

Lesson 5

CHRISTOLOGY – THE PERSON OF CHRIST

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly through grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead he is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate, and all sufficient Savior.

I. Introduction (pg. 19)

The purpose of this lesson is to provide a faithful description of Christ. In our next lesson, Lord willing, we'll discuss the work of Christ, but for now we want to consider who Christ is.

When we discuss Biblical Christology, what we are talking about is the person of Christ. It's not hard to provide a summary statement of what Scripture says about the person of Christ: **Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.**

All throughout the Bible, the doctrine of the incarnation is affirmed – Jesus Christ, who is God, took to himself human flesh. This is the good news of Christianity. The eternal Son of God permanently took into himself a human nature and in so doing became – as the statement of faith at the beginning of our lesson says – **“qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all sufficient Savior.”**

Now when we speak of the incarnation, I think most of us will immediately start thinking about the manger – and rightly so! It's the place where He who is eternal was born into history. But I wonder if you've ever realized that at that moment, when Jesus was at his earliest stage of infancy, he was also upholding the universe (Col. 1:17). He was, as Hebrews 1:3 tells us **“sustaining all things by his powerful word,”** even as he lay as a helpless babe on that Bethlehem night.

This is the great mystery; that human nature and divine nature coexist in one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who would suggest that this is the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible. Our finite minds can only begin to scratch the surface at understanding this truth.

Perhaps the clearest exposition of the nature and meaning of Jesus' divine Son-ship is found in the prologue to John's Gospel. Listen to these selected verses:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...” (*continuing further on*) **“...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...”** (*continuing further on still*) **“...grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.”**

The proposition that Jesus was both fully God and fully man and having two distinct natures in one person was controversial in the early centuries after Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Most of the early church councils and creeds were designed to deal with heresies with respect to the person of Christ, one of which we will discuss in this lesson. And like all Christian doctrines, it doesn't have universal

acceptance. Jews and Muslims reject this teaching and say it makes us polytheists. Unitarians and Jehovah's Witnesses deny the doctrine outright.

Even some professing Christians have called this doctrine into question. They charge that omniscience and ignorance, omnipotence and impotence cannot coexist. Such assertions, however, deny that infinite deity and finite humanity can exist together in the same person and they undermine the Christian message if left unchecked. While this doctrine is far beyond human comprehension, it's clearly commended in Scripture, and so we must subject ourselves to God's infinite wisdom revealed in His Word.

It comes as no surprise that the denial of the person of Christ has always been one of the primary assaults that Satan has used to deceive the world and attack the church. Consider 1 John 4, where the Apostle John says that, **"Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."** John points to the belief in the incarnation as a sign of what is from God and what is not!

Let us now explore this doctrine that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one person. Our format will be to reflect on the humanity of Jesus Christ, then discuss his deity, and then show that these two natures are true of a single person. To begin, let's take a moment to consider the need for Jesus' humanity.

A. The Humanity of Christ

1. The Necessity of Jesus' Humanity (pg. 19)

Why did the Son of God have to take on human flesh? Why do you think it was important for Jesus to become human?

The New Testament gives several reasons why Jesus needed to be fully man if he was going to be the Messiah and earn our salvation. Wayne Grudem, in his systematic theology, identifies seven.

Jesus needed to become a man...

- a) **For Representative Obedience** – Jesus obeyed where Adam utterly failed and disobeyed. Just as through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one man many were made righteous. (Rom. 5:18-19, **"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."**; 1 Cor. 15:45-47, **"Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven."**)
- b) **To Be a Substitute Sacrifice** – Jesus had to be made like us in every way to be an acceptable sacrifice for man, since it was man who rebelled against his Creator. (Heb. 2:14-17, **"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the**

service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”)

