

The Two-fold Nature of Christ  
December 10, 2020  
“God Manifest in the Flesh”

The Early Church; the first 350 years

Several controversies arose that had to do with the person and nature of Christ.

1. Arius: teacher from Alexandria, Egypt - Believed that Christ was a highly exalted being, but was a created being not fully God.
2. Apollinaris: Bishop from Laodicea - Christ was fully God but not fully man.
3. Nestorius: from Constantinople - Jesus was fully God and fully man but was 2 persons in 1 body; one divine person and one human person.
4. Eutyches→ Half and half. Neither truly God nor truly human

Why this confusion? Why did not God make it plain to us? (Maybe He did!)

In 451 A.D. the Council of Chalcedon addressed these issues from the Bible (!).

1. Christ is fully and completely divine—fully God.
2. Christ is fully and completely human—fully God, fully man.
3. The divine and human natures of Christ are distinct—they’re not one in the same.
4. The divine and human natures of Christ are completely united in one person.

This means there are two distinct natures, 1 human and 1 divine, united in 1 person. Christ is fully God, fully man, two natures united in 1 person: *hypostatic union of Christ*. Hypostatic union means the essential nature in which God and man are joined. (see Heb 11:1; Substance/Assurance)

The great confessions of the church affirm this as one of the cardinal doctrines:

- Westminster Shorter Catechism: “He continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person forever.”
- Belgic Confession: “We confess that He is Very God and Very Man; Very God by His power to conquer death and Very Man that He might die for us.”

From “The Incomparable Christ” by J. Oswald Sanders

I. This is a Mystery (Caution: Col 1:25, 26)

- A. 1 Timothy 3:16 “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”
- B. “It is a truth of revelation which like many others must be accepted by faith,” as Sanders says, “awaiting the dawn of eternal day for fuller knowledge, for a full explanation.”
- C. The problem of analogies: There is nothing else like the incarnation in our experience.
- D. The fact that this is a mystery need not prevent us from taking it as true and studying the Scriptures to understand it better.

II. It is Factual

- A. Luke 24:36-42 “As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.”

- B. Truly God – This aspect of Jesus was not diminished by also being human. The human nature did not diminish his God-nature.
- C. Truly Man – This aspect of Jesus was not changed by also being God. The divine did not permeate and change his man-nature.
- D. God-man: Retaining the “hypostasis” of both beings we call him not God and man but we call him God-man
- E. In his actions he remained both at the same time. Asleep he was still God. Rebuking the raging storm he was still man.

### III. It is Clearly Taught

- A. John 3:12-15 “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”
- B. Jesus always refers to himself as a single individual never in the plural
- C. His actions always proceeded from his single person. I.e. he did not stop being a man at the transfiguration, nor God when asleep.
- D. Jesus speaks as being in heaven and on earth at the same time (see above)
- E. Confirmed in the letters: Romans 1:1-4 “...the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,”

### IV. It was Necessary

- A. Hebrews 7:21-25 “...but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”
- B. If only human there would be no power to obey and save. He could then only have been an example for us without power to save us and change us.
- C. If God only there would be no empathy and perfection of love. Without the divine we would have no advocate with the Father.

### V. It is Eternal

- A. Acts 1:9-11 “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'”
- B. Christ remains in his resurrected body from then till now and eternally
- C. He retains his essential attributes of humanity.

### VI. Why is this important? He is our Jacob’s ladder, our link, our line to heaven and divine power to overcome sin and embrace God.

Heb 4:15: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”