



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“Perversions of the Doctrine of Christ’s Person, Ancient and Modern”

...and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Now, will you turn over to 1 Peter chapter 2, and let’s read verses 7 and 8. 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 7 and 8. Here Peter writes,

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builder disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient. Whereunto also they were appointed.”

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, Scripture says, “All the city was moved saying; Who is this?” All the city said it then, and all the world has been saying it since then. Who is this? For nineteen hundred years one lone figure has puzzled and tormented the mind and conscience of mankind. In our last two studies, we have sought an answer to this in the terms of the “Formula of Chalcedon.” And we dated the formula, 451 AD, for that is the day of the Council. We’ve been saying in one divine person are united a complete human and a complete divine nature. And that this union is called the

Hypostatic Union, a union of substance. We stopped here, and we didn’t investigate such other significant doctrines as the sinlessness of our Lord, the impeccability of our Lord because we’re not going to deal in detail this year with the doctrine of Christology. We’re going to move on to soteriology.

Now, these are very important doctrines but we’re going to drop them. I did say just a word about impeccability, and of course, implicit in the fact that Jesus is the possessor of a complete human nature and a complete divine nature, and that he is the “God-Man,” a divine person. Implicit in that, is his sinlessness but we, in order to make it very plain, should state of course, that a proper study of our Lord’s person would be to study his sinlessness.

This agreement of the church concerning Jesus Christ was not easily reached. And further, it has been challenged through the centuries. It is being challenged today. There are men today who are in the Christian church outwardly, who do not believe the “Formula of Chalcedon.” There are some who even accept the deity of Jesus Christ and the humanity who would like to revise the “Formula of Chalcedon.” But there are some who would like to eliminate it entirely and do not believe in the deity of Christ. So the personality of our Lord or the person of our Lord is still under attack, and shall be under attack, I’m sure, until the time that Jesus Christ comes again.

We, who are members of the church of Jesus Christ, should be prepared to defend our views concerning the Lord Jesus and the reason, of course, is that they are at the heart of Christianity. If we say that we are Christians and we do not really know who Jesus Christ is and we’re not able to defend our beliefs concerning him, we’re surely going to be weaker witnesses for him. In fact, I think that to understand the person of Christ is absolutely essential to the missionary program of the body of Christ. And as someone has put it, “The church must not stutter when it speaks concerning Jesus Christ.” If an Hindu, or if one who believes in some other religion, should say to us, “Why do we Christians assert that Jesus Christ is the only redeemer, the only mediator between God and men?”

What would we have to say to that? If we should say that Jesus Christ is the “God-Man” and one must be related to him in order to be saved and we’re speaking to someone who has not grown up in the Christian church at all, and he should begin to ask us questions about “why,” what would we say?

It’s necessary to wrestle with these problems, and so we want to look now at the doctrine of Christ up to Chalcedon. And we’re dividing this time into two parts: Errors of the first three centuries, and Errors of the fourth and fifth centuries. And first of all, just a word about Ebionism. Ebionism is a term that comes from the Hebrew word which means “poor,” *ebion*. And consequently, the Ebionites were the poor ones. Their doctrine was very closely related to Judaism. In fact, many of them were Jews. It was very much like Judaism within the Christian fold. They denied the reality of the divine nature of the Lord Jesus. They said that Jesus was not the “God-man.” They were strongly influenced by passages that were very important in Judaism such as

Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 3 in verse 4 and I’ll look it up and read it for you. “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it. That it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” And so the Ebionites stumbled over the reality of the divine nature. They said he was qualified to be the Messiah by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him at his baptism. But he was after all, only a man.

Now, you can see I say why they would want to say that because they were used to believing that there was one God. And the idea of Jesus Christ’s deity seemed to suggest to them, two Gods, more than one. Ebionites. The Ebionites existed and had influence in the first and second centuries. So they were an early heresy within the Christian movement.

Cerinthianism. Cerinthius was an heretic. He held that there was no real and essential union of the two natures in Christ before baptism. And he also felt that the deity

of Christ was founded on the enduement of the Holy Spirit which came at the baptism. And it was then, that there was a union between the divine and human natures. Cerinthius and Cerinthianism was not a very wide-ranging movement, and I’m going to close the discussion of it by just simply saying that Cerinthius is probably best known for the fact that the Apostle John knew him, and he knew John. In fact, there is a famous story about Cerinthius and John. That John was in one of the public baths taking a bath and it became known that Cerinthius was also taking a bath. And it is said that when he found out that Cerinthius was also in the bath, he rushed out and said, “We must get out of the place because if Cerinthius is here, the whole bath is liable to fall in on us” or words to that effect. And so whenever I think of Cerinthius, I think of the bathhouse incident in the tradition of the Apostle John.

