

The Hypostatic Union

Your Ticket to Heaven

The Hypostatic Union:

- A. The proper noun, “Incarnation,” is defined by Webster’s as, “the union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ.”¹

The more detailed understanding of the word is developed within the doctrine of the Incarnation, or more precisely, the hypostatic union.

In the Person of the incarnate Christ are two natures: divine and human. They are inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal.

The word, “hypostatic,” is the English translation of the Greek noun, **ὑπόστασις** (*hupóstasis*):

(1) the essential or basic structure/nature of an entity, *substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality* (underlying structure, often in contrast to what merely seems to be.)

(a) of the Son of God as *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*: [*charaktér téś hupostáseōs autoú*] *an exact representation of (God’s) real being (i.e. as one who is in charge of the universe) Hebrews 1:3.*²

The dispensation of the hypostatic union began at the virgin birth and is referred to as the First Advent:

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small village in the northern part of Judea, about six miles south of Jerusalem.³

¹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2014), s.v. “incarnation.”

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ὑπόστασις.”

³ “But as for you, Bethlehem *’Éphrathah*, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity” (Micah 5:2, NASB).



It was known also in the Old Testament as 'Éphrath,⁴ a little place among the clans of Judah which was to produce the ruler of Israel. The prophecy in Micah was well known to be messianic in the first century and was cited to Herod by the chief priests and scribes as pointing to the birthplace of the Messiah.⁵

The two natures of Christ maintain their complete identity though being joined in personal union forever. The attributes of His human and divine nature belong to their corresponding natures though the attributes of either nature belong to the one Person of Christ.

There is no mixture of the two natures to form a third substance or hypostasis, the essential nature of an individual. The human nature always remains the human nature and the divine nature always remains the divine nature.

It is standard to refer to Christ as theanthropic, the union of the divine and human natures of Christ. The two natures are united without transfer of attributes. It is impossible to transfer an attribute of one nature to the other nature without destroying that nature.

The hypostatic union includes the union of two natures, divine and human, in one Person.

2 Peter 1:4 By these things He has freely given to us extremely valuable and numerous promises so that through these you may become partners in the divine nature, having escaped from degeneracy caused by evil desires from the lust patterns and the cosmic systems. (EXT)

The word “nature” comes from the Greek noun, **οὐσία (ousía)**: “entity, essence, substance, nature.” In the New Testament, it usually refers to that which belongs to someone or what he has, his substance.”⁶

Beginning with the incarnation of Jesus Christ, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

⁴ אֶפְרַתָּה ('Éphrathah). It is used as a name for Bethlehem in antiquity. It was prophesied as the place from which the Ruler of Israel would come, whose origins were mysterious and from ancient times (Micah 5:2). Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, “אֶפְרַתָּה,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 88 [672].

⁵ J. R. McRay, “Birth of Jesus Christ,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 156.

⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “οὐσία,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1076 (3776).



Yet, these two natures remain distinct, whole, unchanged, without mixture or confusion, so that Jesus Christ is true humanity and undiminished deity in one Person forever. Therefore, He is the unique Person in all of history.

All the attributes of deity adhere to His deity and never cross over and become humanity. All the attributes of humanity adhere to the humanity of Christ and never become deity.

This means the attributes of the divine nature could not be transferred to the human nature of Jesus Christ to help Him to resist temptation or resolve the great problems experienced by Homo sapiens.

Therefore, the human nature of Christ had to depend entirely upon the plan of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

The Lord's unique natures of divine and human are referred to by the Greek term, **ὑπόστασις** (*hypóstasis*), from which we get the adjective, "hypostatic." It refers to the substance or essential nature of an individual.

The hypostatic union of Jesus Christ takes two natures, divine and human, and unites them in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is not two people but one Person with two natures which are defined by the term, the hypostatic union.

In John's opening chapter, He presents the deity of Jesus Christ with the capitalized noun, "Word": "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1)."

The word, "Word," is the proper noun, **Λόγος** (*Lógos*) and its primary application refers to the system by which ideas are preserved by inscribing them through a written language or by means of verbal communication.

