

I. INTRO AND REVIEW (The Names, Natures, Offices and States of the Mediator of the Covenant)

A. Paul writes, “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.”

1. The Church has always believed that Jesus Christ is God and that He was a true man.
2. The difficulty has been for theologians: how can we explain that? Especially in light of errors?

B. The orthodox view of Christ is that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God in two distinct natures (divine and human) in one person. In this Lesson we want to “unpack” that statement.

II. JESUS CHRIST IS GOD

A. When we teach that Jesus Christ is God we mean that the one who was born in Bethlehem, who died on Calvary and rose from Joseph’s tomb is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Eternal Son of God.

1. What this does not mean.

- a. This does not mean that Jesus Christ was merely a great moral teacher or an enlightened prophet.
- b. This does not mean that Jesus Christ was the man who reached the highest level of God-consciousness.
- c. This does not mean that Jesus Christ was the man who was entirely permeated by God.

2. This means that everything that can be said of God can be said of Jesus Christ.

- a. The Bible does not hesitate – despite its strict monotheism – to call Jesus Christ *God* (John 1:1, 20:28; Rom. 9:5, I Tim. 3:16, Tit. 2:13, Heb. 1:8-9, I John 5:20 [see 1:2]).
- b. The Bible ascribes to Jesus Christ the attributes of God: John 1:1, 8:58 (eternal), Rev. 2:23 (omniscient), Heb. 13:8 (immutability), omnipotence (raises the dead, calms the sea, etc), and the works of God (creation [John 1:3], providence [Heb. 1:3], salvation [Acts 4:12]).
- c. The Bible commands us to worship Jesus Christ as God (Matt. 14:33, John 5:23, Rev 5:13, Heb. 1:8).

B. The importance of this truth is such that if a person denies it he is eternally condemned.

1. Without the deity of Christ there can be no salvation (John 8:24, II John 2:9).

- a. Only if the Mediator is God can He merit for us perfect righteousness
- b. Only if the Mediator is God has He power over His own life so that He can lay down His life and take it up again on His own authority and thus be able to substitute Himself for us.
- c. Only if the Mediator is God can He satisfy the justice of God and bear the wrath of God so as to deliver us from it.

2. Historical and Creedal references

- a. “They were wont, on a stated day, to meet together before it was light, and to sing a hymn to Christ, as to a god” (Letter from Pliny the Younger [Roman Gov.] to Trajan [Emperor] 112 AD).
- b. “Our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to a dispensation of God, from the seed of David, yes, but of the Holy Spirit as well” (Ignatius of Antioch, died c. 115 AD [Eph. 18]).
- c. “He therefore is that true, eternal and almighty God, whom we invoke, worship and serve” (BC 10).
- d. “The person who submitted to [this death] was not only really man and perfectly holy but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Savior for us” (Canons II, A, 4).

III. JESUS CHRIST IS MAN

A. As God Jesus is of the same essence as the Father and the Spirit; as man Jesus is of the same essence as us (“coessential with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood [Chalcedon].”

1. This means that Christ is everything that a human being is, except He does not participate in our fallen nature. He has no sin (no original guilt, no original pollution or corruption of nature, no actual sin).

- a. He had a human body consisting of human flesh and blood (John 19:34), a human soul (Matt. 26:38), a human will (Luke 22:42) and human emotions (Luke 10:21, John 11:35, Mark 6:6).
- b. As a human being, He had physical limitations [finite]: He could only be in one place at one time, He was limited by time and space. He experienced tiredness (John 4:6), hunger (Mark 11:12), thirst (John 19:28).
- c. As a human being, He had rational limitations [finite]: He grew in knowledge (Luke 1:52), He was limited in His knowledge (Mark 13:32). As man He was subject to God and worshipped God as His God.

2. This manhood of Jesus Christ was necessary

- a. The Mediator must represent man before God and to do so must be true man; He must be able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Heb. 2:14, 17-18, 4:15-16).
- b. The Mediator must bear the wrath of God against the sins of His people in the human nature.
- c. The Mediator must have a human nature so that He can suffer and die.

B. There are several things which we can say about the human nature of Christ.

1. It was a real (true) and complete human nature

- a. The human nature of Jesus Christ was as real as ours; it was not a figment, a ghost, a phantom, a pretense. It was not a supernatural body, it was not heavenly flesh (Luke 24:39; I John 1:1-3, 4:2).
- b. The human nature of Jesus Christ lacked nothing human: He did not have a human body and divine blood, or a human body but a divine soul, or a human body but a divine mind. He had a human everything.
- c. This means that His human nature was finite (it had a beginning [the flesh of Jesus was formed by the HS from the human nature of Mary] and it was subject to change [same biological properties as ours]).

2. It was a weakened but sinless human nature

- a. Jesus Christ took to Himself a human nature weakened by the fall, but He Himself was not sinful. The nature He took was not the pre-Fallen nature of Adam, but the fallen nature of Mary ("God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" [Rom. 8:3]). He could be tempted, but He could not sin.
- b. This was necessary so that Christ could suffer and die. He had a human nature subject to the curse.
- c. But, at the same time, Jesus Christ was guilty of no personal sin, because He is the Son of God.

IV. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD

A. The person is the conscious and self conscious subject of all of one's activity. It is that which "stands under" everything one is and does.

1. If you take a verb – any verb – in reference to Jesus Christ, the one doing the action of the verb is always the Person of the Eternal Son of God.

- a. This Person (the Eternal Son of God) dwelled in perfect fellowship with the other Persons of the Godhead, coequal, coeternal, coessential with the Father and the Spirit.
- b. This Person (the Eternal Son of God) took to Himself a real, complete, weakened & sinless human nature.
- c. This Person (the Eternal Son of God) suffered, died, rose again, ascended and sits at Right Hand of God.

2. This is important to understand because a nature does not perform activity and cannot be subject of action, only a person can and does.

- a. It is not correct to say, "The human nature of Jesus Christ thirsted" or "The human nature died on the cross" or "The human nature suffered" or "The human nature of Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven."
- b. It is not correct to say, "The divine nature of Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead" or "The divine nature of Jesus Christ had the power on earth to forgive sins."
- c. Rather, we understand it thus: The Person of the Eternal Son of God unites in Himself the two natures (human and divine) so that all the activity of the one Christ is the activity of the Eternal Son of God.

B. We must understand that Christ *unites* in one Person the divine and human nature but that each nature retains its *distinct properties*.

1. This is a real union of the two natures:

- a. There are not two persons in Christ so that there is a human "I" and a divine "I" but only one "I."
- b. There is not a fusion of the two natures of Christ so that the divinity becomes humanized and the humanity becomes divinized. Then, the Mediator would be neither God nor man!
- c. The human nature retains its properties and the divine its properties, yet they cannot be separated (BC 19).

2. This means (in the communication of properties) that what can be said of either nature can be properly said of the whole Christ, may be properly said of the Person of the Eternal Son of God

- a. It is proper to say, "Jesus Christ is the Creator of the Universe" (but this is only true with respect to His divinity; His humanity did not exist then, but the Person of the Son created the Universe).
- b. It is proper to say, "They crucified the Lord of glory" (I Cor. 2:8) or to speak of the church of God which "He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28) (but this is only true with respect to His humanity; His divinity was not crucified and has no blood, but the Person of the Son was crucified in the human nature).