

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 27 - FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN]

Today we are going to have a bit of a theology lesson.

- ◆ Theology, which is the study of God, is normally reserved for scholars and academics who use big difficult to pronounce words and terms to explain biblical concepts.
- ◆ However, as theology plays an important role in magnifying our understanding of God's nature and character, we need to spend some time looking at these concepts to deepen our relationship with our God.

The early NT church wrestled with two major issues for the first 400 years – The concept of the “Trinity,” and the concept of “Christology.”

- ◆ We looked at the concept of the Trinity earlier, so our focus this time is on “Christology.”
- ◆ Last time we proved from John 1 that Jesus was indeed God. We also saw that in the true spirit of the Trinity, He did not come with his own agenda, but came with the complete support and agreement of the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ The Trinity was united in its mission to restore its broken relationship with mankind.

But the other remarkable statement John makes is, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1:14).

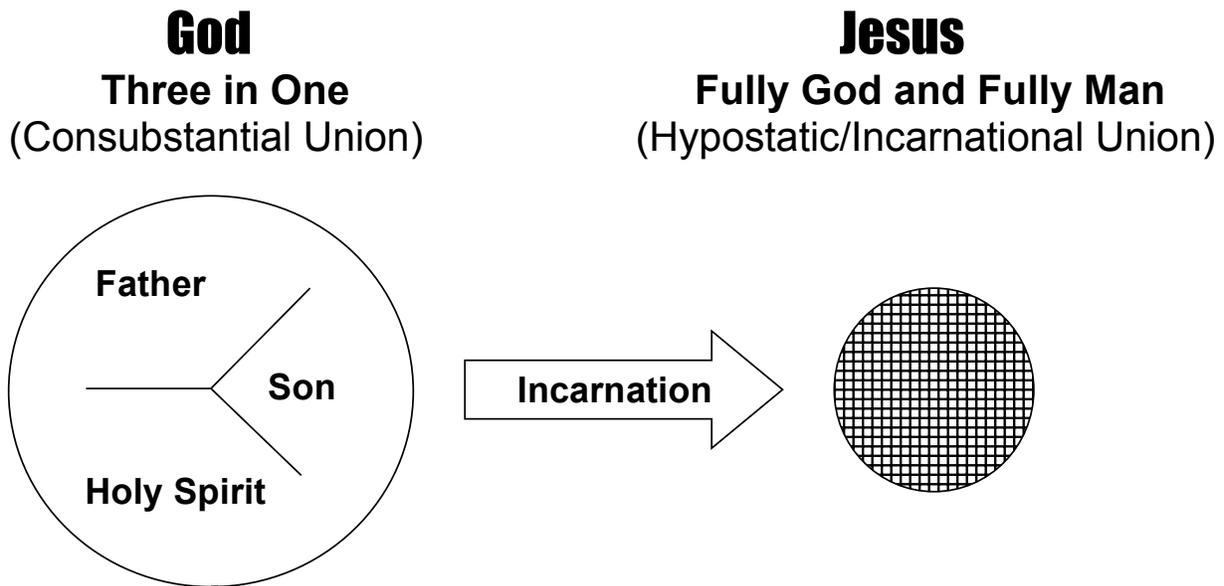
- ◆ In an act of pure grace, the Word chooses to give up his glory at the Father's right hand and become a human.
- ◆ So just to confuse things not only is Jesus God, but He is also God in the flesh – a real live human.
- ◆ So in addition to trying to reconcile God being one and at the same time three, the early church had to wrestle with the question of trying to understand the nature of Jesus Christ – How could He be at the same time both human and divine?
- ◆ This led to the development of what is termed “Christology” – the study of the nature of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The importance of this discussion should not be underestimated, as at stake is Jesus' claim of being our Savior.
- ◆ If He was not both God and man our very salvation is at stake.

To begin with, we need to go back to the conundrum facing the early church of trying to understand the nature of Jesus Christ – how could He be at the same time both human and divine?

- ◆ For centuries the debate raged around how these two natures could exist in one person.
- ◆ Some stressed the divine side while others stressed the human side.
- ◆ Finally after substantial debate and even bloodshed, The Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. ruled that the Lord Jesus Christ is “truly God and truly man.”

The Consubstantial and Hypostatic Unions. (See figure below).

