The Person of Jesus Christ

Part 1

I. The Christological Heresies

A. The Ebionites (@ 70 - 300 AD)

- Jews seeking to Judaize Christianity
- Jesus···
  - Was the physical son of Mary and Joseph
  - Fulfilled the Mosaic law
  - Chosen by God to be the Messiah
  - Became conscious of this at his baptism
- Ebionism – denies the **deity** of Christ.
- Denial caused by "its incompatibility with monotheism."
- Refuted throughout the New Testament.

B. The Gnostics

- Primarily a gentile perversion
- The rationalism of the early church
- *Gnosis* = higher knowledge
- Basic tenet is dualism:
  - Spiritual world (Gr., *pleroma*) is good.
  - Material world (Gr., *kenoma*) is evil.
  - Since flesh is evil, God could not become flesh.

B. The Gnostics

- Their solutions:
  - Cerinthian Gnosticism: the divine Christ came upon the human Jesus at his baptism and departed shortly before his death.
  - Docetic Gnosticism (Gr., *dokeo*, "to seem or appear"): Jesus only had the appearance of flesh.
- Denies the **humanity** of Christ.
- Compare the scriptural teaching: Col. 1:15-18; 2:9; 1 John 4:2-6; 2 John 7.

C. The Arians (early 4th century)

- Arius was a proud, ambitious, and argumentative man.
- Arianism teaches…
  - Christ existed before all "other" creatures.
  - Christ was the agent God used to fashion the world.
  - He Himself was created.
- Their theological argument: "The opposite view is unreasonable and irreconcilable with monotheism and God's dignity."
- Answer: The scriptural data reveals the doctrine of the Trinity.
  - I. Christ is God.
  - II. There is one God.
  - III. Christ is distinct from the Father.

C. The Arians (early 4th century)

- Their Scriptural arguments
  - 1) Proverbs 8
    - The early church interpreted as Christological.
    - The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word in v. 22 with the Greek word *ktizo*, meaning "created."
  - Answers:
    - The Hebrew word can be translated "acquire," "buy," and "possess," but not "create."
    - Wisdom is speaking, not Christ.

C. The Arians (early 4th century)

- Their scriptural arguments
  - 2) Colossians 1:15
    - Christ is the "firstborn of creation."
    - Arians argue must mean Christ was created.
  - Answers:
    - Other biblical usages of this Greek word
      - E.g., Psalm 89:27 uses the word <u>firstborn</u> parallel to a phrase underscoring preeminence not birth order.
    - Jewish literature
      - Rabbi Bechai described Jehovah as "the firstborn of the world."
    - The context
      - <u>The context focuses on Christ's preeminence.</u>

C. The Arians (early 4th century)

- Arianism – denies the full **deity** of Christ
  - first of the created beings
  - *a* god but not *the* god
- In 325 A.D. the Nicean Council rejected Arianism as heresy, proclaiming Christ to be of one substance with the Father.

D. The Apollinarians

- Apollinarius first proposed this view.
- Man is composed of three parts:
  - Spirit
  - Soul
  - Body
- Christ had an "animal soul" and body, but the divine Logos took the place of the human or rational spirit.
- Apollinarianism – deny full **humanity**
  - the divine Logos took the place of the human spirit in Christ
  - the divine Logos took only the material part of human nature.
- The Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) condemned this heresy.

E. The Nestorians

- Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, first proposed this view.
- Christ consisted of two natures <u>and</u> two persons.
- The divine Logos indwelt the human Jesus.
- Nestorianism
  - denies the unity of two natures in one person
  - divides Christ into **two persons**, one human & one divine.
- The Synod of Ephesus (431 A.D.) condemned this teaching.

F. The Eutychians

- Eutychians are "monophysites" (one nature).
- They teach that Christ had only a divine nature.
- Eutchychianism
  - Fails to distinguish properly between the two natures
  - Teaches Jesus had only **one nature**
- The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) condemned this doctrine.

Dr. A. P. Peabody

"The canon of infidelity was closed almost as soon as that of the Scriptures.   Modern unbelievers have for the most part repeated the objections of their ancient predecessors."

II. The Council of Chalcedon

The Chalcedon Statement

- The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)
- "Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul [i.e., human soul] and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted.

The Chalcedon Statement

- "Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect of his humanness.

The Chalcedon Statement

- "We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ—Son, Lord, only-begotten—in two natures; and we do this without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function.

The Chalcedon Statement

- "The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the "properties" of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one "person" and in one reality [hypostasis]. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Word [Logos] of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of Fathers [the Nicene Creed] has handed down to us.

III. The Biblical Evidence

A. The Humanity of Christ

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- 1. He had a human birth into a human line.
    - Luke 2:1-20; 3:23-38
    - Rom. 1:3 - concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh
    - Gal. 4:4 - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law

The Virgin Birth

- A Virgin Conception <u>and</u> a Virgin Birth
  - Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23, 25; Luke 1:27, 34
- What the virgin birth did <u>not</u> accomplish…
  - 1) Not the cause of Jesus' deity.
  - 2) Not the cause of His sinlessness.

