

The Person of Christ

The Chalcedon Definition

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all unite in teaching that we should confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This same one is perfect in deity, and the same one is perfect in humanity; the same one is true God and true man, comprising a rational soul and a body. He is of the same essence (homousios) as the Father according to his deity, and the same one is of the same essence (homousios) with us according to his humanity, like us in all things except sin. He was begotten before the ages from the Father according to his deity, but in the last days for us and our salvation, the same one was born of the Virgin Mary, the bearer of God (Theotokos), according to his humanity. He is one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, and Only Begotten, who is made known in two natures (physeis) united unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably. The distinction between the natures (physeis) is not at all destroyed because of the union, but rather the property of each nature (physis) is preserved and concurs together into one person (prosopon) and subsistence (hypostasis). He is not separated or divided into two persons (prosopa), but he is one and the same Son, the Only Begotten, God the Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the way the prophets spoke of him from the beginning, and Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and the Council of the fathers has handed the faith down to us.

Twelve Key Ideas

1. The eternal Son, the Logos, possesses full deity

- *“There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”¹*
- The Son is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit – he possesses all the attributes of deity.
- The Son is co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit – there was never a time when the Son did not exist.
- **John 1:1** testifies to his eternity, his personhood and his deity.

2. The eternal Son - the Logos - took to himself a human nature

- **John 1:14** - In the incarnation the pre-existent Logos assumed a human nature in hypostatic union.
- *The hypostatic union is the personal union of Jesus’ two natures.*
- *“The eternal son of God took into union with himself a human nature created in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. This union continues for the whole of eternity, so that the humanity is permanently united to the Son and he remains human.”²*

¹ FIEC Statement of Faith

² Letham Systematic Theology, 2011, p.499

- “What he was he continued to be; but what he was not he took to himself.”³
- The incarnation is not about subtraction but about addition.

3. The eternal Son assumed an impersonal human nature

- “The logos assumed a human nature that was not personalized and that did not exist by itself”.⁴
- The Logos was not united with a human person but with a human nature.
- It was not the fusion of two pre-existent natures.
- It was not the fusion of two pre-existent persons.

4. The eternal Son assumed a full human nature and yet without sin

- He had a material body and a rational soul.
- The body of Christ was real, tangible and local.
- He had to develop and he needed sustenance.
- The soul of Christ had to grow in wisdom and knowledge.
- He had a limited human mind and a will that made free choices.
- He engaged in worship and built relationships.

5. He did not assume a fallen nature and he was free from sin

- Christ came as a lowly, despised and weak man but as a sinless man.
- Through the virgin conception he was free from the stain of Adam’s sin.
- If he had a sinful nature with the concomitant guilt for sin he would have had to redeem himself before he could redeem humanity.
- He had a human body and a reasonable soul and he lived in our physical and social environment. However he was unique in that he was born of a virgin, he never sinned, he received the Holy Spirit without measure, he had a unique self-consciousness and his life did not end with death but resurrection.
- ‘But whilst He [Christ] took humanity with the innocent infirmities, He did not take it with the sinful propensities. Here Deity interposed. Christ’s humanity was not the Adamic humanity, that is, the humanity of Adam before the Fall; nor fallen humanity, that is, in every respect the humanity of Adam after the Fall. It was not the Adamic, because it had the innocent infirmities of the fallen. It was not the fallen, because it never descended into moral impurity. It was, therefore, most literally our humanity, but without sin.’⁵

6. He has two natures

- A nature is the sum total of all the essential qualities of a thing.
- He has two natures – he is fully God and fully man.
- “This same one is perfect in deity, and the same one is perfect in humanity; the same one is true God and true man, comprising a rational soul and a body. He is of the same essence as the Father according to his deity, and the

³ Gregory of Nazianzus

⁴ Berkhof – Systematic Theology – Banner of Truth, 1971, p.322

⁵ Melvill, Sermons (New York: Stanford & Swords, 1850), p.47.

same one is of the same essence with us according to his humanity, like us in all things except sin".⁶

7. He is one Person

- A person is a substance endowed with reason and volition and who is capable of relationship with other persons.
- *"He is not separated or divided into two persons, but he is one and the same Son, the Only Begotten, God the Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ."*⁷
- There is no evidence of a dual personality in Christ.
- There is no distinction in his inner life between an "I" and a "you".
- Jesus never used a plural when speaking of himself.
- The Son of God never addresses the son of man as if he is a different person from himself. Scripture reveals only one Christ.

8. The two natures exist without division or separation

- *"The property of each nature is preserved and concurs together in one person"*⁸
- He is not separated or divided into two persons, but he is one and the same Son, the Only Begotten, God the Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The two natures of Christ do not represent a split in the divine Person.
- Jesus Christ is not half God and half man.
- *"The union of the human and divine in the person of Jesus Christ is a real, organic union, not simply a moral sympathy or relational partnership."*⁹
- If we divide the Person of Christ we are in danger of undermining the real participation of the Son of God in our humanity and our salvation.

9. The two natures exist without confusion or change

- *"The distinction between the natures is not at all destroyed because of the union, but rather the property of each nature is preserved and concurs together into one person and subsistence."*¹⁰
- In incarnation the Logos did not cease to be what he had always been.
- He remained the divine Son.
- The human nature of Christ was not changed by its proximity to his divine nature.
- Even in such close proximity the two natures do not bleed into one another.

10. The two natures communicate their properties to the one Person

- The properties of each nature are communicated to the united one Person.
- This communication takes place at the level of the Person and not between the natures.

⁶ Chalcedon definition

⁷ Chalcedon definition

⁸ Chalcedon definition

⁹ *Theological Primer: Hypostatic Union* – Kevin DeYoung – Gospel Coalition website

¹⁰ Chalcedon definition

- By virtue of the hypostatic union the attributes of either nature belong to the one Person.
- The properties of each nature therefore belong to the one Person.
- The one person can be said to be:
 - ⇒ Almighty omniscient and omnipresent.
 - ⇒ The man of sorrows with limited knowledge and power
- The human nature is not deified and the divine nature is not humanized.

11. All his actions are the actions of the one Person

- One Person is spoken of including divine titles with human attributes:
 - ⇒ **Act 20:28** - *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”*
 - ⇒ **1 Cor 2:8** – *“None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*
- One person is spoken of including human titles with divine attributes and actions.
 - ⇒ **John 3:13** – *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.”*
 - ⇒ **John 6:62** - *“Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”*
- Whatever may be affirmed of one nature may be affirmed of the Person.
- Each nature does what is proper to it according to its attributes.

12. The hypostatic union is necessary for our salvation

- *“He was begotten before the ages from the Father according to his deity, but in the last days for us and our salvation, the same one was born of the Virgin Mary, the bearer of God, according to his humanity.”¹¹*
- In order to redeem humanity he needed to assume humanity.
- Human beings sinned and the penalty for their sin had to be borne by another human being.
- Redemption involved suffering and this demanded that the Logos took human flesh which was able to suffer.
- As mediator he needed experiential knowledge of the woes of mankind so that he could act with sympathy when we suffer or when we are tempted.
- The sacrifice for sin had to be of infinite value because the penalty demanded by an infinitely holy God was also infinite.
- Only the divine Son could bear the wrath of God for all his people.
- Salvation is not by divine fiat - the incarnation was therefore a necessity.
- Salvation is the work of the one person acting through the two natures.

¹¹ Chalcedon definition