The third error, or Docetism is a more important error. Now Docetism, I think I’ve referred to this once before, but Docetism comes from the Greek word *dokeo* which means sometimes “to think” but it often means “to seem.” S-E-E-M. “To seem.”

Now, the Docetists were individuals who flourished in the first and second centuries, and they denied the true humanity of our Lord. They said that Jesus only seemed to be a man, but he really was God manifest in what appeared to be human nature. But Jesus was really something like a ghost, something like a phantasm, not really a man. So they denied the humanity of our Lord. And you will notice in the New Testament that the authors of the New Testament have a word to say about Docetism whether it was the beginning of the movement or precisely the movement or a related thing. John, particularly, in the New Testament speaks about the true incarnation of the Lord Jesus, and he warns against the error of not believing that God was manifest in the flesh. He says in 1 John 4 verse 1 and following, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.”

Now, the reason that John had to stress this was because there were many who were denying that he had come really in the flesh. “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.” Docetism. So a Docetist is a man who believes that Jesus Christ was truly God, but that he was not truly human.

Now, that is a philosophy that has some application to us in the 20th Century because Bishop Robinson, who has written a famous book, “Honest to God,” has accused all who believe in the deity of Jesus Christ of being really Docetists.

Now, before tonight what would you have said if you had come up to Bishop Robinson and he had said to you, “What do you believe about Jesus Christ?” And you should reply, “I believe that he was the God-Man.” He would say, “Oh, you’re one of those evangelical Docetists.” You might think that you should take a mouthwash after he had called you that. But what he’s really trying to say to you is that you have not really interpreted the humanity of our Lord sufficiently. You have not given sufficient force to the fact that he was a man. The Docetists denied the humanity of Christ. He would say that we stress too much the deity of Christ. He does not believe in it, of course, but we stress it too much. Docetism, keep that in mind because that’s a doctrine that frequently appears, even in modern thought.

The Errors of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries, and Roman I: Arianism

Now, this is a very important thing, and if you get nothing tonight, I hope you go out understanding what an Arian is and furthermore, knowing that you are not one.

The Christological conflict began to rage in the fourth century on a very large scale. And it came to its head in the fifth with the Council at Chalcedon. But Arianism is a heresy that reached its climax in the fourth century. The year 325 AD will always remain a milepost in the development of the doctrine of Christ by the church. It was at Nicaea that the first ecumenical council was called. Now, *Nicaea*, like many Greek

words, is often spelled “N-I-C-E-A,” and then it is often spelled “N-I-C-A-E-A.” Now, if you ever took Greek or ancient history, you’ll notice that some of the history books or whatever spell these terms differently. I’m putting on the board “N-I-C-A-E-A.” Nicaea. Nicaea is a little place in Bithynia.

Now, you know precisely where it is, I know. [Laughter] But Bithynia was in northern Asia Minor in modern day Turkey. Nicaea. It was in Nicaea in 325 AD that the first ecumenical council was called, Council at Nicaea. And at that council one of the great things that was considered was the doctrine of the person of Christ. There was a man from Alexandria, a presbyter, an elder, from that city by the name of Arias, who had been spreading teaching concerning Jesus Christ which came up for discussion at that council. At the council was also a man by the name of Athanasius. Athanasius was very famous in church history. In fact, Athanasius is probably one of the most important of the Christians “A-T-H-A-N-A-S-I-U-S.” Athanasius. Athanasius is probably one of the most important of the Christians who lived about this time, because it was he who was responsible for the formulation of the doctrine of the deity of the person of Christ as most Christians have believed it down through the centuries.

At the Council of Nicaea, Arias was brought up before the council, and his doctrine was discussed. Arias had denied the deity of Christ, as well as his eternal generation from the Father. His views were really summed up in two statements. I wish that we had time so that I could just single out some of you in this audience and ask you how you would answer some of these statements that Arias made. For example, Arias said, “If Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God, if Jesus Christ was generated, and thus the Son, then there must have been a time, (although he did not say “time”) there must have been a time when he was not.” Arias simply said this. That’s what he said, which means there “was” when he “was not.”

