

WHAT WE BELIEVE

A SURVEY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON #8 – The Person of Christ

The Baptist Faith & Message Article 2

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

MEMORY VERSES

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made (John 1:1-3, HCSB).

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Was Jesus just a man, or was He more? How are we to understand who Jesus really is?

There are four summary statements about Jesus that must be understood and affirmed in order to have a complete biblical picture of the person of Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus Christ is fully and completely divine.
2. Jesus Christ is fully and completely human.
3. The divine and human natures of Christ are distinct.
4. The divine and human natures of Christ are completely united in one person.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Every pseudo-Christian cult subtracts from the person of Christ in regards to His deity. Only, orthodox Christianity affirms Jesus' complete divine nature. The affirmation of the deity of Christ is the primary doctrine which sets orthodox Christianity apart from all other religions and cults in the world. What

does Scripture say about the deity of Christ? See the following: John 1:1,14,18; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:5-7; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:3,8,10; 2 Pet 1:1; Rev 1:8,17-18; 22:12-13.

Summarize:

Jesus clearly thought of Himself as God. This fact can be seen in at least the following six ways.

1. Jesus taught with divine authority. Matt 7:23,28-29; 5:22,28,32,34,39,44; 24:35.
2. Jesus had a unique relationship with God the Father. Luke 2:49; John 5:17-18.
3. Jesus' favorite self-designation was the title the Son of Man. Dan 7:13-14; Mark 2:10-11,27-28.
4. Jesus' teaching emphasized his own identity. He identified Himself as the King when teaching on the Kingdom of God. Central to His teaching was the priority of His identity (Matt 16:15).
5. Jesus received worship. Matt 14:33; 28:9,17; John 9:38; 20:28. Angels refused to receive worship (Rev 19:10; 22:9). The apostles refused worship (Acts 14:14-15).
6. Jesus equated Himself with God the Father. John 5:17-18; 8:58-59; 10:30-33; Mark 14:61-64.

Jesus' humanity and deity:

As man, He got tired; as God, He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

As man, He got hungry; as God, He fed thousands with a lad's lunch.

As man, He got thirsty; as God, He gave living water.

As man, He prayed; as God, He made, in praying, no confession of sin.

As man, He was tempted in all points like as we are; as God, He was without sin, baffling His enemies with the question, "Who convinceth Me of sin?"

As man, He slept; as God, He arose from sleep and stilled the raging tempest. ...

As man, a ship carried Him; as God, He walked on the rolling, tumbling sea.

As man, He accepted a village girl's invitation to her wedding; as God, He there changed the water into wine. ...

As man, He wept at Lazarus' grave, as God, He raised Lazarus from the dead.

R.G. Lee, 1886-1978
Pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church
Memphis, Tennessee
President, SBC, 1949-51

Implications of Christ's Deity

1. God can be known definitively and personally. John 1:18; 14:9.
2. Redemption is possible and has been accomplished in Christ. 1 Tim 2:5.
3. The risen, ascended, enthroned Christ has omnipotent power to meet our needs. Heb 4:15.
4. Worship and obedience to Christ is appropriate and necessary.
5. Other implications?

When seeking to determine "the bottom line" of another's persons professed spiritual belief, simply ask them, "What do you think of Jesus?" Is He God in the flesh?"

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

At His conception in the womb of the virgin Mary, Christ became permanently united to a human nature to become and the incarnate Son of God.

1. Did Jesus have a human birth, a human genealogy, a human body? What did Jesus experience in His earthly life that indicates He had a real human body? Gal 4:4; Luke 2:40, 52; Matt 4:2; John 4:6; 19:28; Luke 23:46.

Summarize:

2. What did the apostle John say about the physicality of Jesus' body? 1 John 1:1-3

Summarize:

3. After His resurrection, Jesus continues to exist in a physical human body. How did Jesus verify His physically resurrected body to the disciples? Luke 24:36-43; John 20:17,25-27.

Summarize:

4. Did Jesus ascend to heaven in a physical body? Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11.

Summarize:

Implications of the Humanity of Christ

Jesus' humanity shows that the problem of the human condition is not in being human but in being sinful. Jesus' human nature shows the potential of humanity as God intended.