To utilize this means of communication, the individual must have something to write or to say. To do either, the source must have ideas He wishes to communicate. In John's context, that Person is Jesus Christ and the initial subject is His deity in verses 1–13.

The opening phrase is prepositional, "In the beginning was the Word" which refers to the deity of Jesus Christ prior to the creation of the universe. In verse 14, John changes his emphasis to the humanity of Christ where he writes, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This section continues through verse 34.

The hypostatic union has two natures which are united without loss or transfer of attributes. No attribute of His deity is lost or changed and no attribute of His humanity is lost or changed.

Principle: This doctrine is paramount. It underwrites your eternal salvation.



B. The Significance of the Lord's Resurrection

Of all the doctrines revealed in the Bible, one in particular stands out as the summum bonum since its truths allow all others to acquire their subsequent positions of immutability.

In our study of the hypostatic union and resurrection, I will cite references from Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology*, his seminal publication on the subject of dispensational theology. Dr. Chafer founded Dallas Theological Seminary in 1924. His manuscripts on systematic theology culminated in their publication under that title in 1948 containing eight volumes and published by Dallas Seminary Press.

1. CHRIST'S PREDICTIONS. Up to the time of His death and rising again, a resurrection, being quite supernatural, was not easily expected; but it is evident that, for important reasons not difficult to recognize, the ability to grasp what Christ said of both His death and resurrection was really withheld from the disciples, though specifically and repeatedly announced. His death and resurrection had no immediate place in the kingdom program. Even John the Baptist was given no clear comprehension of the oncoming death and resurrection of Christ.

On the other hand, it was needful that by the transfiguration [The Lord's bodily appearance which took the form as it will appear at the Second Advent (Matthew 17:1–9.)], Peter and John were encouraged to retain the certainty of His power and coming (2 Peter 1:16). They must know that the kingdom program is not abandoned, but that its realization from that time forth must be associated with His return to the earth in power and great glory.

Until their doctrinal significance could be disclosed—the death and resurrection of Christ could have been interpreted by the disciples as only a hopeless cancellation of all they had been taught and all they had proclaimed respecting Messiah's earthly kingdom.

It was required by existing conditions that the disciples should not know Christ's upcoming death and resurrection until those age-transforming events were experienced and the time had arrived when they should enter into the new values secured for them by these events; yet it was also essential that Christ should predict both His death and His resurrection.⁷

⁷ The passages which record Christ's predictions of His death and resurrection are Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:17–19; 26:12, 28, 31; Mark 9:30–32; 14:8, 24, 27; Luke 9:22, 44–45; 18:31–34; 22:20; John 2:19–21; 10:17–18; 12:7.



2. SUBJECT TO VALID PROOF. All evidence functioning through human channels is naturally subject to human limitations. Men are fallible. Their impressions can be erroneous. On the other hand, the honest testimony of a witness must be received and weighed for all its purports to be. “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16). No greater line of proof could exist than the fact that Christ did rise. The whole scene was suddenly changed when He appeared and promptly was identified by those who saw Him. The effect produced indicates that there was a sufficient cause and that cause was none other than the truth that He was alive from the dead.

His followers were unprepared for His death. That death was not softened by the slightest expectation that He might rise from the dead. They were unprepared for His resurrection and when He arose, they responded normally to so great a surprise and joy. They were without a design or plan in acting so. To them the tomb was empty beyond a doubt and the Savior was alive and in their midst again. Angel messengers as well as human witnesses testified to the empty tomb and several hundred testified to His living presence.

The apostles began at once to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem and to those who had caused His crucifixion. Had there been any proof which men could produce that would demonstrate that Christ was still in the state of death, it would have been forthcoming; but none could be found.

The appearances of Christ were duly recorded by Paul in:

1 Corinthians 15:5 He appeared to Cēphus [Κηφῶς (*Kēphás*): the Aramaic equivalent of Peter: “rock”], then to the twelve [actually 10 from the collective of 12].

v. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred men at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

v. 7 then He appeared to James [the Lord’s half-brother and writer of the Letter of James], then to all the apostles [a total of 11, Judas absent];

v. 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also [Paul]. (NASB)



They who know Him best and could apply uncounted tests to establish His identity were convinced, not so much by the empty tomb as by His actual presence with them. On that confidence which His living presence engendered they preached with all boldness, and Christianity, grounded on the death and resurrection of Christ, was launched with never a recorded doubt on the part of those to whom He appeared.

