

TWELVE POINTS OF LIGHT

POINT 4: COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON - DUAL NATURE OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

A. Importance

1. The Council of Chalcedon took place during theological debate concerning the Person of Christ.
2. The Council addressed four crucial issues concerning the Person of Christ.
 - a. Deity of Christ - against Arianism
 - b. Humanity of Christ - against Apollinarianism
 - c. Christ is One Person - against Nestorianism
 - d. Christ has Two natures - against Eutychianism

B. Development of Christological Views

1. Relationship to the Father
 - a. Arianism (issue of deity)
 - 1) Jesus is not preexistent but the first-born of all creation.
 - 2) He was created by the Father and then Christ created the universe.
 - 3) He is not equal with God in essence or eternity.
 - b. Docetism (issue of humanity)
 - 1) Dualistic system: spirit and flesh.
 - 2) Flesh was considered evil so God could not become flesh.
 - 3) Jesus appeared human but was actually divine.
 - c. Monarchianism (issue of polytheism)
 - 1) Emphasized the unity of God but denied Trinity which was perceived as Tritheism.
 - 2) The unity of God denotes both oneness of nature and oneness of person.
 - 3) Sabellius taught that the Persons of the Godhead were modes in which God manifested Himself.
2. Relationship of Jesus' Two Natures
 - a. Apollinarianism
 - 1) Apollinarius was Bishop of Laodicea
 - 2) In zeal against Arianism, he went so far on side of deity that he distorted Jesus' human nature.
 - 3) Position
 - a) He is one person with one nature.
 - b) In His human flesh resided a divine mind and will.
 - c) Logos took place of human spirit and therefore His divinity controlled or sanctified His humanity.
 - 4) Opposition
 - a) The NT pictures Jesus with a human mind and emotions.
 - b) If Jesus were not fully human, He could not redeem mankind.
 - b. Nestorianism
 - 1) Nestorius
 - a) Became Bishop of Constantinople in 428.
 - b) He attacked the title $\text{Qeotoko}\varsigma$ (God-bearer or Mother of God).
 - 1} It was thought that he didn't accept the deity of Christ.
 - 2} Actually, he thought the term emphasized Jesus' deity to the point of denying His humanity. He was trying to avoid the Apollinarian heresy.
 - 2) Position: Christ is two persons with two natures.

- c. Eutychianism
 - 1) Eutyches - a monk in Constantinople dedicated to the opposition of Nestorianism.
 - 2) Position
 - a) Christ is one person with one nature.
 - b) All of Christ was divine, even His body.
 - c) His divinity swallowed up His humanity “like a drop of honey into the sea dissolves in it.”
 - 3) In 449, “Robber Council” was held and affirmed Eutyches and condemned all forms of Nestorianism.

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

A. Historical Setting

- 1. The western provinces of the Roman Empire were being laid waste by Attila the Hun.
- 2. After much political intrigue and change of emperors, the Council of Chalcedon was held in 451, with more than 500 bishops in attendance.
- 3. Pope Leo I called bishops to sign his *Letter to Flavian* or *Tome* which attacked the position of Eutyches.
- 4. Excerpts from the *Tome*
 - a. On authority, *The people who fall into this folly are those in whom knowledge of the truth is blocked by a kind of dimness. They do not refer to the sayings of the prophets, nor to the letters of the apostles, nor even to the authoritative words of the gospels, but to themselves. By not being pupils of the truth, they turn out to be masters of error.*
 - b. On fundamental truth, *...God the Father almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary. These three statements wreck the tricks of nearly every heretic.*
 - c. On Eutychianism, *Then he would not deceive people by saying that the Word was made flesh in the sense that he emerged from the virgin’s womb having a human form but not having the reality of his mother’s body...It was the Holy Spirit that made the virgin pregnant, but the reality of the body derived from body...So the proper character of both natures was maintained and came together in a single person.*
 - d. On Jesus’ humanity, *His subjection to human weaknesses in common with us did not mean that he shared our sins. He took on the form of a servant without the defilement of sin, thereby enhancing the human and not diminishing the divine. For that self-emptying whereby the Invisible rendered himself visible, and the Creator and Lord of all things chose to join the ranks of mortals, spelled no failure of power: it was an act of merciful favor...What was taken from the mother of the Lord was the nature without the guilt.*
 - e. On Jesus’ two natures, *The birth of flesh reveals human nature; birth from a virgin is a proof of divine power...the divinity was concealed by the veil of flesh...For it is from us that he gets a humanity which is less than the Father; it is from the Father that he gets a divinity which is equal to the Father.*

B. Results of Chalcedon

- 1. Eutychianism condemned
- 2. Council of Nicea reaffirmed
- 3. Christological formula
 - a. Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures - human and divine.
 - b. He is consubstantial (of the same nature) with Father in deity and consubstantial with man in humanity, except for sin.
- 4. Faith of Chalcedon
 - a. Text: *So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed down to us.*

- b. Key Points
 - 1) One and the same Son: One person
 - 2) Perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity: Two natures
 - 3) Truly God and truly man: Two natures maintained
 - 4) Begotten before the ages: Eternality
 - 5) Relationship of two natures: No confusion, no change, no division, no separation

5. Theological Definitions

- a. Hypostatic union
 - 1) The relationship of Jesus' human and divine natures
 - 2) The two natures constitute one person
 - 3) Insures the constant presence of both humanity and deity
- b. Kenosis
 - 1) Subordination of Jesus' divine attributes
 - 2) His divine power was veiled but not surrendered, John 1:14; 17:5.
 - 3) He voluntarily relinquished independent use of His divine attributes, Phil. 2:7f.
 - 4) Definition: Jesus surrendered no attributes of deity but He did voluntarily subordinate His use of them in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations.
- c. See handout, "Council of Nicea" for biblical references to Jesus' deity and humanity.

CONCLUSION

- A. Council of Chalcedon set proper Christological boundaries which define Jesus as one Person with two distinct natures.
- B. Dr. Craig Blaising, *They were engaged not in a speculative task but in a descriptive task. They were concerned to make a precise as well as accurate statement about the Incarnation recorded in the Scriptures.*
- C. Importance
 1. Because of His deity, Jesus can save us.
 2. Through His humanity, Jesus makes payment for our sins.
 3. In His humanity, Jesus knows our frustrations, pains, joys, and sorrows. Hebrews 4:15, *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

INTERNET RESOURCES

Wheaton College. All 38 volumes of Schaff's *Ante-Nicene, Nicene, and Post Nicene Fathers*.
<http://ccel.wheaton.edu/fathers2>

Church History. Excellent resources, including pointers to other early church sites.
<http://www.christianity.net/christianhistory>

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