1. As a sinless human, Jesus qualified to be the obedient representative of humanity before God. Rom 5:18-19.

2. As a sinless human, Jesus can be a substitutionary sacrifice for mankind. Heb 2:17.

3. As a sinless human, Jesus can be the only effective mediator between God and man. 1 Tim 2:5.

4. As a sinless human, Jesus can be a sympathetic high priest. Heb 4:15-16.

5. As a sinless human, Jesus can be a true example and pattern for human character and conduct. 1 Pet 1:21; 1 John 2:6.

HISTORICAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Two early heresies concerning the deity of Christ are Ebionism (adoptionism) and Arianism.

1. Ebionism (adoptionism) was taught by a small Jewish-Christian sect in the first century. They believed God's power came upon the man Jesus to fulfill the role of Messiah, but Jesus was not God.

2. Arianism is named after the teacher Arius (c. 256-336) who believed Jesus was the "first and greatest of created being" (similar to today's Jehovah's Witnesses). The heresy of Arius was rejected at the Council of Nicea in 325. At this council, Athanasius showed the Scripture teaches Jesus is fully God, being of the same essence as the Father.

Early heresies concerning the humanity of Christ are Docetism and Apollinarianism.

1. Docetism, a second-century heresy, denied the true humanity of Christ by saying Jesus did not have a real, physical body. Jesus only "appeared" to have a body (Greek dokeo, "to seem, to appear to be"). They said, "when Jesus walked on the beach, he left no footprints." Note John's statement about this view in 1 John 4:2.

Can you find another like Jesus?

The religion of our Lord Jesus Christ contains in it nothing so wonderful as Himself. It is a mass of marvels, but He is the miracle of it; the wonder of wonders is "the Wonderful" Himself. If proof be asked of the truth which He proclaimed, we point men to Jesus Christ Himself. His character is unique. We defy unbelievers to imagine another like Him. He is God and yet man, and we challenge them to compose a narrative in which the two apparently incongruous characters shall be so harmoniously blended-in which the human and divine shall be so marvelously apparent, without the one overshadowing the other. They question the authenticity of the four Gospels; will they try to write a fifth? Will they even attempt to add a few incidents to the life which shall be worthy of the sacred biography, and congruous with those facts which are already described? If it be all a forgery, will they be so good as to show us how it is done? Will they find a novelist who will write another biography of a man of any century they choose, of any nationality, or of any degree of experience, or any rank or station, and let us see if they can describe in that imaginary life a devotion, a self-sacrifice, a truthfulness, a completeness of character at all comparable to that of Jesus Christ Himself? Can they invent another perfect character even if the divine element be left out? They must of necessity fail, for there is none like unto Jesus Himself.

Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of the New Testament*

2. Apollinarianism, named after Apollinarius (4th c.), believed humans had bodies, souls, and spirits. He thought the divine logos in Christ took the place of the rational spirit of a human. This view was rejected at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Gregory of Nazianzen's famous statement was, "that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved." Jesus had to assume every element in a human nature to fully redeem humanity.

The Distinction and Unity of Christ's Two Natures
In the incarnation, the two natures of Christ remain distinct while united in one person. Isa 9:6; Luke 2:11; John 1:14; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 2:8; Gal 4:4-5.

Implication of Christ's Two Natures
Christ must be both God and man if He is to mediate between God and man, make atonement for sin, and by a sympathetic high priest. Col 1:19-20; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:17.

Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109), in his *Why God Became Man*, summarized the importance of Christ's two natures: "It is necessary that the self-same Person who is to make this satisfaction [for sins] be perfect God and perfect man, since He cannot make it unless He be really God, and He ought not to make it unless He be really man."

In A.D. 451, leaders of the church assembled in Chalcedon (modern Turkey) and wrote a creed affirmed both Jesus' full humanity and his full deity, with his two natures united in one person. This creed teaches the church how to talk about Christ without falling into error.

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with

us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us (emphasis added).