Consubstantial and Hypostatic Unions



In the same way we cannot understand the mystery of the Consubstantial Union of the Trinity, we cannot understand the mystery of the Hypostatic or Incarnational Union of Jesus

The Council of Chalcedon (451AD) ruled that the Lord Jesus Christ is *“truly God and truly man, consubstantial with the Father in all things, as to His divinity, yet in His humanity like unto us in all things, sin excepted.”* He is thus known *“in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance and without division, the distinction of natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarities of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and subsistence.”*

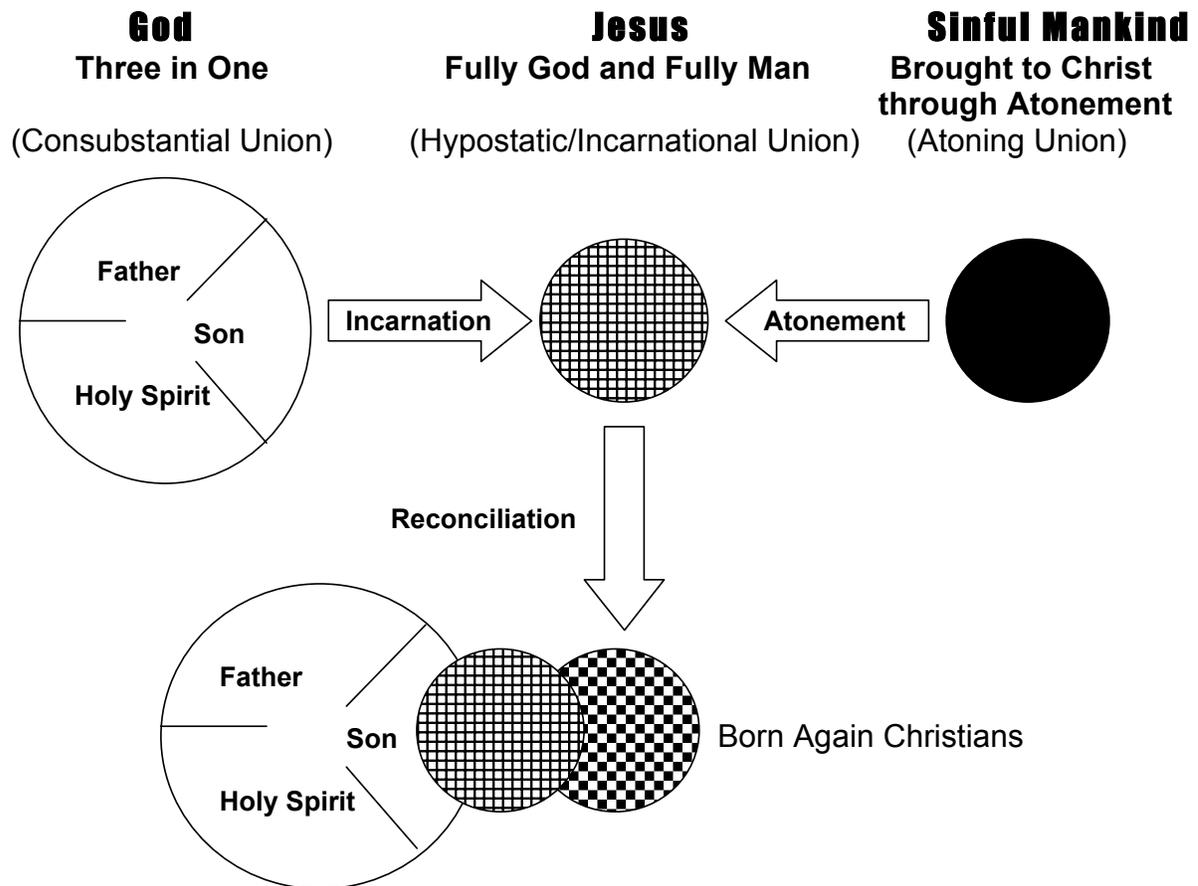
What we should note is the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation belong together.

