

Christology 101

Lesson 11

The Divine and Human Person of Christ Part 2: The Union of His Deity and His Humanity

The orthodox position of Christianity, as we saw last week, is that the Incarnate Christ is one person with two natures, human and divine. This “hypostatic union” or one person union of the divine nature and human nature of Christ is a unique Person and a difficult and complicated concept to understand in theology. It is based on the clear statements of scripture that emphasize both His full deity and His perfect humanity. So, we can accept it by faith, even if we have difficulty understanding it perfectly.

Think of “nature” as “a complex of attributes” (Buswell’s Theology), or as “the sum of all the attributes and their relation to each other” (Walvoord, 114). Then Christ’s divine nature is the sum of His divine attributes and His human nature is the sum of all the attributes of perfect humanity. These two natures are united in the one Person of Jesus Christ forever.

The real problem comes when we consider the divine and human nature functioning.

“Much confusion arose in the early history of the church over the problem of how such incompatible natures could be joined in one Person **without one or the other losing some of its essential characteristics**. The resulting discussion, however led to the orthodox statement that the two natures are united without loss of any essential attributes and that the two natures maintain their separate identity.” (Walvoord, 114)

The two natures were united at the incarnation, but never mixed. Remember our definition of the incarnation, **“full Deity, and perfect humanity united without mixture, change, division, or separation in one Person forever.”** (Ryrie, Basic Theology, 247, chapter 42). There was no mixture of the human attributes and divine attributes so that His divine attributes became less divine or His human attributes became super human. The natures did not change into something else. There was no division and no separation. The two natures remain in one Person forever.

Sometimes we have a tendency to divide what Christ did by His humanity and His deity. For instance, we say that His humanity was hungry or thirsty, but not His deity. While it is true that hunger and thirst are attributes of humanity, it is true to say that the “person” of Christ hungered and thirsted. He is one Person, not two. Because of this Christ can be described as both weak and omnipotent, learning and omniscient, finite and infinite.

Sometimes Christ is described in terms of His divine attributes. In John 8:58 He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." This statement of the attribute of pre-existence or eternity is true in relation to His divine attributes.

Sometimes Christ is described in terms of His human attributes. On the cross He said, "I thirst" (John 19:28). This attribute is definitely human. So is being hungry and sleepy.

He functions in the roles of Prophet, Priest, King, and Redeemer. This is true of His whole Person, both natures, not just of His deity or just His humanity. It is important to keep in mind that whatever He does, He does and it may reveal or manifest one nature or both.

Difficulties for this two natures in one Person are many:

- Matthew 27:46 "My God, My God, what hast thou forsaken Me?"
- He knew all things, but "does not know the day nor the hour."
- He died on the Cross. Perhaps the most difficult.
- He was tempted, but God cannot be tempted.

On the cross Christ was being judged for the sin of all humanity. He felt the full weight of our sin. He had known constant and unbroken fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This cry of "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken Me?" seems to come from his human nature, but the use of the pronoun "Me" indicates that it was true of His whole person or both natures. "Christ was being judicially forsaken because He was bearing the sin of the world. It was not simply the divine nature forsaking the human nature as some have held." (Walvoord, 114)

In Matthew 13:31-33, Jesus is talking about the second coming and says, "³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³² **But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.** ³³ Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come." In His humanity, which is finite and learning, He did not know. Perhaps this relates to the "Kenosis" or self-emptying of Christ which we will discuss later in which Christ voluntarily limited the manifestation of His divine attributes and glory.