- c) **To Be the One Mediator Between God and Man** – We needed Christ to represent us to God and to represent God to us. Only someone both fully divine and truly human can effectually mediate between God and men. (1 Tim 2:5, “**For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.**”)
- d) **To Fulfill God’s Original Purpose for Man to Rule the Creation** (Heb. 2:8-9, “**putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.**” Luke 19:17-19, “**And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’”** 1 Cor. 6:3, “**Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!**”)
- e) **To Be Our Example and Pattern in Life** – Christ showed and taught us how we are to live. We have no better example to follow than in Christ. (1 John 2:6, “**whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.**” 1 John 3:2-3, “**Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**” 2 Cor. 3:18, “**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**” 1 Pet. 2:21, “**For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**”)
- f) **To Be the Pattern for Our Redeemed Bodies** – Jesus’ resurrection body was the firstfruits of those who will follow and be resurrected with Him on that last day. (1 Cor. 15:42-49, “**So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.** ⁴³ **It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.** ⁴⁴ **It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.** ⁴⁵ **Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.** ⁴⁶ **But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.** ⁴⁷ **The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.** ⁴⁸ **As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.** ⁴⁹ **Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.**”)
- g) **To Sympathize as High Priest** – Jesus has experienced our struggles and so he can understand what we go through. (Heb. 2:18, “**For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**” Heb. 4:15-16, “**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” ¹⁶ **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**”)

2. The Beginning (pg. 20)

Luke 2:7, **“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”** Since it was necessary for Jesus to take on human flesh, how do we know from Scripture that Jesus was fully human? What evidences are there to suggest this?

It’s appropriate for us to direct our study of the humanity of Christ with the beginning of Jesus’ life on earth. With regards to the virgin conception, Galatians 4:4 says that, **“when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.”** In Luke 1:31-35, we find the account of the angel Gabriel delivering this message to Mary. Gabriel spoke to her and said...

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end. How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, **“since I am a virgin?”** The angel answered, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”**

The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and fully humanity in one person.” Think of the wisdom of God in ordaining the incarnation in this way.

Scripture doesn’t tell us, but what if Jesus took on human nature and descended from heaven in adult form? Think about the difficulty that this would have created. Who would believe that Jesus really was descended from Adam’s race if he just suddenly appeared? In addition, it seems that His human nature would be a new creation, similar to ours, but not derived from the same stock as ours. This would raise doubts as to whether His mediation would be any use to us.

Similarly, what if Jesus was born as the God-man to two human parents? This would have made it very difficult to believe that he was fully divine. It would also lead us to believe that he shared the common guilt and original sin of mankind and so could not save us from our sin.

Praise God that he sent His Son in the way he did. God ordained a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Christ, so that [1] his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of his ordinary human birth from a human mother, and [2] his full deity would be evident from the fact of his conception in the virgin Mary’s womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

Another doctrinal importance of the virgin birth is that it shows that salvation comes from the Lord – our salvation does not come from human effort but only through the supernatural work of God. The virgin birth fulfills the promise of Genesis 3:15 that the ‘seed’ of the woman would crush Satan. God says, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

This ‘seed’, who is Christ, did not take on a corrupt nature that was inherited from the fall of Adam. If he did, then he would have died for his own sin and would not have been resurrected. But instead through the Holy Spirit’s power, the conception of Christ was kept free from the pollution of sin.

It’s difficult for us to understand how the corruption of sin passes from parent to child so it’s enough for us to simply acknowledge that Jesus took on human nature but did not inherit the sin of Adam. It’s a miracle of God, and nothing is too hard for God to do.

3. Body, Mind and Soul (pg. 20)

The next aspect of Christ's humanity that we want to think about is that Jesus had a human body. The second chapter of Luke tells us: A human baby was placed in a manger. A human baby was circumcised and given his name in the temple on the eighth day. A human baby was held by the righteous Simeon. Luke 2:40 tells us of his development, **"the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."** Luke 2:52 says, **"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor of God and man."**

Jesus' human body was like ours in every way. He hungered. He thirsted. He grew tired from his journeys. He needed sleep. He lacked the strength to carry his own cross due to the weaknesses and limitations of his body after being severely beaten. He bled. And his body ceased to have life and ceased to function when he was killed on the cross. Hebrews 5:8, **"Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."**

The fact that Jesus "grew in wisdom" shows that he went through a learning process. It shows that he had a human mind that needed to develop. He had to learn how to eat, how to talk, how to read and write. Hebrews 5:8 says that he "learned obedience." We see that in his human nature Jesus had the limited knowledge of a human mind. In Mark 13:32, it says, **"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."**

Jesus also had a human soul with human emotions. He displays a full range of emotions in the gospels. In Matthew 8:10 he is "astonished" by the faith of the centurion. In John 11:35 Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus. At Gethsemane, Jesus tells his disciples, **"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."** And in a verse that should be convicting to us we read, **"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears."** (Heb. 5:7).

