

JESUS THE GOD-MAN?

In our study in "Learning with Luke" the physician carefully weaves his account of the gospel of Jesus Christ. From His miraculous birth to His magnificent baptism, Luke has demonstrated that Jesus is truly human. But he also shows how God says that Jesus Christ is truly divine.

Only a perfect God-Man could work our salvation, as a perfect obedient life presents Himself as the sacrifice for sins on the cross of Calvary, and then raises to perfect resurrection life. How can we wrap our minds around this astounding concept? Let's examine four important points about this unique person.

1- Jesus Christ is incarnated, not created. He is the Son of God come in human flesh. A recent Lifeway-Ligonier survey reveals a disturbing trend among people who claim to be evangelical believers: 97% agree there is only one true God in three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit - yet 78% say Jesus Christ is "the first and greatest being created by God." Do you agree? This is grievous heresy, espoused by the ancient heretic Arius and pushed by cults today, and soundly refuted by Scripture.

The Bible clearly teaches Jesus Christ is not created, but is the incarnated Son of God, come in human flesh. John 1 presents Him as the "Word," God from the beginning, creator of all things, become flesh and dwelt among us. Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 2:18 are other passages presenting one God in three persons. Theologian RC Sproul notes, Jesus Christ is the incarnation in history of the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity which consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

"**One Godhead in three persons**" is the orthodox Christian understanding of the unity of the three persons as co-equal and co-eternal in the one Godhead. There were many early heresies. Docetism says Christ only appeared to be human. Arianism teaches He was created by the Father and is only "like" God. The Apostles, Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian creeds were written "against errors" to concisely present what the Bible teaches: Jesus Christ, as God's Son incarnate, is not merely "like" God but is of the same substance, "con-substantial" (homo-ousios) of the same essence as the Father, eternally begotten, not made or created, but eternally co-existing. These concepts require us to think deeply!

In John 10:30 Christ declares, "*I and the Father are one.*" Romans 9:5 proclaims "*the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.*" Sproul says, "we deny that the Son is merely like God (homo-i-ousios) or simply adopted. We deny there was ever a time when the Son was not divine. We deny that the human body and soul of Jesus Christ existed prior to the incarnation of the Son in history." He is the Son of God become incarnate, that is, come in human flesh, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came as God's promised Christ, Messiah, Savior, Deliverer, who is not mere man nor mere myth, but God.

2- Jesus Christ is hypostatic, a unique union of divine and human natures. Orthodox Christians have always held to the unity of God in the Trinity, one Godhead in three persons - and to the unity of Jesus as one person with two natures, both human and divine. Colossians 2:9 says "*for in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*" 1John 5:20 says "*Jesus Christ is true God and eternal life.*" John 20:28 says of Him, "*my Lord and my God.*" Titus 2:13 and 2Peter 1:1 present "*our God and Savior Jesus Christ*" Hebrews 1:2 declares Him to be "*the exact imprint of God's nature.*"

Sproul notes, "we affirm that Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly man, two natures united in one person forever." Jesus Christ is unique. Theologian Wayne Grudem observes, "Jesus Christ is not just potentially God or someone in whom God uniquely worked, but was truly and fully God, with all the attributes of God. To say that we cannot understand this is appropriate humility. But to say that it is impossible is arrogance, and a different definition of 'possible' than revealed in Scripture."

"**One person with two natures**" is the orthodox Christian description. The Nicene Creed describes Him in one person and one subsistence with the Greek word "hypostasis" which gave rise to the term "hypostatic union" which refers to human and divine natures in the one person of Jesus Christ. This is not an easy concept. Heretics err in trying to comprehend anything other than "one person with two natures" as articulated in the Chalcedonian council. The Nestorian error said Jesus Christ was two personalities in one being, and the Eutychian monophysite error said He had one nature with a mixture of divinity and humanity. The Appollinarian error said He was one person with a human body but with mind-spirit from the divine nature of the Son of God. Even more confusing!

Some describe Jesus Christ as "*theanthropic*" ("*theos*" God, "*anthropic*" man) but Sproul cautions to be very careful exactly what is meant, as the Bible presents Him as "one person with two natures." Many cults today continue these errors, including Jehovah's Witnesses who accept His humanity, and Christian Scientists who talk about His divinity, and Coptic and other Middle Eastern groups who never accepted the Chalcedonian definitions, along with others who present a different Christ than that of the Bible.

Concepts like "divinely human" or "humanly divine" may attempt to explain but they pervert the truth. 1John 4:2-6 warn Christians that those who deny Jesus Christ as God come in the flesh are anti-Christ, false prophets, the spirit of error. Christians today must remain vigilant against such spirit of error - and the antidote is the written-down Word of God, the Bible itself. Two more points next time! □