Beyond all this—especially for those who have spiritual discernment—is the New Creation reality which is built, not on a mere belief in the resurrection of Christ, but on Him who arose from the grave. The entire Second Testament which proclaims, defends, and stands upon the resurrection of Christ is itself worthy of its claim to be the inspired Word of God. In the course of its message the resurrection of Christ is an essential feature. The greatest divine purpose is being executed upon the reality to Christ's return from the tomb.

3. ACTUAL RESURRECTION. Attention is directed to the truth that Christ really died and that, had He not been raised, He would, so far as His human body is concerned, have remained in the state of death. It is the truth which is misconstrued by unsuitable illustrations. It is probable that nature provides no comparable reality. Sincere men have, without due thought, sought to elucidate the doctrine of Christ's resurrection by comparing it to the hatching of an egg, the manifestation of life in the form of a lily when a dry bulb is planted, or the breaking of the cocoon by the chrysalis and the appearance of a gorgeous butterfly. A moments consideration suggests the inaptness of all these figures.

The egg will not hatch unless it enfolds a germ of life. No dry bulb presents a lily unless it is alive. No chrysalis ever broke its cocoon that was not animated; but there was no life in Christ's tomb. No greater distinction exists than that which obtains between life and death, and it is tragic indeed when, even by implication—which an ill-considered illustration may very well adumbrate—it is intimated that Christ did not really die, or that even a spark of life was continued in the tomb as the basis of a mere resuscitation. Let it be restated: there is nothing in nature capable of representing a true resurrection from death. Christ went down in despotic death and came up with unimpoverished and inexhaustible life.



Death does not end the consciousness of the human soul and spirit. Death did not end the consciousness of Christ's human soul and spirit, nor did it affect His Deity. Physical death is an experience of the body and only resurrection will restore its life again. Christ entered completely into the state of physical death and from it He came forth by an actual resurrection.

4. A NEW ORDER OF BEING. A sharp contrast exists and should be recognized between the glory of the preincarnate Christ on the one hand and that of Christ in resurrection on the other hand. In other words, His resurrection was vastly more than a reversal of His death. Such reversals, indeed, were the rule for all other so-called resurrections recorded in the Bible. They were, to be strictly accurate, only restorations or resuscitations from the state of complete death. The difference is seen in the fact that other so-called resurrections were a return to the former life and estate wherein those thus revived were subject to a second dying, while of Christ it is said He arose into a sphere of being never occupied or exhibited before.

It is not contended that any change was wrought in His Deity other than that which is possible in the realm of association or incarnation. The humanity of Christ—His body, soul, and spirit—instantly became that which had been anticipated throughout all eternity, namely, perfect humanity glorified and exalted to the point that it was not only meet for heaven, but meet as well to be an integral part of the glorified theanthropic Person. It is no small requirement upon that which was itself only perfect humanity that it should become an integral part of the all-glorious, exalted, resurrected Son of God. In other words, Christ is the first and only one of all earth dwellers thus far to put on immortality.

1 Timothy 6:15 He Who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

v. 16 Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal domination! Amen. (NASB)

2 Timothy 1:10 Our Savior Christ Jesus Who released us from association with spiritual death and Who has illuminated eternal life and immortality through the gospel. (EXT)



Immortality is wholly of the body, never of the soul or spirit, and since no other one from this sphere has yet received the glorified resurrection body, He only has immortality. That immortal body with a glorified soul and spirit united to Deity becomes the incomparable theanthropic Person, the exalted Savior.

5. SEVEN REASONS FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST:

A. Christ arose because of Who He is:

Acts 2:24 Whom God has raised up, having loosed the birth pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be held under the authority of it. (EXT)

No situation conceivable could be more abnormal than that the theanthropic Person should enter the realms of death. He is the source of all life.

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. (EXT)

This is not a reference to human life, which begins with human generation, but to that life which God is, from everlasting to everlasting. It is, therefore, because of Who He is that He arose from the tomb.

