

The Purple Pulpit

Installment #10

July 22, 2018

The Unipersonality of Christ

We have been teaching on the two forms, the two natural essences, the two consubstantialities of Christ in our recent Purple Pulpit threads. Today I want to stress the unipersonality of Christ. This is important to avoid the heresy that has been designated “Nestorianism,” which took its name from the most influential advocate (and possibly the inventor) of the error, one Nestorius. Nestorius taught that Jesus was one, and the Christ was another, that the man Jesus was inhabited by another, namely the Christ. This is clearly labeled as antichrist doctrine in 1 Jn. 2:22. Indeed, to be born of God one must believe that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn. 5:1).

The error of Nestorianism is similar in approach to the lie of tritheism. Let me explain. One may err relative to the teaching of the matters surrounding the Trinity in one of two ways. One may stress the oneness of God (His essence) in such a way that the “Threeness” is downplayed and lost sight of. Another may emphasize the Threeness (persons) in a way that doesn’t fully appreciate the oneness. The former error results in modalism (the belief that God exists in only one person, who functioned in three different roles or “modes”) or Unitarianism, while the latter results in tritheism (the belief in three

gods). Similarly to the error of tritheism (which we are regularly falsely accused of by Muslims) Nestorius so focused on the “twoness” of Christ (His two substances of Deity and humanity) that he denied the unipersonality of Christ (that though He has two simultaneous states as Godhood and manhood, He is one Person – the One Christ!).

We see this unipersonality (again, the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is one Person) in the language of Scripture that reflects a concept that theologians call “the communion of attributes.” This is when we see the natural way that Scripture refers to titles, attributes, or conditions of one of the essences of Christ under a reference to the other. For example, consider 1 Cor. 2:8. There “the Lord of glory” (a designation of Christ’s Deity) is the One said to have been “crucified” (a situation only possible for a human). Jesus the Christ is one and the same, Who is both the Lord of glory and the crucified One. Consider and contemplate these other verses where this communion of attributes can be observed: Acts 20:28; Gal. 2:20; Jn. 3:13; Lk. 9:26; Jn. 2:19; Mk. 13:32; Mt. 4:3,4; Jn. 1:30; Isa. 7:14 cf. Mt. 1:23. Scores of other examples could be cited.

Note also that Jesus (the human name of the Lord) is clearly designated “Christ,” “Lord,” and “Son of God” (Acts 2:36; 17:2,3; Jn. 20:30,31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Heb. 4:14; 1 Jn. 4:15; 5:1; 5:5). Col. 2:6 is particularly powerful in this vein when it refers to the Son of God as “the Christ – Jesus the Lord.”

The unipersonality of the Lord Jesus Christ is thus seen to be the very doctrine of the Scriptures, and therefore part of the confession of the universal assembly of believers. While we admit both the Deity and humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, we confess Him to be, in all veracity, one Person, one Christ, the one and only Saviour of all who place their belief in Him. This is a key part of the Scriptural Christology. This is our faith (1 Tim. 3:16-4:1; Jas. 2:1).