

I. INTRO AND REVIEW

A. Last week we saw the positive teaching concerning the Person of the Son of God

1. He is true and eternal God, coessential with the Father and the Spirit.
2. He is true, complete and sinless man, consubstantial with us, His people.
3. These two natures are distinct from one another and united in the Person of the Son of God

B. We saw that the subject (the one doing) of all of Christ’s activity is the Eternal Son of God acting thru the 2 distinct natures.

1. What may be properly said of either of the two natures may be properly said of the whole Christ, may be properly said of the Eternal Son of God (“I thirst” “they crucified the Lord of glory”).
2. But, although we now have an orthodox confession of these things, the church had to struggle with false ideas about Christ before she was able to confess the truth as we have it today.

II. CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE DEITY OF CHRIST

A. The arch-heretic of the early church was Arius (d. 336) and his heresy is known as Arianism

1. Arius believed that only the Father is truly God; the Son of God is not God. He taught four things.

- a. The Son is a creature and owes his existence to the Father’s will (Col. 1:15, Rev. 3:14)
- b. The Son had a beginning (in eternity) “*There was when he was not.*”
- c. The Son as a creature has no direct communion with or direct knowledge of the Father
- d. The Son is liable to change. In fact, some Arians taught that the Son could have fallen but the Father willed otherwise.

2. Arius was condemned by the local bishop, Alexander and Alexander’s deacon Athanasius

- a. Arius appealed to some very influential friends, and persuaded them that he was no heretic. He did this by hiding what he really taught and by misrepresenting his enemies.
- b. Such was the controversy caused by Arianism that a Council was called at Nicaea in 325. A creed was proposed but rejected because Arius said he could sign it. The main battleground was over the word homoousion (“of the same essence”). Arius refused to agree to that word. He favored homoiousion (“of a similar essence”). The Nicene Creed was adopted, Arius was anathematized and banished. The Creed affirmed the following.
 - 1) The Son is eternally begotten of the substance of the Father (“begotten not made”).
 - 2) The Son is co-eternal with the Father (“begotten of the Father before all worlds”).
 - 3) The Son possesses all the attributes of God, is true God, and has a perfect knowledge of the Father (“God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God”).
 - 4) The Son is of the same essence as the Father (“being of one essence with the Father”).

B. Aftermath of Nicaea

1. Arius was banished but with the help of influential friends was able to convince the Emperor of his orthodoxy.

- a. In fact, because Athanasius would not accept Arius back into the Church, the Emperor banished *him*.
- b. The Emperor ordered the heretic Arius to be reinstated to full communion but Arius died the day before.

2. The Arians became more radical

- a. Some were teaching that the Son is of a different essence than the Father, others that the Son is unlike the Father. At the same time, the Arians attacked the Deity and the Personality of the HS
- b. Athanasius and other theologians were able to convince their homoiousion brethren that homoousion was the best word to use and the issue was settled in Constantinople in 381 AD (Read the Creed, p. 78).

III. CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

A. Some Christians influenced by paganism denied the human nature of Christ

1. Some said that matter is per se evil and therefore the Son of God could not assume physical matter (I Tim 4:4)
2. His humanity then must have been either a figment of men’s imagination or a heavenly humanity which he brought down from heaven. Either way, it was not the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary (Heb. 2:14)

B. Apollinarianism

1. This was the teaching that Christ had a human body (“flesh and blood”) but not a human soul.

- a. The Logos (the Person of the Son) replaced the human soul of Christ. The human nature of Christ, then, was without human soul, spirit, mind, thought, will or emotion. Those things in Him were divine.
 - b. But the orthodox could see that this went against Scripture. The man Christ Jesus had human psychology (Matt. 26:38-39, Mark 3:5, Luke 1:52, 23:46, John 2:17, Heb. 5:8).
 - c. This teaching was a denial of the complete humanity of Christ, and if He was not a complete man He could not redeem us completely, *body and soul*. In addition, this endangered the true humanity of Christ, for the teaching meant that Christ's flesh became deified and His flesh was the object of worship.
- 2. The response of the orthodox was that Christ assumed a "reasonable soul" as well as a body.**

C. Nestorianism

1. Nestorius separated the two natures of Christ to such a degree that he made two persons in Christ.

- a. His view of Christ was of a man possessed by God. God dwelled inside the man Jesus Christ but the divine was never truly united with the human in one Person. The analogy he used was marriage: the man and woman are one flesh but are distinct persons.
- b. His teaching, then, was that a divine Christ inhabited a human Christ.

2. Nestorius was condemned especially for his denial of theotokos (God bearer)

- a. The Church called Mary theotokos (God bearer) because they confessed that the one borne by Mary was God Himself. Nestorius did not want to confess that. He would not say that Mary bore God, but only that she bore Christ (Luke 1:35, 43). He would not say that the Son of God was crucified, but only that the man Jesus Christ was crucified (I Cor. 2:8).
- b. But this was a dangerous and heretical separation of the two natures and a denial of the real Incarnation of the Son of God. If the human and divine are not united in the one Christ, Christ's sufferings have no value for our salvation. They are the sufferings of a mere man.

D. Eutychianism

1. Eutyches went to the opposite extreme. For him, Christ's human nature was absorbed into his divine nature.
2. The result was that Christ was neither human nor divine but a "third thing." Then He could not be our Mediator and Savior.

IV. THE SOLUTION OF CHALCEDON (451) ("one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures ...").

A. Four phrases were used to preserve orthodoxy

1. **Without confusion:** in the union of the two natures of Christ (human and divine) they did not blend into a third nature.
2. **Without change:** in the union of the two natures of Christ (human and divine) one nature did not change into another nature. The humanity was not divinized. The deity and the humanity retained their distinct properties. The human nature never became omnipresent or infinite or omnipotent. The divine nature never lost any of its divine attributes.
3. **Without division:** although the two natures of Christ (human and divine) can be distinguished they cannot be divided from one another. They exist in union together.
4. **Without separation:** after the union of the two natures of Christ (human and divine) they are not separated again. Even now, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God in our flesh.

B. The truth is the truth of the Incarnation

1. The Son of God took upon Himself our human nature. In so doing, He became what He was not before but He lost nothing of what He was. He added to Himself a true, complete human nature and remained very God.
2. His divinity retains all the attributes of deity, although while on earth His deity was veiled behind flesh. He remained the eternal, infinite, almighty Second Person of the Trinity.
3. His humanity is true and complete and retains all the attributes of humanity. It never becomes infinite, omnipresent, etc. ("The distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union but rather the property of each nature being preserved").
4. Because of the close union between the natures, the divinity lends eternal value to the sufferings of Christ and lends power to the human nature to bear up under the wrath of God.