- ◆ The doctrine of the Trinity declares that Jesus is truly divine, while the doctrine of the Incarnation declares that Jesus is also truly human.
- ◆ Why did the early church spend over 400 years debating this issue before arriving at this conclusion?
- ◆ Well it had important theological implications that centre on the ability of Jesus' claim to be able to forgive our sins – a pretty important implication.
- ◆ First, justice demands a response; a price has to be paid for our sins.
- ◆ Just as a murderer is sentenced to die or life in prison, a penalty had to be paid for the sins of all humanity.
- ◆ And the only person in the position to be able to die for the sins of all humanity is the Creator of all humanity, Jesus Christ (John 1:3).
- ◆ Our Holy God takes sin very seriously. He just doesn't give us a free pass; a price has to be paid.
- ◆ Our death is demanded by a just and holy God for our many sins.
- ◆ As the guilty party, we can only die for our own sins; none of us can die for anyone else's sins.

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- ◆ Yet the remarkable truth of the Gospel is, Jesus as our Creator steps around the judgment table from his position of Judge and takes the place of condemned humanity.
 - ◆ **Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**
 - ◆ So it was important to establish Jesus was indeed God in order for Him to be our Savior.
 - ◆ With the price paid, God is now in a position to “forgive” us as the price has been paid.
 - ◆ This is the second point. As God is the one offended by our sins, Jesus had to be **fully God** in order to be able to forgive us our sins.
 - ◆ Ultimately sin is an offense against God’s Holy nature of love and all God stands for.
 - ◆ So when we hate our brother, it not only offends our brother, it also offends God because it reflects back on the Creator and Father who has a comprehensive claim on that brother.
 - ◆ That is why David in his prayer after his murderous plot against the courageous Uriah, says. **“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;” (Psalms 51:4).**
 - ◆ David was fully aware of his sin against Uriah, but ultimately he realized the universal implications of his sin on God Himself as David had killed one of God’s children.
 - ◆ So David approaches God’s throne asking for forgiveness.
 - ◆ **Psalms 51:7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity**
 - ◆ Jesus demonstrated His ability to forgive sins as He went around performing miracles.
 - ◆ You may remember the story of the paralytic who was lowered down through the roof of the building.
 - ◆ **Mark 2:5-7 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”**
 - ◆ The teacher’s of the law’s statement was correct, only God has the right to forgive sins.
 - ◆ This is also one of the major proofs that Jesus was indeed God as only God has the right to forgive sins.
 - ◆ You may have heard of the Arian controversy in the fourth century.
 - ◆ The Arian controversy describes the early controversy between the early church fathers Arius and Athanasius relating to the nature of Jesus Christ.
 - ◆ Arius believed Jesus, as Son of God was a created being which put him in conflict with the Trinitarian position that was defended by Athanasius.
 - ◆ The issue was settled at the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) that introduced the word *homoousious* or “consubstantial” meaning of the “same substance” as the Father.
 - ◆ This was in contrast to Arius who used the word, *homoiousias* meaning of “similar substance.”
 - ◆ This word *homoousious* or substance was added to the word *hypostasis*, which came to mean “person” to form the orthodox Trinitarian formula, “one substance, three persons”, or in the Greek, “one *ousia*, three *hypostases*.”
 - ◆ The early church fathers wanted there to be no misunderstanding that the person Jesus Christ was indeed God.
 - ◆ The debate continued and was finally settled at the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) where it was ruled that Jesus is one divine-human person in two natures.
 - ◆ The two natures, human and divine are united in the person of Jesus Christ without mixture, confusion, separation, or division.
 - ◆ The remarkable truth of this statement is the second person of the Trinity is now also human.
 - ◆ He who has always had a divine nature now also has a human nature.
 - ◆ Jesus Christ is the permanent union between God and man that makes Him the perfect representative or mediator between God and humanity (Hebrews 5:7-10).
- One of the many titles Jesus has is that of “Mediator.”**
- ◆ A mediator is one who stands between two parties in order to affect “reconciliation.”
 - ◆ You may remember this was one of the roles Moses assumed in the ongoing rocky relationship between God and Israel.
 - ◆ **1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus. Jesus as Mediator. (See figure below).**

Jesus as Mediator



Christ our Mediator as Fully God and Fully Man:

1. Enters into our fallen humanity and sanctifies us from within His own Being
2. Imparts to us the "life" and "love" of God
3. By uniting humanity with His divinity overcame sin and death
4. Unites every believer together into His Church

As a result we enjoy an intimate relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the mediating work of Jesus Christ

- ♦ **2 Peter 1:3-4 (NKJV)** 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

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There are three important unions that revolve around and make it possible for Jesus Christ to fulfil his role as our "Mediator."

