**Who Needs Theology?**

**The Person of Jesus**

**Class #11**

-Christianity is Christ.

-So “who Christ is” was *the* central issue for the first few centuries of the church, with the consensus being:

- Jesus Christ: Fully God / Fully Human

-What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is both God and human?

-John begins with the strong affirmation that Jesus is God, yet Luke 2:52 talks about him having a normal human development.

-Jesus acted as God by forgiving people’s sins and was condemned at his trial for making himself equal with God, yet the Bible also says that Jesus can sympathize with our weakness and was tempted in every human way - though God cannot be tempted. .

-The early church fathers upheld Jesu’s humanity and divinity long before the creeds were written to stamp out heresy.

Hypostatic union – The belief in a perfect union of two distinct but never separate natures

- one human and one divine - in one integral, eternal divine person.

Hypostatic: one person

Union: of the two natures

Trinity: Affirmed that God is “one what” and “three whos”.

(One divine substance shared equally by three distinct persons).

Hypostatic union: Affirmed that Jesus, on earth and now in heaven, due to his incarnation and resurrection, is “two whats” and “one who”.

-Two distinct but never separate natures.

-Divine and human.

-One integrated person; the eternal Son of God).

-The one person, two nature’s idea of Jesus Christ has always been upheld as orthodox by the church.

-Again, the importance of upholding this is not simply speculative theology, but strikes at the heart of how we understand what Christ accomplished in our salvation.

-That is why Hebrews, which is all about salvation and the work of Christ, is a book all about getting your Christology right.

-Who you believe Jesus is determines what you believe Jesus has accomplished.

Heresies

1. Docetism – Denied the true humanity of the saviour.

-Gnostic thinkers who believed that matter was evil, therefore, how could

Jesus became matter without becoming evil.

-Jesus only *appeared* human.

-Or they made a distinction between the earthly and physical Jesus and the heavenly and spiritual Christ.

-In more liberal theological circles today this can be seen in “Jesus was a man of history, but Christ is the object of faith” ideas.

-Or in pietistic evangelical folk theology that states, “It wouldn’t matter if they find Jesus bones, I still have my personal relationship with Christ.”

-Docetist views end up spiritualizing the incarnation so as to make it not a real incarnation.

-Christ never really lived as a human being, took on our pain, suffering,

and died as a human being.

-Questions:

-Was the person Jesus dead on Saturday before his resurrection, or was just his body dead?

-Is keeping Jesus “alive” on Saturday a form of docetism?

-How is Jesus our great High Priest and advocate if he never really lived, suffered and died as one of us?

1. Adoptionism – Jesus was a very special human being who was *adopted* by God as

his special son.

-Most Adoptionists say that this happened at his baptism.

-Some Docetists were also adoptionists and believed that “Christ” entered the man “Jesus” at his baptism and then “Christ” left the “man” Jesus before his death, so that only the “man” Jesus died and not the “Christ” Logos.

-And form of adoptionism has become the norm for modern liberal Protestant Christianity.

-Jesus fulfilled an eternal divine plan.

-He was a human being perfectly fulfilling the plan of God.

-He was God’s ideal for humanity. (The face of God).

-And, thus, accepted/adopted by God as his ideal of what we are all called to emulate.

-This ultimately reduces the gospel to self-salvation because it reduces Christ to a

human example to follow.

-Whereas Docetism denies the true humanity of Christ, Adoptionism denies his true deity.

1. Arianism – A more sophisticated form of adoptionism.

-Pushes the origin of Christ back to God’s first and greatest creature.

-This “created creature” was then adopted by God to become an incarnated human

being.

-JW’s are Arians. (Jesus was the incarnation of Michael the archangel).

-How can a mere creature redeem lost and sinful humanity?

-We end up with Jesus simply being an example again and a gospel of works.

**These first three heresies deny the Hypostatic union**

**The next three heresies are attempts to too precisely understand the Hypostatic union**

-These three are attempts to correct the extremes of the other school of thought only to end up going to an equally dangerous extreme on the other end.