4. Sinlessness (pg. 20)

Even though Jesus took upon himself a human nature, he did not take up our sin nature and did not sin. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that **"he had no sin."** 1 Peter 2:22 states, **"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."** This is all the more remarkable given that he was thoroughly tempted, even directly by the devil in the wilderness.

Hebrews 4:15 says, **"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin."** "The fact that he faced temptation means that he had a genuine human nature that could be tempted, for Scripture clearly tells us that **'God cannot be tempted by evil** (James 1:13)."

5. Hometown Reception (pg. 20)

Other Biblical evidence that demonstrates Jesus had a human nature comes from the comments made about him by those he lived with for the first thirty years of his life. Matthew 13:53-58 records the reception Jesus received when he returned to his hometown of Nazareth:

"Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?' they asked. 'Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?' And they took offense at him."

Apparently, prior to beginning his ministry, Jesus was perceived as an ordinary man, even though he was much more. His neighbors were amazed at the Jesus they saw when he returned back home. All of his life, they'd taken him to be an Average Joe, a simple carpenter. Perhaps this is the reason that we read in John 7:5 that **“even his brothers did not believe in him.”**

Jesus was so fully human that even those who lived and worked with him for thirty years, even those brothers who grew up in his own household, did not realize that he was anything more than another very good human being. They apparently had no idea that he was God in the flesh.

Some people have taken this persuasive evidence for Jesus' humanity and tried to assert on the basis of such passages that Jesus was not always fully God and fully man. Some assert a “gradual incarnation doctrine” which states that Jesus needed to grow physically and socially and so over time he increasingly gained a divine nature. This would explain why the people of Nazareth didn't understand the changes.

Others claim an “adoptionist” view, which says that God imparted a divine nature to the ordinary man Jesus upon his baptism and that it was at this baptism that Jesus becomes God incarnate. But there is too much biblical evidence contrary to such heretical views. Just one example would be Jesus amazing the teachers in the temple with his understanding and answers when he was only 12 years old. The best answer is that Jesus was always fully God and upon conception became fully man as well, but that he did not step into his Messianic ministry until the time appointed for him by the Father.

6. THE GOD-MAN FOREVER (PG. 20)

So what about Jesus now? Is he still fully God and fully man? The answer is Yes! Jesus did not temporarily become man. Instead, his divine nature was permanently united to his human nature. This seems to be one of the teachings of the ascension. The disciples are told, **“this same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).”** Jesus did not shed his humanity after his death and resurrection, as we see him eating food in flesh and bones with the disciples in Luke 24:39-42, **“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”** ⁴⁰ **And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.** ⁴¹ **And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”** ⁴² **They gave him a piece of broiled fish.”** Even at the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, we see that he has a physical body, though no longer one robed in humility; it is forever exalted and glorified. Rev. 1:12-16, **“Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”**

Question: Was it possible for Jesus to sin and for his temptations to be real? (*This question deals with the “impeccability” of Christ where impeccable means “not able to sin.” Hebrews 4:15 clearly states that Jesus was tempted as we are, and James 1:13 clearly states that God cannot be tempted. Because Jesus' human nature does not exist without his divine nature, we must conclude that in his human nature Jesus was tempted but that because his human nature exists with his divine nature, the person of Jesus could not have sinned finally.*)

Questions or Comments?

III. The Deity of Christ (pg. 20)

Now that we have seen that Christ was fully human, it's right for us to see how he was fully God as well. So how do we know from Scripture that Jesus was fully God? What evidences are there to suggest this?

The New Testament evidence for the deity of Christ is overwhelming. If you acknowledge the authority of Scripture, then you cannot miss the fact that Jesus is God.