Now, he didn’t insert the word “time,” but that of course, is the way his language seemed to point, and so Arias’ doctrine was simply a logical thing that arose out of the

fact that if Jesus Christ was generated there must have been a time when he was not. He did not specifically say that Jesus Christ was not God. He just said there was a time when he was not which, of course, denied his what? Eternity, his eternity.

Secondly, he said, “The Son possessed a nature like the Father’s, but not the same nature as the Father’s.” That doesn’t seem bad, does it? Suppose men that your wife should say to you before this discussion, “You know, I believe that Jesus Christ possessed like God’s but not precisely the same.” Would you think that she was a rank heretic and you should break fellowship with her? Well, that’s what Arias said. He said, “The Son possessed a nature like the Father’s but not the same nature.” He would like to put it this way. This is the word that he would like to use of the nature of Christ. It was *homoiousios*.

Now, notice how it’s spelled. Athanasius said, “No, it is not ‘*homoiousios*,’ it’s ‘*homoousios*.’” Now, as you can see the only difference these views is that one little “iota,” one little “i.” Arias said, “Jesus Christ’s nature was like the Father’s but not the same.” Athanasius said, “Jesus Christ’s nature was the same as the Father.” Like *homoiousios*, the same *homoousios* and the church split over a diphthong, so critics of the church said.

Harnack was a great German scholar. He said, “The church was rent asunder by a diphthong.” And he used to think it was a terrible mistake, but then he discovered that the whole nature of Christianity depended on the difference between *homoiousios* and *homoousios*. For you see, if we say that Jesus Christ’s nature is “like” the Father’s, but not the same, we really bring into question the deity of Jesus Christ. Is he truly very God of very God, or simply someone like God? And Harnack said he came to understand that if the church had not made the decision at Nicaea that they made, the chances are, there would not be any church at all in his day. It would have just have been something of interest to historians.

Now, lots of people, unthinkingly, when they think about a controversy like this over one little letter, is it an omicron or is it a diphthong? An *omicron, iota*. See that this is surely a little matter and it doesn’t mean a thing. But you know some of the greatest things that have ever happened have depended on just one word or sometimes even one syllable.

And you can find it right in the 20th Century, right in the Sixties. Do you remember a fellow by the name of George Romney? Practically forgotten about him now, haven’t you? Now, he was quite a prominent fellow in 1967. What happened to him? He uttered one word. That’s all. He was a leading candidate for the presidency of the United States, and might well have been the president today were it not for the fact that he uttered one word. Remember what it was? What? See, all of you know it. “Brainwashed.” He said he was brainwashed about Vietnam. Well, what does brainwashing suggest? Well, brainwashing suggests that a man is pretty weak under pressure. And the minute he uttered it, those who were supporting him knew that his cause was lost. One word wrecked his whole bid. Big issues can hang on one word.

Now, some of you’ve heard me tell the story before. This is supposed to be a true story. Now, I’ll tell it again for others of you who haven’t heard it. This story appeared in a popular magazine some years ago, and it explains why telegraph and cable companies spell out punctuation marks. According to the story, a woman left and began to travel in Europe, and her husband was a fairly well-to-do man. And when she was touring Europe, and doing some shopping, as women are wont to do, she discovered as she went through a jewelry store that there was a wonderful bargain on a bracelet. And so she wired back to her husband and said, “Have found wonderful bracelet. Price \$75,000. May I buy it?” And the husband, like all good husbands, went immediately down to the office of Western Union to cable Europe and he put down this, “No, price too high.” But unfortunately, the telegraph operator left out the sign, it used to be a sign for “comma”

after “No” and sent it off without the Morse code for a comma. And of course, it came “No price too high” and she immediately bought it.

Now, that is not all that happened, when that happened he sued Western Union, and he won the case. And ever since that time, so the story goes, the punctuation marks have been spelled out. Comma, no comma price too high. So you see, real big issues can actually hinge on a punctuation mark, much less a word.

So at the Council of Nicaea, the church of Jesus Christ settled the question of the deity of our Lord, and eliminated anything that came short of the full and complete deity of our Lord Jesus. He does not possess a nature like God’s. He possesses the same nature as God. There never was a time when he was not. He is the eternal Son.

Now, if you do not believe these things, you are an Arian, and there are lots of Arians around. There are some semi-Arians too, men who accept certain of Arias’ propositions, but not all. But the Christian church, the orthodox Christian church, has since Nicaea believed in that question of the deity of Jesus Christ.

Would you like to listen to the creed that came from Nicaea? This is what they finally decided on. I’m going to read it, whether you’d like to hear it or not. [Laughter] After they had wrestled with the question, this is what they came up with. “We believe in one God, the Father all sovereign, maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Begotten of the Father – only begotten. That is of the substance of the Father.” In other words, he is of the being of the Father. “Only begotten of – that is of the substance of the Father. God of God. Light of Light. True God of True God. Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.” *Homoousion to patris*. “Through whom all things were made, things in heaven and things in the earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into heaven, is coming to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit. And those that say there was, when he was not, and before he was begotten, he was not, and he came into being from what is not, or those that

allege that the Son of God is of another substance or essence, or created, or changeable, or alterable. These the Catholic and Apostolic church anathematizes.”

Now, Apollinarianism. Arabic 2: Apollinarianism. Apollinaris was the bishop of the church of Laodicea. He denied the completeness of our Lord’s human nature. He reasoned that since Jesus Christ is immutable, he could not have united himself with a variable human spirit. So the “logos” or the divine nature assumed body and soul taking the place of the human spirit. Thus, according to Apollinaris, Jesus was only two parts human. He had a human body, he had a human soul, but he did not have a human spirit. He had a divine spirit. So there was a substitution. His human nature then was not like the human nature of other men. Consequently, he was not a man. You’d think that was a small thing. But the church is very careful about its understanding of Jesus Christ. Apollinarianism was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

Now, you can see that the church through these centuries is wrestling with the character of our Lord, some wrestling with his deity, others wrestling with his humanity. And these councils are designed to discuss the things and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the early church came to conviction after they studied the word of God.

Arabic 3: Nestorianism. The next two heresies are not quite as important as those two, Arianism and Apollinarianism, but one of these days you might run across them, so I better say something about them. Nestorius was the bishop of the church at Constantinople in the 4th Century. He denied the unique personality of Christ. He denied that Jesus Christ was one person. He said that, “Since Jesus Christ had two natures, that implies two persons.”

Now, there is some evidence that Nestorius was framed by his great enemy, Cyril of Alexandria. But at any rate, the error is a real error. To believe that because Jesus possesses two natures, he is therefore two persons, is to misunderstand the teaching of the Bible. And so Nestorianism was condemned at the Council at Ephesus in 431 AD, as well as at Chalcedon.

By the way, Robert Louis Stevenson’s, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has dramatized the Nestorian heresy of the dual personality. Because of course, if Jesus, according to Nestorius possessed two natures – divine and human – he has two personalities. And so he would be like a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde. If you want a clue as to how to write something worthwhile, think over some heresy of the past, and construct a modern story or novel on the basis of it.

Arabic 4, pardon me, Eutychianism. Eutychius was an abbot of Constantinople in the fifth century. And he denied the integrity, the wholeness, the separateness of the two natures by confusing them. He said, “If Jesus Christ is one person and he possesses a divine nature and a human nature, really what you must have is a kind of a third nature.” And so he posited a third nature. From these two natures, he inferred a third nature. So he said our Lord was one person who had one divine human nature. Not separate, but mixed. And that of course, is something that Chalcedon will have something to say about. His heresy was condemned at Chalcedon in 451 AD.

Now, one can see why the Council at Chalcedon is largely a negative conference, in the sense that the formula or definition of Chalcedon that finally came forth, was one that is almost altogether negative. This has been sometimes criticized by modern theologians. They say the church came to a decision concerning Jesus Christ and it’s all negative. Well, the reason is because the person of Christ was being attacked by others, and so when they came to their decision, they naturally came to it in a negative way so that the errors would be properly handled.

Now, I’m going to read you what happened at Chalcedon, 451 AD. This is what the church came to concerning Jesus Christ. Listen to it and I’ll try to stress the things that are important. “Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one in the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. At once complete in godhead, and complete in manhood. Truly God, and truly man. Consisting also of a reasonable soul and body of one substance – *homoousios* not *humoiousios* with the

Father as regards his godhead. And at the same time, of one substance with us, as regards his manhood. Like us in all respects.

What would you want to add right here? “Like us in all respects.” Say it. “Except for sin.” That’s exactly what they said. “Apart from sin.” You see, you’re thinking like the early church. Thinking like theologians too. As regards his godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood, begotten for us men and for our salvation of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer – *theotokos*, the God-bearer. Have you ever wondered why the Roman Catholic Church calls Mary the “Mother of God”? Well, they do not mean to say that Mary is the mother of his divine nature. They mean to say that she is the mother of his human nature, but he, the person, is God.

Now, there is a sense of course, in which that term is confusing, because if a person did not understand what the church taught concerning the person of Christ, you might think that’s what it meant that she was in some way, the mother of his divine nature. But that term has historical precedence. The “God-bearer” so the Council at Chalcedon said. “One in the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, recognized in two natures.”

Now, notice the negatives. “Without confusion. Without change.” Without confusion as Nestorianism. “Without change. Without division. Without separation. The distinction of natures being in no way, annulled by the union, but rather, the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence.” That’s the hypostatic union. The very word “hypostasis” is used here. “One person and subsistence, hypostatic union, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one in the same Son and only begotten God the word, Lord Jesus Christ. Even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us in the Creed of the Fathers as handed down to us.”

Roman II: The Doctrine of Christ from Chalcedon to the Reformation. We’ll pass over this with just a few remarks because you see at Chalcedon, really, an historical high

water mark came. Since that time, the church has not debated the question of the person of Jesus Christ to any great extent within itself. It has debated with others; heretics, apostates. But the true believers in the body of Christ have largely accepted the formulation of the Council of Chalcedon. And that is why today, you will often hear people say that the Council of Chalcedon made a decision that the church has abode by since that time. So there was very little controversy from the time of Chalcedon to the Reformation. There was a question over whether Jesus Christ had one will or two wills, and the “Monotholite Controversy” arose out of that.

By the way, and tonight I walked in to my wife, I don’t make her come to these meetings because she’s heard me speak so many times that I’m sure it must be boring to her. But I said, “You know, my theology class is going to really get ahead of you.” I said, “Now for example, what is Nestorianism? What is Eutychianism?” She said, “I don’t know. I don’t know.” “What is Apollinarianism?” “I don’t know.” “What is Aryanism?” “I don’t know.” I said, “You see, you’re getting to be just as ignorant as you can be.” So let me ask you a question, “Did Jesus Christ have one will or two wills?” And she thought for a minute. She said, “One will.” I said, “Ah, a monotholite. Married to a monotholite I am.” And so I went out saying, “Boy, I’ve got a good illustration I’m going to tell my class tonight.”

Monothelism which had to do with whether Jesus Christ had one will or two wills did engage the church. It was settled in the seventh century at the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 681 AD. It decided what? That he had, how many wills? Ah, you don’t know whether you’re a monotholite either, do you? [Laughter] Two wills. One will because of his human nature. One will because of his divine nature. “Oh My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thy wilt.” That is our Lord’s human will struggling with the divine will. And of course, submitting himself to the divine will he possessed. Because he possessed true deity, a divine will, he also possessed a human will. Two wills.

Roman III: The Doctrine of Christ since the Reformation. From the Reformation to the twentieth century. Now, I don’t want to bore you too much, but those of you who do have, I think I’m going to wait to put my outline on later. I don’t think I have time, but I do have an outline I want to put on the board one of these nights for you. You’re not missing much. From the Reformation to the 20th Century, and I don’t want to bore you, but what I would like for you to do, is to put in your notes several men. And then I would like for you, when you’ve got a chance, to just go to an encyclopedia and look up the names.

One is a man by the name of Schleiermacher. Do I have to spell that for you? He was not a southerner. Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher lived in the nineteenth century. He was a German. Sometime when you have a chance, look up Schleiermacher. S-C-H-L-E-I-E-R-M-A-C-H-E-R. Schleiermacher. He said, “Jesus was similar in nature to all other men, but he was distinguished from them by the constant vigor of his God consciousness.” In other words, he was just like we are but nevertheless he had a consciousness of God that was greater than most of us have.