-In its more moderate and responsible thinking, both the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools of thought had orthodox Christology regarding Christ being fully God and fully human.

-The Alexandrians did tend to place more emphasis on Christ’s deity, whereas the Antiochians tended to place more emphasis on Christ’s humanity.

-But the extremists on both sides ended up stepping out of bounds in their attempts to push back against the other side’s extreme.

-These were attempts to uphold the both/end of the hypostatic union, but they essentially ended up not doing so and were deemed heretical by the universal church.

1. Apollinarianism – Jesus had a human body and spirit (life force), but he had a divine soul. (This ‘soul’ was the second person of the Trinity). (Alexandrian school).

-Very popular in folk evangelical circles.

-“Jesus was God in a bod”.

-“Jesus was God with skin on.”

-The problem with this view is that Jesus is never truly human in his mind, emotions, and will.

-This has a direct implication for our salvation, as Gregory of Nazianzus warned: “What God has not assumed (taken to himself in incarnation) is not saved.”

-Did only Jesus’ body die for us?

1. Nestorianism – Jesus had two complete and unmutilated natures. (Antiochian school).

-This view ends up dividing Christ into two persons working in harmony.

-“moral union” – perfect marriage

-What was born of Mary was only human and throughout his life on earth he and his divine Word of God/Logos nature (which remained untouched by human pain and suffering) worked together.

-Again this view was accused of being not a true incarnation.

1. Eutychianism (Monophysitism) – Belief in one nature. (Alexandrian school)

-Jesus’ humanity was like a drop of wine in the ocean of his divinity.

-While he had a human nature in theory it was swallowed up by his divinity.

-He was really a hybrid of humanity and divinity.

(To this day: Coptic Church)

**Creed of Chalcedon - 451 AD**

The Chalcedonian Creed is one of the seven ecumenical creeds (4th) accepted by Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and most Protestant Christian churches. It was written to establish an orthodox and biblical statement upholding the **both/and** of Jesus’ full deity and full humanity against those who either denied his humanity or his deity or whose theology would have allowed his humanity to be swallowed up by his deity or his deity to be swallowed up by his humanity.

*We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people 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 [co-essential] 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 entity, 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 handed down to us.*

-This creed was never intended to be an explanation, but a way to protect the mystery.

-The four fences to uphold the doctrine of Christ as fully God and fully human.

\*Put up the fences/square slide.

-Jesus Christ is two natures without division, separation, confusion, mingling.

Example: two orthodox theories

1. Kenotic Christology – Christ emptied himself of all but love.

-Jesus had two natures and was one person, but was also limited in knowledge and power because of a voluntary decision of self-restriction or self-limitation. (Phil. 2:5-11).

-Jesus did not set aside his attributes of deity, but he did restrict their use so that he was not even conscious of them in his human life on earth.

-Everything Jesus did he did by relying on his Father.

-Question: Did Jesus know that he was the Second Person of the Trinity?

2. Two minds/consciousnesses model

– Christ had two minds in his single personhood.

-This denies any limitation of Jesus’ knowledge or power.

-Jesus ***continually*** decided to submit to his Father and limit his power.

-Question: Can two consciousnesses exist in one person and that person not be mentally ill? Is this different for Jesus? If so, was he really a human just like us?

*Conclusion*

Jesus Christ as God incarnate; one unified person – the eternal Son of God equal with the father; of two distinct but never separate natures, human and divine.

From Jesus Christ we learn not only the will and character of God but also the will and character of what it means to be human.

Questions

1. What has been your understanding of Christ’s humanity and deity in the past?
2. When you listened to this lecture did you find your views close to any of the heresies?
3. Did the difficulties and all the nuances of this topic inspire you to want to figure this out more or give up? (Why?)
4. How important do you think it is to understand this topic (Why?)
5. Did anything about your perception of Christ change after this chapter/lecture? (If so, what?)
6. Do you think Jesus fully understood that he was God, the second person of the Trinity, when he walked this earth? (Why/Why not)?