1. Scriptural Evidences (pg. 21)

First, we have many instances where the words used for God (*Theos*) and Lord (*Kyrios*) in the Septuagint are applied directly to Jesus (e.g. John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Luke 2:11). (*NOTE: The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Old Testament used during Jesus' time on earth.*) Second, Paul opens up almost all of his letters saying, **"Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."** He links God the Father and Jesus together as the source of grace and peace.

We also have direct, unambiguous Scriptural statements:

(recorded in workbook)

Colossians 2:9 – **"In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."**

Hebrews 1:3 – **"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."**

Such statements are not confined only to the New Testament. Isaiah 9:6, for example, declares that the human child to be born, that is Christ Jesus, **"will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God..."**

And, of course, we have Jesus' claims of himself. There is his great statement in John 8:58, **"Before Abraham was born, I am!"** The Jews understood that he was claiming to be God. "I AM WHO I AM" was God's way of identifying Himself to Moses. They picked up stones to stone Jesus because their unbelieving hearts judged this to be a blasphemous statement. Jesus was equating himself with God!

2. Attributes of Deity Seen in Jesus (pg. 21)

Well, it's not just declarations made of Jesus that help us to understand his divinity. We also are given accounts of Jesus' actions that clearly commend him as fully God.

We see Jesus'...

- **Omnipotence** – Jesus had authority over all things. He changed the water into wine (John 2:1-11); fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish (Matthew 14); and calmed the storm with a word (Matthew 8:26-27).
- **Omniscience** – Jesus knew people's thoughts (Mark 2); knew who was going to betray him (John 6:64); and knew people's backgrounds (i.e., the woman at the well in John 4). Even others who spent time with him admitted that he knew everything, as Peter does when being restored after his denial in John 21:17.
- **Immortality** – Although Jesus' human nature can die, his divine nature cannot. Thus, he has the authority to raise his body up. He declared that he had the power to take up his own life and proved it in his resurrection. Hebrews 7:16 says that he has the "power of an indestructible life."

- **Sovereignty** – Jesus is supreme, and this is shown in his ability to forgive sins upon seeing the faith of the paralytic (Mark 2:5-7).
- **Worthy of worship** – Only God is worthy of worship; yet we see Jesus being worshipped not only as an infant by the Magi but throughout his ministry on earth and in heaven around the throne.

3. Kenosis Theory: Danger of Narrow Readings of Text (pg. 21)

So we see that Jesus, in his divine nature, shares the divine attributes with God the Father. Thus, Jesus can say to Phillip, **“If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.”** Some have asked, though, whether or not Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes while on earth. And so we come to know of the kenosis theory. The kenosis theory holds that Christ gave up some of his divine attributes when he became man. Kenosis comes from a Greek word in Philippians 2:7 which means “to empty.”

Let’s consider the primary passage where this theory is said to derive from – Philippians 2:5-11, **“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

Where the NIV has that first part of verse 7 translated “*made himself nothing*,” many translations have translated it as the ESV does: “*emptied himself*.” In the late 19th Century some advocated that Jesus must have “emptied himself” by giving up divine attributes. These theologians thought it inconceivable that Jesus could simultaneously be both omniscient God and limited man. But this was not a good solution to the mystery of the incarnation.

First, the text describes what Jesus did in this ‘emptying’: he didn’t do it by giving up any of his attributes but rather by **‘taking the form of a servant.’** For 19 centuries Christians understood this passage to be referring to Jesus giving up the status and privilege that was his in heaven to come to earth. In an act of humility, he willingly concealed the glory due him as the eternal Son of God and did not assert his divine prerogative. We see his glory revealed, however, in the transfiguration. The Kenosis theory gives us a Jesus that is less than fully God and has accordingly been rejected as unorthodox thinking.

We must conclude then that Jesus had a full divine nature; that his name is rightly called “Emmanuel,” that is “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

Questions or Comments?

IV. The Hypostatic Union (pg. 21)

1. Early Heresies

So now that we have seen that Jesus was fully God and fully man, how are we to draw these Biblical truths about Jesus together? The orthodox position is sometimes called the **Hypostatic Union**, meaning simply that Christ's human and divine natures are united in one person.