- ◆ The first union, top left, is the "Consubstantial Union" which is the term used to describe the Trinitarian Union.
- ◆ As mentioned earlier the term, *homoousious* or "consubstantial" meaning of the "same substance" was the word used to describe the oneness of the Trinity in that the three persons were of the same "substance" at the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.).
- ◆ Hence the word, "consubstantial."
- ◆ If we follow the arrow of the "Incarnation" we arrive at another union, the union between God and humanity through Jesus Christ called the "Hypostatic or Incarnational Union."
- ◆ The Incarnation is the way God chose to draw near to mankind.
- ◆ God is not this far-off, uninvolved God who wound up the universe and let things run its course.
- ◆ Rather He is intimately involved with His creation even to the point of rolling up His sleeves and immersing Himself in our tangled mess.
- ◆ Then further to the right we have the "Atoning Union" where Jesus unites Himself to sinful humanity in order to act as their atoning representative and substitute for their sin.
- ◆ Jesus knew the ordeal He was about to face; yet He voluntarily accepted the task.
- ◆ He was the One who inspired Isaiah 52-53. He chose to invade humanity when the cross was the method of execution. He walked the streets of Jerusalem and saw on a distant hill the crucified silhouetted against the sky.
- ◆ ***John 10:17-18 (NLT) "The Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may have it back again. 18 No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily. For I have the right to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it again. For my Father has given me this command."***
- ◆ Jesus voluntarily lived out the Atonement as the Lamb of God sacrificed on our behalf.
- ◆ Again we see this extraordinary love, this time displayed by the Son of God in the terrible sacrifice He was willing to suffer in order for us to be drawn back to God.
- ◆ The Incarnation is the way God chose to draw near to mankind, while the Atonement opened the door for a sinful humanity to draw near to God.
- ◆ This in turn leads to "reconciliation" between God and redeemed humanity as Jesus has paid the penalty for their sin and opened the door for reconciliation to occur.
- ◆ The key person in the whole process though is Jesus Christ.
- ◆ ***Philippians 2:6-8 (NLT) Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. 7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. (Incarnation) 8 And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. (Atonement).***
- ◆ It is His central role in bringing about reconciliation between God and humanity that qualifies Him as our Savior, our Mediator, our Representative, and our Substitute.
- ◆ We explained earlier why it was important for Jesus to be divine in order to substitute Himself as our Creator in the place of sinful humanity in order to forgive us.
- ◆ But it was equally important for Jesus to be human in order for Him to be a true "representative" of humanity.
- ◆ A true human being lived the life of the obedient son and faced the ordeal of the cross on our behalf.
- ◆ It is through this process of Jesus fulfilling in Himself the Incarnation and the Atonement that has brought about Reconciliation.

As Mediator, as God and man in one person, He acted from the side of God as God, and from the side of man as man.

- ◆ Earlier we spoke about the failure of the Israelites to live up to their requirements of the Mosaic Covenant, to "***be holy as I am holy***" (*Leviticus 19:2*).
- ◆ Through the whole process God has been faithful to His side of the covenant.
- ◆ What we see happening with the Incarnation and the Atonement is Jesus as the holy faithful Son now acting from the side of man not only for unfaithful Israel, but also for all humanity with the introduction of the New Covenant instituted with His body and blood.
- ◆ Jesus was born under the law in order to act on behalf of unfaithful Israel, but then expanded the gift of salvation to all people, the Gentiles, under the New Covenant (*Galatians 4:4-5; 3:6*).

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We have looked at three important reasons why Jesus needed to be both divine and human in order to be our Savior.

- ◆ First, God's justice demands a response, a price had to be paid for our many sins.
- ◆ As our Creator and God, Jesus was the only one capable of paying the price for the sins of all humanity.
- ◆ Second, as God is the one offended by our sins, Jesus had to be fully God in order to be able to forgive our sins.
- ◆ Third, Jesus had to be a human being in order for Him to be a true representative of humanity.
- ◆ We will come back to this "representative" principle shortly.

It's a remarkable thing to contemplate God's expression of love towards humanity in the gift of Jesus Christ, but to also understand the wonderful design behind this expression of love only adds to the wonderment.

- ◆ As we have seen today, theology plays an important role in magnifying both the immensity of God's love and the incredible brilliance in how that love is expressed to us.
- ◆ We will look more at this next time.