

APPLYING TRUTH TO LIFE

Grace Gatherings

THEOLOGY NIGHTS | FEBRUARY 7, 2024

GRACE CHURCH
WILLIAMSBURG

Question 12

Describe the **dual natures** of Jesus Christ and explain why this reality is **crucial** for salvation.

Misunderstandings, heresies, and debates about the nature of Jesus Christ have gone on for some time. The same can be said for human nature.

The question at issue is, *how do we understand the make up of Jesus given His claim to be both God and human?* He claimed to be God, but He had a human body and lived as we do.

Who is Jesus? Is He God? Is He man? Is He some kind of mix?

And if He is both God and man, how does that even work? Is He able to be God when He wants to be, turn that off, and then turn into a man and vice versa?

Question 12

Describe the **dual natures** of Jesus Christ and explain why this reality is **crucial** for salvation.

The wrong, or **unbiblical**, answers and understandings to these questions about Jesus' nature come from the same places all sinful error originates: from **hearts carelessly mishandling** God's Word and from **Satan's deceitful efforts to pervert** God's Word in the hearts of mankind.

To give you a clearer picture of how much effort Satan has thrown at confusing and contorting the doctrine of the nature of Jesus, let me list off some of the major Christological heresies. These are false views of who Jesus is in His nature. These heresies date back to the beginnings of the early church, so Satan wasted no time in attacking Jesus' true nature.

Question 12

Ebionism:

Denies the pre-existence of Jesus which leads to accepting His humanity but denying His deity. Ebionites accepted Jesus as a great man and prophet of God. This view was heavily influenced by first century Jewish teachings.

Question 12

Gnosticism:

A complicated system that came from many teachings even prior to the New Testament church. Christ was either a phantom who only appeared to have a body, or He was an eon, an emanation of God that joined with Jesus. Jesus saved people, but only by giving the elite a special intellectual knowledge setting them apart from everyone else.

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Adoptionism/Modalism:

God adopted Jesus at either His baptism or His resurrection. Adoptionists denied the Trinity and emphasized the oneness of God (Unitarianism). The three persons of the Godhead are three different modes of the one God. The Father and the Son were not distinct, and this led to the weird belief that God the Father died on the cross.

Question 12

Docetism:

From *dokeo* -- to seem, to appear. Simply, the docetists accepted Jesus' deity but rejected His humanity. All matter is evil, of this earth and, therefore, Jesus could not have had a real body. This was an illusion; He could not suffer or die a real death.

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Arianism:

From Arius, elder in the church Alexandria, Egypt. Christ is a created being, the first and most supreme of all created beings. Christ was not of the same substance as God, but He was similar in substance. Christ was to be regarded as being somewhere on the scale between God and man.

This sparked great debate in the church between AD300-392. Two church councils met to resolve the issue of whether Christ was **similar** to (*homoiousia*) or of the **same** substance as (*homoousia*) God.

Nicaea: AD325; Constantinople: AD381.

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Apollinarianism:

From Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea. Christ is a true deity but **not** fully human. Christ had a spirit, but not a human mind (a rational soul) or human will. Jesus was God masquerading in human form.

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Nestorianism:

From Nestorius of Constantinople. Jesus has a dual personality -- two natures and **two persons** rather than one person and two natures.

Question 12

Eutychianism:

From Eutyches of Constantinople. Christ's deity and humanity are devoid of distinction. Christ's nature of deity and humanity were fused together to form a third nature that was neither God nor man but something in between.

Question 12

What do each of these false views of Jesus' nature **have in common**?

They all try to **divide** or **exclude** truths about His nature in unbiblical ways.

Question 12

What does the Bible teach us about Jesus' **true** nature?

Jesus is **God**.

- John 8:58; John 10:30; Romans 9:4-5

Jesus is **human**.

- Matthew 4:1-2; Luke 2:7, 40; John 4:6; John 11:35

Jesus is **one** person with **two** natures. Jesus is **both fully** God and **fully** human.

- Colossians 1:15-22; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3

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What does the Bible teach us about Jesus' **true** nature?

In summary:

Jesus is not half man and half God, He is not two people in one body, and He is not in some way or ways a partial mixing of who God is.

As the God/Man of the Bible, His humanity and His divinity, while expressing two distinct natures, must both be fully upheld.

We cannot affirm that Jesus' two natures are a blending of some sort, nor can we accept that His natures are only separate: "They are united yet distinct." (R.C. Sproul)

Question 12

Why is this doctrine so important to the Church and to the gospel?

Isaiah 43:11

Only the true God of the Bible can save people from the sinful separation that exists between God and mankind. If Jesus is less than God, then He cannot be our Savior.

Question 12

Why is this doctrine so important to the Church and to the gospel?

1 Timothy 2:5

Our sinful separation from God requires a mediator between us and God. Paul affirms that Christ Jesus the man is the **only** Mediator between God and mankind.

Christ is not His first name; Christ is His title which means Messiah, Anointed One, Deliverer. Jesus reveals God to us.

Jesus is the *Son of God*, the sinless sacrifice offered to God on our behalf and fully accepted by God to bear our sins for us.

And Jesus is the *man* who stands as the only person who can bring God and men together in peaceful friendship (Heb. 2:17).

Question 12

Why is this doctrine so important to the Church and to the gospel?

Hebrews 4:14-16

This affirms Jesus' deity as the Son of God and as our high priest who Himself was tempted as we are, without sin, and is able to identify with our suffering as human beings.

As God's Son, **He alone** could be our holy (without sin) priest before God, bringing to God the perfect sacrifice of Himself on our behalf and ensuring that we can draw near to God by His own mercy and grace.

Question 12

Why is this doctrine so important to the Church and to the gospel?

1 John 2:6

The same Jesus who is Holy God, and who provides us with perfect righteousness, also provides us with the example of living out that holiness in all aspects of being human.

We are “to walk as He walked” -- to live as He lived in the holy desire to please the Father in all things, to do the Father’s will, and to speak God’s truth to each other.

Our obedience is the obedience of grace, of God’s favor on us and of His power working in us -- all because of **Christ living in us** and **setting us the example** for holy living.

Question 12

By being fully human and living in sinless perfection, Jesus became the only **person** to ever live **without sin**; this made Jesus the only perfect (sinless) substitute for us as He took on our sins and died in our place to *pay the penalty* for our unrighteousness -- our spiritual separation from and wrong-standing with God (2 Cor. 5:21).

At the same time, because Jesus is also **fully God**, He alone possessed the ability to conquer the power that had conquered us; Jesus *secured the righteousness* (right standing perfection) of God for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

In the God/Man, Christ Jesus, we have the certainty of power over sin and of joy in our complete forgiveness for all our sins -- past, present, and future.

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