During the first few centuries after Christ came to earth, several heretical views were put forth in dealing with how Christ could have two natures. We will look at four of them briefly:

- a) Arianism – Claimed that Jesus was not fully God. Arianism reasoned that the scripture passages referring to Jesus as “only begotten” meant that he was created by the Father.
- b) Apollinarianism – Claimed that Jesus had a human body, but not a human mind or spirit – these were part of the divine nature. (i.e. Christ's manhood was incomplete because our spirits, or souls, needed saving as well.)
- c) Nestorianism – Claimed that there were two separate persons in Christ – one for each nature. (Christ was not divided but had two natures in one person working together in perfect unity.)
- d) Monophysitism - Claimed that Christ had one nature only – a new nature that was a hybrid of the human and divine nature. (This would leave Christ not representing man nor be truly God.)

2. The Chalcedonian Definition (pg. 22)

Well, in 451AD a large church council gathered in the city of Chalcedon near modern day Istanbul to solve the problems raised by these controversies over the person of Christ. The outcome of that council was a definition that summarized Scripture to guard against these unbiblical teachings and has been taken to be the standard orthodox teaching on the person of Christ ever since.

The Chalcedonian definition stated that Christ has the same nature as the Father and has the same nature as man. These “two natures” were said to be “*inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, [and] inseparably*” together “*in one Person*”. It confirmed the incarnation we discussed earlier and that the “property of each nature” was “preserved...in one Person” and not two.

The Chalcedonian definition was created to help solve the controversies surrounding the person of Christ. To fend off heretical teachings, it denounced certain views expressed of the person of Christ. But it also clarified positively who the person of Christ is from what we know from Scripture. Although this does not fully satisfy our curiosity, it is a helpful way to explain a mystery not open to a natural explanation and helps to guard against error. In fact, the Chalcedonian definition is considered *the* orthodox definition of the Biblical teaching on the person of Christ. If you want to go outside the borders of Chalcedon, you might as well choose your heresy.

3. Combining the Texts (pg. 22)

A question that often arises in dealing with this subject is how can God, who is immutable and does not change, become God incarnate? Although difficult to answer, we must maintain that Christ's divine nature did not undergo any essential change, but he did take on humanity that was not his before. In other words “remaining what he was, he became what he was not.”

The fact that Jesus was both fully God and fully man is a difficult doctrine. But if we are willing to affirm Scripture, we must take what appears to be a paradox as compatible truths. If we grant that Jesus was divine, it becomes unreasonable to find difficulty in any of this.

There are some ways to make this a little easier, however. First, it's important to realize that we can distinguish between things done by Christ's human nature but not by his divine nature and vice versa. One nature does some things that the other nature does not do. Luke, for example, can tell us that Jesus

was about thirty years old when he began his ministry, while John tells us that he is the eternal Word of God. One reference is to his human nature, and one is to his divine nature.

Another example is the “Tired yet Omnipotent” example. In Matthew 8 we read that Jesus is asleep in the boat because he is tired. But he gets up from his sleep and with a word calms the wind and sea. Grudem states it well: **“Here Jesus’ weak human nature completely hid his omnipotence until that omnipotence broke forth in a sovereign word from the Lord of heaven and earth.”**

Second, realize that although we can distinguish between things done by Christ’s two natures, overdoing it can make us sound like Nestorians, preaching a schizophrenic Jesus who has two persons trapped in one body. But Jesus doesn’t give us that option. He always speaks as “I” and not “we”; the Bible gives us “a consistent picture of a single person acting in wholeness and unity.” And while we can distinguish actions of his divine nature and actions of his human nature to help us understand some things, it’s telling that the Biblical authors do not find it necessary to say, “Jesus’ human nature did this” or “Jesus’ divine nature did that.” He is fully God and fully man, in one person.

CONCLUSION (PG. 22)

While much of these things remain mysterious to us, Scripture has revealed to us everything we need to know about Jesus in order to place our trust in him. So who is Jesus? Our whole lives are built and judged on how we answer this one question. Let us close by listening to how Paul answers this question in Colossians. Speaking of Jesus, he says...

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to *reconcile to himself all things*, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by *making peace through his blood*.”

Questions or Comments?