B. To fulfill the Davidic Covenant:

In truth, no subject is more baffling within the range of prophetic themes to those who spiritualize the kingdom than the question why it was prerequisite for Christ to be born of the line of David. If His is a spiritual kingdom, He need be born of no particular human line. The Bible does not follow a program adapted to human ideals. The Davidic covenant promised with an oath of Jehovah's that out of the fruit of David's loins, according to the flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on David's throne.⁸

2 Samuel 7:12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish His kingdom." (NASB)

⁸ "Men, let me boldly speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him (2 Samuel 7:4–17), that from the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on His throne, He looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ that His soul was not left in Hades, Paradise compartment, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus, God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses." (Acts 2:29–32, EXT)



David believed the covenant which Jehovah made respecting his earthly throne and kingdom—what right had he to doubt?—and that is why he spoke of the fact, as recorded in Psalm 16:10, that Christ would not be left in the grave.

Psalm 16:10 You, Father, will not abandon my [David's] soul in Hades [Paradise]; nor let Your Holy One [Messiah] experience decay [corruption]. (EXT)

In the Sacred Text, the whole Davidic covenant program moves majestically on with subsequent revelations regarding it quite confirmatory (cf. Isaiah 9:6–7; Luke 1:31–33; Acts 2:25–31; 15:16–18), and continues in certain prospect until it is consummated at the return of Christ when He will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem. This is the kingdom proffered by Christ in His earth ministry and preached by His disciples.

The same kingdom was rejected by the nation when they rejected their King. In the purpose of God and to the end that redemption might be achieved, the Messiah must die. Of the various reasons here assigned for Christ's resurrection, it is now asserted that He arose because of God's oath to David, lest that be violated—as it would have been had Christ remained in the sphere of death. An oath given to David from Jehovah respecting Messiah as the One to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem bears no relation to a supposed spiritual kingdom. If the kingdom be spiritual rather than literal, what then becomes of Jehovah's oath? Of what import is the Davidic covenant?

C. To Become the source of resurrection life:

It was after His resurrection that Christ breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). In like manner every Christian has been born from above and received the divine nature when he believed. It remains only to declare again that the life which is thus imparted is the life of Christ in resurrection and not the preresurrection life of Christ. It is on the ground of this truth that the Christian is contemplated, as he is in the New Testament, as already raised from the dead:

Colossians 3:1 If you have been raised in Christ [positional truth, and you have], keep on desiring to possess and endeavoring to obtain the things above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God.



Colossians 3:2 Keep thinking objectively about the things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

v. 3 For you have died positional death and your life has been hidden together with Christ by means of God.

v. 4 On the occasion when Christ, Who is our life, shall become manifest [**Second Advent**], you also shall become manifest together with Him in glory. (EXT)

In fact, the believer is now blessed with all the values of cocrucifixion, codeath, coburial, and coresurrection with Christ. These great realities are his as completely as they were Christ's since Christ wrought them as a Substitute for the one who believes. In the most actual sense, the child of God has been raised up and seated with Christ in heavenly spheres. Thus, it is written:

Ephesians 2:5 Although we all were spiritually dead in our transgressions, God has made us alive in association with Christ (by grace you have been completely and permanently saved),

v. 6 and raised us up with Him, and caused us to sit together with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

v. 7 for the purpose that in the approaching ages He might demonstrate His surpassing grace riches in generosity toward us in Christ Jesus. (EXT)

D. To Be the source of resurrection power:

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came up and said to the eleven disciples, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven [**Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father**] and on earth [**Scripture constitutes the mind of Christ on earth**]. (EXT)

The power which wrought in Christ is the power that is engaged on behalf of the believer. That power may be directed in various channels, but it is the portion of all who believe.

In Romans 6:4 the resurrection of Christ is the measurement of power available for the Christian's walk in "newness of life":

Romans 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through the baptism of the Holy Spirit into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised up from deaths [**spiritual and physical**] through the glory of the Father [**Who raised Christ from the dead**], so also we might potentially choose to walk [**περιπατέω (peripatéō): wheel-tracks of righteousness**] in an extraordinary newness of life. (EXT)

A new life principle, namely, the walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

E. To be head over all things to the church.

When the resurrected Christ is combined with the Church into one entity, the result is known as the New Creation.

