether we understand it or not. It has been said many times, “God never said to understand Him; He said to trust Him.” The only way we can know for certain that we are trusting Him is by trusting and believing His Word as given to us by Divine inspiration. I trust this small diversion from the overall subject matter was not tedious to you, but I believe this cannot be emphasized too much in this day of denying absolutes and the accuracy of the Word of God.

We introduced Isaiah 9:6 in the previous podcast. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,” Isaiah 9:6a. In looking at some verses concerning the angel Gabriel and his visit to Mary, it was seen that the child to be born of her was to “be called the Son of God.” Therefore, it is essential that we know and understand somewhat about the nature, Person, and being of the Son of God.

Regretfully, we are nearing the end of our time for the study for today and will have to postpone looking at this passage in more detail to our next podcast. However, I will say that the only reason for quoting only the first part of the text was in hope of limiting our remarks to the virgin birth. Yet we must not ignore the rest of the verse because this “child” that is to be born and the “son” given is described as

One that “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.” I would like to say that I believe it would have been better if the comma between Wonderful and Counsellor would have been omitted, but this is not anything that will add to or take away from the overall description of the “child” born or “son” given. Without question He is designated as “The mighty God” and “The everlasting Father.” How can this be? With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Nevertheless, this is the Savior ordained by God.

I must say that I find myself lost in a sea of endless wonders and marvels and stand in awe when trying to proclaim the profound truths of the incarnation. To God be the glory! The Lord willing, we will continue this in our next podcast, but our time is exhausted for today. Farewell.