

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 4:
CHRISTOLOGY

Lecture 4:
THE HYPOSTATIC UNION



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev. Robert D. McCurley is minister of the Gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church, in Taylors, South Carolina, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

greenvillepresbyterian.com

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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STUDY GUIDE

Module 4

Christology

Lectures by Dr. Stephen Myers:

1. Introduction to Christology
2. The Divinity of Christ
3. The Humanity of Christ

Lectures by Robert D. McCurley, ThM:

- 4. The Hypostatic Union**
5. The States of Christ
6. The Offices of Christ
7. The Necessity of the Atonement
8. The Nature of the Atonement
9. The Extent of the Atonement
10. The Preeminence of Christ

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Module 4:

CHRISTOLOGY

Lecture 4:

The Hypostatic Union

Introduction

In Christ's earthly ministry, much of his divine glory was hid from those who saw him. Not all could see the exquisite beauty of the one who himself is God. But that is not to say that they saw no glory at all. John speaks for the disciples and others when he writes, in John chapter 1, verse 14: "We beheld his glory; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The light of the divine glory of his Person shined through, and his followers beheld him, and they worshipped him, as we see in John chapter 9, verse 38.

Theme: *Christ is one Person. He is the God-man, in two distinct natures, and one Person forever.*

I. Scriptural Basis

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3:16)

1. *"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness."*
 - a. This doctrine promotes powerful and practical godliness.
2. The mystery itself—God was manifest in the flesh.
 - a. The eternal Son of God, took to himself a human nature, and continued as both true God and true man in two distinct natures, and one Person forever.
3. Christ is the fullest and final revelation of God.
 - a. To be God-centered is also to be Christ-centered.

Questions:

1. What is the “mystery of godliness” mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:16, and why is it called that?

2. In 1 Timothy 3:16, what is meant by the word “manifest”? How does God manifest himself?

3. Why is this called the central theme to which the entire Bible points?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question #36:

“The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fulness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person for ever.” _

1. Christ has two distinct natures.
 - a. The two natures are without mixture.
 - b. The two distinct natures are unified in the one Person.
 - c. The Chalcedon Confession:
 - 1) Perfect in Godhead, perfect in manhood.
 - 2) Truly God and truly man.
2. Christ as one Person.
 - a. The Person of the eternal Son of God.
 - b. Not a twofold personality.

- c. The Hypostatic Union—a union of subsistence.
 - d. This is a permanent union.
3. The communication of the properties of these two natures.
- a. *Westminster Larger Catechism*, question #40.
 - b. In all of Christ's actions, it was the God-man, the one Person who was acting.
 - c. Because Jesus is both God and man, he can be the Mediator between God and man.
4. Conclusion: not two, not one, but two in one—two distinct natures in one person forever.

Questions

1. What does the word “distinct” mean in regards to Christ's two distinct natures?

2. What does the Chalcedon Confession declare about the state of Christ?

3. When we say that Christ has two distinct natures, do we mean that he is two distinct persons? Please explain your answer from Scripture.

4. Describe the union of two distinct natures in Christ. What is the theological name for this? Is this a permanent union?

5. What does it mean when we say, “Human dust is on the throne of heaven”?

6. Describe the communication of the properties of these two natures in Christ’s Person. How does this truth enable us to understand the Holy Scripture?

III. Polemical Exposition

1. The debate between Athanasius and Arias on Christ’s divinity.
 - a. One little letter: homoousios versus homoiousios.
 - b. Eunomius asserted heteroousios, Christ is of a different substance.
2. Early church heresies.
 - a. Some denied the preexistence of Jesus, so denying his essential deity.
 - b. Some believed that God adopted the human Jesus as his divine Son.
 - c. Some denied the two distinct natures of Christ, mixing his two natures.
 - d. Some denied the unity of the Person of Christ, making him two persons.
 - e. Some claimed Christ was two Persons, and two natures.
 - f. The monophyletists claimed Christ has a singular will.
 - g. Socinians and the Jehovah Witnesses, both, like Arias, deny the deity of Christ.
3. The debate between the Lutherans and the Reformed.

Questions:

1. What was the debate between Athanasius and Arias about? What Greek alphabet letter was at the center of the debate?

2. What are other examples of heresies in early church history and in the Patristic era?

3. What is the focal point of the debate between the Lutherans and the Reformed regarding the nature of Christ? What are the two opinions? Which was most widely accepted in the Reformed Tradition?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. The doctrine of Christ's one Person leads us to worship Jesus Christ in his divine glory, as our Lord and King.

2. We should also approach the Most High with confidence through our sympathetic Mediator, the God-man.

3. We should listen with fear to what the Lord Jesus Christ says, and do what he proclaims, because he speaks to us through his Word with divine authority.

4. We should seek to be conformed to his image.

5. We should have jealousy over the orthodox doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. How is the truth of Christ having “two distinct natures in one person forever” said to be a great comfort for believers?

2. Why should we listen with fear to what the Lord Jesus Christ says to us?

3. What does it mean to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ? In what manner can the believer be conformed to his image?

4. Why is careful precision so vital for handling of the doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ?

V. Self-reflection

As we meditate on “the mystery of godliness” spoken of in 1 Timothy 3:16, can you see how this doctrine would promote powerful and practical godliness in all of its aspects? Does the study of the Person of Christ motivate you to come to Jesus? Does it make you desire him more and more?