Ephesians 2:5 Although we all were dead in our transgressions, He has made us alive together with Christ (by means of grace you have been completely and permanently saved).

v. 6 And the Holy Spirit has both raised us up together with Him [**Christ: doctrine of the current positional truth⁹**] in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (EXT)

Thus, it is said in:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ Jesus, he is a new spiritual species. The ancient things have come to an end; behold, they have become a new species with the result that they will always be a new species. (EXT)

As all that enters into the New Creation is established on resurrection ground and is derived directly from the resurrected Christ, it is clear that He Himself was for this cause raised and seated far above angelic spheres and made Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body (Ephesians 1:20–23).

F. On account of justification.

Justification means an act of vindication. This is a judicial act because we are born under condemnation, being spiritually dead.

⁹ Current positional truth is related to the believer's election and predestination. Election means we are in union with Christ at salvation. Christ has no battlefield royalty or family, but the Church Age had to be inserted into history to provide for Him a royal family.



Therefore, justification is an official judicial act which occurs every time anyone believes in Christ. The justice of God acts on our behalf pronouncing us justified, which means God imputes His righteousness to us and we are permanently justified before Him.

It will be recognized that this aspect of resurrection truth is drawn from one text of Scripture (Romans 4:25), which reads:

Romans 4:25 Jesus Christ who has been delivered over to judgment because of our transgressions and was resurrected from the dead because of our justification [δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosúnē*): acquittal¹⁰]. (EXT)

It is not according to sound doctrine to declare that justification is based upon Christ's resurrection. It, rather, is certain from the testimony of the New Testament that justification is based upon the death of Christ. It is written in:

Romans 3:24 Receiving justification [δικαίω (*dikaióō*): vindication] without payment by His grace through the redemption [ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolútrōsis*): the ransom paid by Christ's work on the cross] that is in Christ Jesus.

Principle: Justification is the only means by which God can bless us from His integrity. Therefore, justification must be accomplished before the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

The testimony that sin had been judged at the cross and the judgment against us had been cancelled, emphasizes the saving work of Christ on the cross. It was completely accomplished before He died physically.

Yet there is a sense in which it may be said too that, since imputed righteousness is the divine reason for that divine pronouncement which justification is and since imputed righteousness accrues to the believer on the sole basis of his union to the resurrected Christ, the believer's justification does rest perfectly on the resurrection of the Lord. It is therefore true that justification is made possible both by the death of Christ and by His resurrection, and so both are essential.¹¹

¹⁰ “δικαιοσύνη: The decision of heaven's court that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as a result of His assumption of our guilt.” (Randolph O. Yeager, Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Co., 1983), 412.

¹¹ The major references for this study cite Lewis Sperry Chafer, “The Resurrection of Christ Incarnate” in *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), V:238–249 passim.



Conclusion: Salvation was accomplished while Christ was still physically alive on the cross.

Romans 5:9 Much greater then, having now been justified [δικαιόω (*dikaiōō*): by the imputation of divine righteousness] we shall be delivered from punishment in the lake of fire through Him. (EXT)

Justification is a judicial function of God. Without compromising the principle of fairness in His justice, God is able to impute His righteousness into those who put their personal faith in Christ.

Forgiveness subtracts sin. Justification adds righteousness.

This formula is expressed repeatedly in Scripture for the resultant salvation of anyone who believes in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In the verses below, two key words are emphasized, the verb πιστεύω (*pisteúō*): “to believe,” and its working object, the proper masculine pronoun αὐτός (*autós*): “Him”:

John 3:16 “God so loved the world with the result that He gave His only, uniquely born, Son with the purpose that whosoever believes [πιστεύω (*pisteúō*)] in Him [αὐτός (*autós*): the working object of πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) is Jesus Christ] shall not perish [in the lake of fire], but have eternal life. (EXT)

Acts 16:31 Believe [aorist active imperative of πιστεύω (*pisteúō*):] in the Lord Jesus [Κύριος Ἰησοῦς (*Kúrios 'Iēsoús*): the working object of “believe.”] and you will be saved. (NASB)

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