

CHRISTOLOGICAL ERRORS - Is Jesus who He said He was?

Apostolic controversies:

1. Overemphasis on deity negating humanity
2. Overemphasis on Oneness negating Trinity
3. Overemphasis on humanity negating deity
4. Overemphasis on ignorance. I don't know and I don't care.

There is a tension in the Scriptures regarding Christ's deity. He is "fully God and fully man."

To be man and/or human entails spirit, soul and body. How can one be wholly God and fully man at the same time? The Jews rejected Him while Believers accepted Him. Hence the tension.

The original apostolic church didn't major on theological correctness. Jesus manifested and demonstrated Yahweh's miraculous salvation and they gladly believed. Within 200 years the apostolic congregation grew, some call it maturity and because of unbelief and carnality the miraculous ceased and gradually liturgical, rationalized, institutionalized religion replaced the church. Since that time people want everything explained. Christianity, especially in the West, has become a religion of doctrine, hence witnessing is proving a particular point of view.

Satan keeps this confusion alive today. That's why there is another Jesus, another Spirit and another gospel. Here are the major challenges facing the infant apostolic church. Keep in mind the Bible not yet available to believers nor were there libraries, manuscripts, dictionaries and commentaries.

ADOPTIONISM: Jesus was a man who *became the Son of God* at some point in His earthly existence, usually the baptism or resurrection. Jehovah's Witnesses say Jesus became the Christ at His baptism, dedication and consecration. Luke 2:11 says He is "Christ the Lord." John 1:1-3 and Phil. 2:5-12.

DOCETISM: From Greek *dokeo* "to appear" was a specialized form of adoptionism presenting Jesus as distinct from the spirit or mind of Christ. Jesus *became* the Son of God when the Spirit descended on Him as His baptism. The Spirit, or mind of Christ, left Him on the cross before He died. Thus Christ appeared to have died hence the origin of their name, "to appear."

They were obligated to teach this error because of their view the spirit is good and the flesh-matter is evil. The spirit-Christ could not be associated with the corruption of death that is part of the flesh. John 1:1-3 answers this problem: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The source of the current *Jesus died spiritually* theory is related to Docetism.

ARIANISM: Arius was a 4th century Bishop in Alexandria, N. Africa who taught: "Before he was begotten, He did not exist." Jesus is only a *created being*; therefore, He was not co-eternal with the Father.

Arianism appeals to human reason, but it doesn't appreciate the grammatical presentation of Jesus in John's gospel and Philippians 2. It rejects the deity of Jesus.

Arianism is the foundation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Charles Russell, the Watchtower founder, said the pre-existent word was Michael, the archangel, the first and only direct creation by God. He was like God, but He was not God."

Arius said, "We know only one God who is unbegotten. There was a time when God was not a Father." He wanted to use the term *homoioisius*, which meant a different kind.

The Arian problem is with us big time today and it can't be answered with one or two scriptures. Check the other "Articles" available at this web site.

The Council of Nicea excommunicated Arius. There was no much politicking they called him back, but he disappeared the day before he was to appear. He was found dead. They later wrote how God had vindicated His true form of religion by killing Arius, but of course it wasn't true.

ATHANASIUS: (296-372) led the attack against Arius at Council of Nicea A.D.365. He was not a Trinitarian, but believed there was one God in three persons of the same essence.

He argued Christ always was, at no time was He not. He was and is co-eternal with the Father and of the same substance with the Father. He asked: "How can God be eternally the Father without always having an eternal Son?" He said the only begottenness of the Son does not refer to His coming into being, but is a description of His unique relationship with the Father. *This is the orthodox view.*

He questioned Arianism: If God created Jesus He could create further extensions of Himself and He would not be constant...there would be more sons. Here is where the doctrine of the Incarnation began, and it is very important to know Jesus was and is God. To know God personally and to have the assurance of His salvation you must know Who Jesus is.

If you separate the Father and the Son, there are at least two gods, one Almighty and one mighty one Big One and one little one. If Jesus was only a created creature then Christianity is false. God did not love man so much He gave Himself, as John 3:16 says, but He created a creature and sent him/it/? To suffer and die in His place. No! God Himself was IN Jesus the Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

The Council of Nicea convened with 300 bishops in A.D. 325. Until Arius' era the church had neglected the issues of heresy, but this controversy forced them to define their beliefs. Only four bishops agreed with Arius. Remember, all of these Councils, Bishops and the controversies were within the Catholic Church.

MONARCHIANISM: Maintained monotheism. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one," and this caused a problem.

1. *Dynamic:* Defies deity of Christ. God adopted Jesus at His baptism.

2. *Modalistic:* Grk. "Belief in the rule of one." Only the Father was and He was in Jesus. The Father *acted* as the Son. They reacted toward any tri-theism: i.e. three Gods, Father, Son

and Holy Spirit. In reacting they overreacted and created another extreme. They denied three distinct persons in the Godhead.

3. **SABELLIUS**: (d.260). Taught God was an absolute One, but three manifestations. Just as a person can be a parent, a child and spouse, yet the same person, so God reveals Himself in successive revelations as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

He had a theological problem with John 1:1: The Word WAS God and the Word was WITH God. If the Word was God how could He be with God? And with John 14:28 when Jesus said, "My father is greater than I am. If Jesus was God and equal with God how could He say the Father was greater than He?? The United Pentecostal Church and branches of the Apostolic churches preach Sabellianism.

