

# Incarnation: the Firstborn of Many Brothers | Salvation: Life in the Son | TEC

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## The Story So Far

- The Promised Seed/Savior

*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)*

- The Promised King

*<sup>12</sup> I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:12-13)*

- The Promise of Union with God

*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)*

## A Twist in the Story

*The Word became flesh. (John 1:14)*

*All the promises of God find their "Yes" in him. (2 Corinthians 1:20)*

## Who's a Heretic?

- A. Jesus was divine, but in a different way than God the Father is divine
- B. Jesus the man was the same person as the eternal Son of God
- C. Jesus had a combined nature of humanity and divinity
- D. God the Son took on the appearance of humanity in Jesus
- E. God the Son came down and indwelt the person of Jesus

## Christological Heresies

### I. **Arianism:** Is Jesus truly God or is he a created being?

A. Heresy: Jesus, the Son, is a being of *similar* substance (homoiousios) to the Father.

“There was when the Son was not.” - Arius

B. Orthodoxy: Jesus, the Son, is a being of the *same* substance (“homoousios”) as the Father

“We believe in **one God**, the **Father** almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the **Son** of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one essence [homoousios] with the Father; who for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary and became man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; his Kingdom shall have no end. And in the **Holy Spirit.**” (The Nicene Creed, 325 A.D.)

C. The Biblical Testimony: Jesus is truly God

a. God alone is eternal...and so is Jesus

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)*

*Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)*

b. God alone is worthy of worship...and so is Jesus

*<sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods before me...<sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God. (Exodus 20:3,5)*

*<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”<sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. (John 9:37-38)*

c. God alone created the universe...and so did Jesus

*I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.*  
(Isaiah 44:24)

*All things were made through [the Word], and without him was not anything made that was made.* (John 1:3).

*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* (Colossians 1:16)

d. Jesus is God

*I and the Father are one.* (John 10:30)

<sup>27</sup> *Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”*<sup>28</sup> *Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:27-28)

*For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.* (Colossians 2:9)

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* (Matthew 28:19)

D. Why This Matters

1. Arianism is futile: no mere creature could span the chasm between God and man
  - No mere creature, however exalted, can bring us all the way into the joy of the Triune fellowship
  - “The Son cannot be a bridge between God and humanity if the bridge doesn’t fully reach both ends” - Michael B. Thompson
2. Arianism is an inferior gospel: the god of Arianism doesn’t come *himself*, he sends someone else—a lesser, created being.

II. **Docetism:** Is Jesus truly human or did he just seem to be human?

A. Heresy: Jesus only *appeared* to be human, but he wasn’t really.

- $\delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\omega$  (dokēo) = “to suppose, appear, seem”

B. Orthodoxy: “That which Christ has not assumed he has not healed” - Gregory of Nazianzus

C. The Biblical Testimony: Jesus is truly human, but without sin

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

*Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. (1 John 4:2)*

*Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)*

*Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)*

*By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. (Romans 8:3)*

*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. (Hebrews 4:15)*

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)*

*<sup>4</sup> It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. <sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.’ (Heb. 10:4-5)*

D. Why This Matters

- Docetism has no atonement: only man can suffer in man’s place (Hebrews 2:17; 10:4-5)
  - “The Son cannot be a bridge between God and humanity if the bridge doesn’t fully reach both ends” - Michael B. Thompson (cf. 1 Timothy. 2:5)
- Docetism has no encouragement: only a fellow man can sympathize with our fleshly weakness (Hebrews 4:15)
- Docetism has no revelation: we don’t know the Father if the Son didn’t come in the flesh (John 1:14)
- Docetism is an inferior gospel: the god of Docetism did not come *all* the way down

III. **Nestorianism**: Is Jesus one person or two?

A. Heresy: Jesus’ human and divine natures are utterly divided (there are two persons in Jesus)

- B. Orthodoxy: Jesus' two natures exist in a "hypostatic [personal] union." He is one person, with two natures, that are distinct but not divided.

"When we come to something that we can't fathom at the heart of the gospel, don't minimize the mystery and say something else, say the unfathomable truth anyway and let the mystery be adored in silence." (~Cyril)

- C. The Biblical Testimony:

*When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law. (Galatians 4:4)*

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews 2:14)*

*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. (1 Timothy 3:16)*

- D. Why This Matters

- Nestorianism denies the uniqueness of Jesus: we too are men indwelt by God
- Nestorianism is an inferior gospel: the god of Nestorianism cannot be truly reconciled with humanity, there is always a wall between the two.

#### IV. **Eutychianism**: Is Jesus some kind of God-man hybrid (e.g. werewolf)?

- A. Heresy: Jesus' human and divine natures are mixed to become one altogether different nature

- B. Orthodoxy: Jesus is one person with two distinct natures, that are united though not confused

"Remaining what he was, he became what he was not" - Gregory of Nazianzus

"The Son cannot be bridge between God and humanity if the bridge doesn't fully reach both ends"

- Michael B. Thompson

- C. The Biblical Testimony:

(All the passages about why Arianism and Docetism are wrong apply here)

#### D. Why This Matters

- Eutychianism has all the problems of both Arianism and Docetism
- Eutychianism is an inferior gospel: the god of Eutychianism is unable to save us as we are

#### **The Chalcedonian Definition (451 A.D.)**

“Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.”

#### **What we must confess about the Incarnation:**

1. The eternal Son became a man in the Incarnation while remaining God. Thus, Jesus has two natures—divine and human.
2. Each nature is full and complete—Jesus is truly God and truly man.
3. Jesus is only one person.
4. What can be said of one nature but not of the other *can* be said of the person of Jesus.

#### **The Main Point: *the Incarnate Christ is essential for your salvation.***

Every heresy worships a false god and offers an inferior gospel: it requires we rise up to God because Christ is (at best) some kind of good example. Only the true gospel has the true God becoming true man to save us.

*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,  
in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)*

#### **Recommended Resources**

- *Heresis & How to Avoid Them*, eds. Ben Quash & Michael Ward
- *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius