

Christology: The Person and Work of Christ

Lesson 4: The Person of Christ – Union of Two Natures

Statement of Belief: Jesus Christ, the Son of God and second person of the Trinity, possess two natures, divine and human, distinct from one another yet inseparable.

Question #1: What is one heresy that denies the distinction of two natures?

Eutychianism

- Named after Eutyches, a monastery leader in Constantinople in the late 4th and early 5th centuries
- Also known as monophysitism (Gk. *monos*, “one,” and *physis*, “nature”)
- Eutyches taught that the incarnate Christ had only one nature
- He believed that Christ’s human nature and divine nature somehow blended into a new nature that was present in the incarnate Son of God

Biblical Response

- When the two natures blend, they become a third nature that is neither fully God nor fully human
- Because the Son is neither fully God nor fully man, He cannot be our salvation

ASSESSMENT: Denies distinction of two natures, contrary to biblical witness

Question #2: What is one heresy that denies the union of two natures?

Nestorianism

- Named after Nestorius, preacher in Antioch and bishop of Constantinople in the early 5th century AD
- Nestorius taught that there were two separate persons in Christ, a human person and a divine person
- In other words the incarnate Son of God is two distinct, separable, natures, combined in one, inseparable Christ
- “Christ is indivisible in that he is Christ, but he is twofold in that he is both God and a human being. He is one in his sonship, but is twofold in that which takes and that which is taken...” (Nestorius)

Biblical Response

- The Bible gives no indication that one of Jesus' natures is independent of the other nature
- Nowhere in scripture does Jesus' human nature decide to do something contrary to his divine nature
- No scriptural record of a discussion between Jesus' two natures
- Jesus and other biblical writers use singular pronouns when referring to the Son

ASSESSMENT: Denies union of two natures, contrary to biblical witness

Question #3: What is the orthodox view of the union of two natures?

The Chalcedonian Definition (Council of Chalcedon, AD 451)

"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 [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and 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 has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us."

Summary: Two natures, One person, Perfect unity

Question #4: What are some modern Christological heresies?

- **Mormonism**
 - God used to be a man on another planet
 - He is married to his mother goddess and they have spirit children
 - Good Mormons will become gods and have our own planets
 - Elohim had physical relations with Mary, which produced Jesus
 - Jesus was the first spirit to be born in heaven
 - Jesus is the spirit-brother of Satan
 - Jesus is one of three gods (infinite number of gods in theory); there is no Trinity
 - Salvation is by works, not grace alone through faith

- **Jehovah's Witness**
 - The Son is a created being (the first)
 - The Son and the Father do not have the same essence
 - The Son is only *like* the Father, but not *equal to* the Father
 - Salvation is through Jesus' sacrifice

- **Oneness Pentecostalism**
 - One form of modalism (Sabellianism, modalistic monarchianism)
 - There is only one person (God), who reveals himself in three different modes throughout history.

- **Islam**
 - Jesus is a created being (simply human)
 - Jesus never claimed to be divine
 - Jesus was virgin born and sinless, but not indications of divinity

Conclusion

- Jesus is fully God and fully man
- Jesus is one person
- Jesus has two natures that are distinct, yet inseparable
- Jesus has a human body, mind, soul, spirit
- Jesus' humanity and divinity are both necessary for salvation