EBIONITES: A Jewish sect, called the poor people, (2nd century) denied the reality of Jesus' divine nature. They believed He was a Jewish prophet, but not God. They rejected His virgin birth; He was only the natural son of Joseph and Mary. His non-deniable miracles were the result of the Spirit descending upon Him at His baptism in the Jordan River. He was the Jewish Messiah who would rule the world for 1,000 years.

CERINTHIANS: John's chief antagonist at Ephesus was Cerinthus. He believed Christ's deity was based on His baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, rather than His supernatural birth even though Luke wrote "Christ was born this day in the city of David."

He argued there was no real essential union of the two natures. The Divine Spirit descended on Jesus at His baptism and ascended on the eve of His passion. Jesus, who died on the cross, was again just the man Jesus. He died and rose again, but Christ, being spirit did not suffer.

GNOSTICISM: This problem developed during the Hellenistic era and higher thought. *Ginosko* is Greek for "knowledge." They expanded and perverted Christianity by rational learning and speculation. The Lord's earthly life was only an illusion. He neither died nor was He actually born. All matter is essentially evil and the source of all evil. They discounted the true humanity of Jesus, denied the personality of God and man's free will. John's First epistle addressed the Gnostic heresies. It is alive and well today as the core of the mind science religions, such as Christian Science, Unity, Free Thought and the New Age Movements.

APOLLINARIANISM: (315-390) Apollonarius, Bishop of Laodicea, fiercely opposed Arius doctrine of a created Jesus and he was a strong defender of Nicene orthodoxy, but strayed outside the camp regarding Christ's humanity.

He taught Christ had a human body and soul, but not a human spirit or reason. The divine word, the logos, took the place of the human soul or mind so Christ was not fully man. "God in a bog" was his expression. He believed in the oneness of God's nature, but overemphasized the divinity.

This error was condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople in 381.

EUTYCHIANISM: Eutychus (378-454) was a monk at Constantinople and a disciple of the Nestorian. He deprecated humanity of Jesus to avoid the formal charge of Apollinarianism.

After Jesus' fully human nature entered into the incarnate union, the human utterly absorbed and was lost in the divine. The man Jesus *chose* God and was completely blended into Him. He used the illustration of pouring a cup of wine into the Mediterranean Sea.

NESTORIANISM: D.454). Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople, argued over how the human and divine nature of Christ were united. He drew a sharp distinction between the two natures and refused to acknowledge Mary as the mother of God. She was only the mother of the flesh of Jesus, the Jewish half, but the Catholic Church was already embracing Mariology and fully elevated her to the position of co-redemptrix and co-savior with Christ. The Council of Ephesus (A.D.431) judged him as heretical and reaffirmed the hypostatic union. Cyril, his opponent, charged him with saying Christ had two natures and two persons, a false charge.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA (376-444), Held the orthodox Catholic view. Christ was wholly God and fully man with neither aspect diminishing the other. He insisted the title, *theotokos* (bearer of God), a title for Mary, emphasized Jesus as God and his divinity which were not diminished when He became flesh. This does not mean Jesus did not experience limitations by being in the flesh, but only in essence he was still God. He was ruthless and unscrupulous in attacking heresy.

MONTANISM: 2ND Century. A movement led by Montanus and two prophetesses from Phrygia. They held to the ecstatic gifts, prophecy, the immediate expectation of Judgment Day and those falling from grace could not be redeemed. They withstood Catholic orthodoxy who said the "day of miracles" and gifts had ceased.

MANICHAISM: 3rd Century. A Persian monk, Mani, announced himself as a prophet in A.D.242. Influenced by Buddhism and Gnosticism, he took the dualism of Zorostrianism's dual nature of man, good and evil, and conceived an abstract god to counter the idolatries of his day. The good will be rewarded and the wicked judged at the final judgment day. Manichaeism died out about A.D.500 because of asceticism, strict celibacy and austerity for salvation.

EUTYCHAS; 5th Century. Christ was only divine nature, with no human nature. Jesus was totally God and not man.

Conclusion:

Satan is still a clever adversary and scripture twister. These heretical errors are still being taught today. Only the applications are different. For example: The *Jesus died spiritually* teaching supposes Jesus abdicated His deity on the cross and became a child of Satan. Sin is spiritual so Jesus must die spiritually. For three days and nights He was not the Son of God and He was not deity.

He defeated Satan in the bowels of hell and when God raised Him from the dead He was the first man to be “born again” and once again He became the Son of God. He was God but He laid aside His deity and when He was born again He became God again. Whew!

When and how did God become God? He is without beginning or ending. He is the I AM! Can God cease being God? If Jesus was God, and He is (Jn:1-3,15), He could not cease being God. Col. 1:15-17 declared He is the Creator and holds all things together. If the Christ ceased to exist on the cross the universe was without Life or Light waiting for Him to be born again and become the Son once again. This gets confusing.

He was not a man who became God as the Mormons teach. He did not become the Christ at His baptism as the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach, nor was He Michael the archangel as the J.W.’s and Russellites teach. He was God, and because He was and is God He, could not cease being God. God is not capable of being anything less than God. If so He isn’t fully God.

I also hear Universalism-Unitarianism in the background. If Jesus, a sinner confined to hell, if even for a short period, could become God again, then any or all men in hell can be born again since as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive. And become gods? Shades of the New Age.

What are we to learn from these briefs? Don’t try explaining Scriptures. Accept and proclaim them. Satan, the Liar, entered Eden as a mind bender, a word perverter and truth explainer. Today he calls it revelation knowledge.