Then there was a man by the name of Ritschl. R-I-T-S-C-H-L. Ritschl. He too was a German. Have you ever heard of German radical criticism of the Bible? Well, here are some who stand in their tradition. Ritschl. He said, “The doctrine of the two natures was impossible. A true man cannot be truly God. Jesus Christ is not the God-Man, but he’s a sublime revelation of the unity of the divine and the human. He’s a man motivated by God but not the God-Man.” Ritschl. Very important in philosophy and philosophy of religion, as well as in the doctrine of Christ.

Now, last time we talked about the kenotic theology. That is, the theology of men who said that when Jesus became a man, he relinquished some of his divine attributes. So that controversy should be placed here from the Reformation to the 20th Century. So I would say a third, under Schleiermacher and Ritschl, the kenotic – K-E-N-O-T-I-C – kenotic theology.

Now, in the 20th Century. I want to say just a word about that before we stop tonight. The doctrine of Christ in the 20th Century is a thoroughly human one. Essentially, most modern theologians believe that all men are divine. They differ from Christ only in degrees of sonship. Yesterday, when I was preaching on Jude, I quoted from one of our outstanding religious leaders of the twentieth century who just died the other day. Harry Emerson Fosdick. He lived to be ninety-one years of age. Why do the wicked prosper? But Harry Emerson Fosdick, I think it’s the long suffering of God. There’s no excuse. When Fosdick stands before the great white throne judgment, he could never say, “I didn’t have an opportunity.” For the spirit of God said for ninety-one years, more than most. You had opportunity. Fosdick said, “Of course, the divinity of Jesus differs from ours in degree, not in kind. We have divinity. He has divinity. He just has a little more divinity than we have.”

Let me read you another of our leaders in the 20th Century. This man’s a Lutheran. He says, “Jesus made a mistake concerning the Day of Judgment.” I’m quoting him, “For it should be openly acknowledged that in this respect, Jesus made a mistake. There’s more cause for surprise that this mistake did not damage the faith of the early church in him, and that the non-appearance of the day of glory, or more precisely its delay, in no way shook belief according to all the statements of the New Testament.” Well, if Jesus made a mistake then of course, he was not God.

Joseph Sittler, also a Lutheran theologian writes that, “He cannot accept the Greek idea of the pre-existence of Christ,” and that he prefers the Oriental concept of foreknowing.

Professor Henry Van Dusen, a Presbyterian. He has said, “In Jesus of Nazareth, God himself was present as fully present as it is possible for him to be present in a truly human life.” Now, you’ll notice that modern theologians, if they’re in the church and leaders particularly in churches that used to be fairly conservative, they word their words in such a way that the simple man in the pew doesn’t know whether he’s true to the faith

or not. Well, he’s not. Listen. “The identity of Jesus with God was of outlook, of purpose, of will, of compassion.” But you’ll notice that there is missing, “of nature, of nature.” Elsewhere, Van Dusen says, “Unless God is in some measure incarnate in the life of every man, he cannot become fully incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.” That’s just nonsense. Now, this man is a leader.

If we’re going to think about the person of Christ, then we must think about several things. First, the reality of the two natures. Jesus Christ possessed two natures; one divine, one human. The integrity of the new natures. There is no mixture of these natures. There are whole natures, and he possesses all the attributes that pertain to each nature. And finally, he is one person. One person. Not two. Is this important?

Thomas Carlisle is a kind of a pitiful character in history. A rather sensitive man, but not a believer. One day when death came to his home, someone opened the New Testament at the Gospel of John, and read the familiar words, “Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father’s house are many mansions.” And Carlisle replied, “If you were God, you had a right to say that. But if you were only a man, why do you know more than any one of the rest of us?” That’s why it’s important that Jesus Christ be accorded his full deity. If Jesus Christ is not fully God, he doesn’t really know anything more about the life beyond the grave than any of us. And so our Christian faith ultimately hinges upon what we believe concerning Jesus Christ.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful faith that Thou hast given to us. And while, Lord, we do not believe the creeds because they’re creeds, we are thankful for men of God who down through the centuries wrestled with the question in the light of the Bible, “Who was Jesus Christ?” And we thank Thee for the basic truthfulness of the decision that was rendered at Chalcedon and which has satisfied men who have studied the Scriptures since. May we be subject to him who is very God of very God, and

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therefore knows the past and the future, and holds us in the hollow of his hand. And
very man of very man, who can sympathize and be our substitute. We worship Thee, the
God and father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In his name. Amen.