The Virgin Birth

- What the virgin birth did accomplish…
  - 1) Fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (7:14).
  - 2) Protected Jesus from the curse on Jeconiah.
  - 3) Divinely determined means through which the eternal, already existing Son of God could add to Himself full humanity.

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- 2. He developed as a human being
  - Luke 2:40, 52

A. The Humanity of Christ

- 3. He had the essential elements of human nature.
  - A body
    - Matt. 26:12 - "When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.
    - Luke 24:39 - "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."
    - John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
    - John 2:21 - He was speaking of the temple of His body.

A. The Humanity of Christ

- 1 Tim. 3:16 - By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

- Heb. 2:14 - Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

- Heb. 10:5 - Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;

- Heb. 10:10 - By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

A. The Humanity of Christ

- 3. He had the essential elements of human nature.
  - A soul
    - Matt. 26:38 - Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."
    - Mark 2:8 - Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?
    - Luke 23:46 - And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.
    - John 12:27 - "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour '? But for this purpose I came to this hour.
    - John 13:21 - When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me."

A. The Humanity of Christ

- 4. He had the sinless weaknesses of human nature.
  - Matt. 4:2 - And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.
  - Matt. 8:24 - And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.
  - John 4:6 - and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.
  - John 19:28 - After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."

A. The Humanity of Christ

- **5. He is repeatedly called and assumed to be a man.**
  - John 1:30 - "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'
  - John 8:40 - "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.
  - John 20:15 - Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

A. The Humanity of Christ

- 5. He is repeatedly called and assumed to be a man.
  - Acts 17:31 - because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."
  - 1 Cor. 15:21, 47 - For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead… **47** The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.
  - 1 Tim. 2:5 - For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

A. The Humanity of Christ

- **6. He had human names.**
  - Jesus (Greek) = Joshua (Hebrew) = YHWH saves
  - Son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1)
  - Son of David (Matt. 1:1)

Philippians 2:5-8

- "He emptied Himself."
- **Two** wrong views···
  - 1) The **kenotic** view
    - Gave up certain divine attributes, especially omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence
    - A denial of the deity of Christ
    - Cf. Heb. 13:8—Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever.
    - During his earthly life, Christ exercised omnipresence (John 1:47-48), omniscience (John 2:24-25; 16:30), and omnipotence in his many miracles.
  - 2) The view of **Anselm**: Christ acted like he did not possess any divine attributes.

The Incarnation

- In the incarnation, Christ emptied himself in two ways…
  - He veiled His pre-incarnate glory (John 17:5)
  - He voluntarily restricted the use of some of his divine attributes.
- *Kenoo* [ken ah' oh]
  - KJV: "he made himself of no reputation."
  - NIV: "he made himself nothing."
  - Often used in secular Greek to describe pouring something out.
  - A simple metaphor: Christ poured himself out.

"He Emptied Himself…"

- Taking the form of a bond-servant (7b)

- Being made in the likeness of men (7b)
  - The similarity = full complete humanity
    - United himself to an *un-glorified* humanity.
    - Became everything we are.
    - Subject to temptation, trouble, weakness, pain, sorrow, and every human limitation.
  - The difference…
    - 1) Rom. 8:3—God sent His own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, [yet without sin].
    - 2) He never ceased to be equal with God.

"He Emptied Himself"

- **Being found in appearance as a man (8a)**
  - Born in the usual way (Gal. 4:4);
  - Had a physical body (Col. 1:22);
  - Grew up in a family—he was the oldest of at least seven children;
  - Had human parents who cared for him (Luke 2:40-51);
  - Grew and developed as other children do (Luke 2:52);
  - Probably worked from at least 13-30 in Joseph's business;
  - Got hungry, thirsty, tired, needed sleep, and felt pain;
  - Experienced external solicitations to sin (Heb. 4:15);
  - Died (Heb. 2:17).

Why Does His Humanity Matter?

- **Revelation**
  - To reveal God (Heb. 1:1-3)
  - To reveal God's Truth in the Gospel (Heb. 2:1-4)
- **Salvation**
  - To rescue us from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15)
  - To save us from the wrath of God
    - Heb. 2:17 – *"To make propitiation for the sins of the people"*
- **Illustration**
  - Heb. 12:2

Why Does His Humanity Matter?

- **Association**
  - To associate with us in this life
    - Heb. 2:17: "*He had to be*" or "was obligated to be like his brethren"
    - Why?
      - "*So that he might become a merciful & faithful High Priest*"
  - To associate with us forever
    - Heb. 2:10-12

The Humanity of Christ

- <u>Revelation</u>: to reveal God, God's truth, and perfection to us.
- <u>Salvation</u>: to rescue us from death, from the law, from our sin, and from His own coming wrath.
- <u>Illustration</u>: to give us an example to follow.
- <u>Association</u>: to understand us in time, and to be one of us forever.