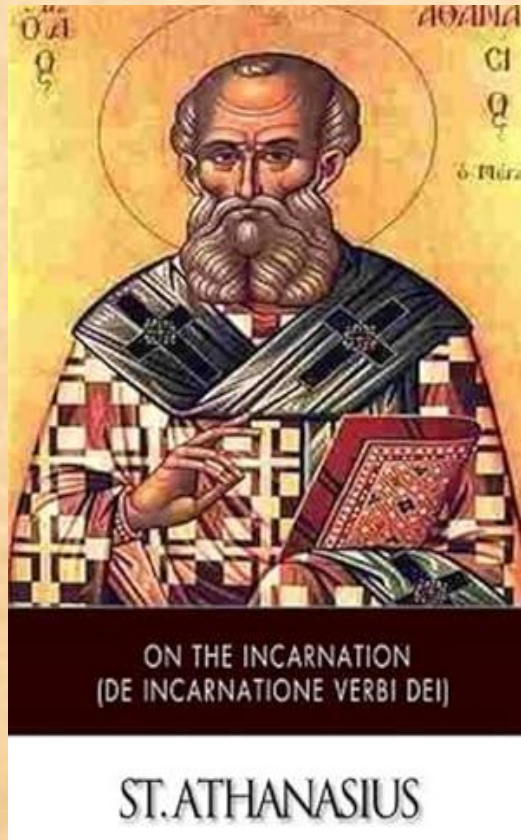


# C3 Seminary: Basics Of the Incarnation

## Session 2: *Logic of the Incarnation*



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# Outline

- What does Bible say about who Jesus is?
- Why did God need to come down as human?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be God and man?
  - Is this contradictory or incoherent?
  - An analogy from our physical world
- Objections

## THE INCARNATION



# John Chapter 1 Explains Who Jesus Is

**“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”**

**<sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**

**<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

- The Word (Jesus) was with God and was God (separate persons of one nature) and created all things that were made (thus He wasn't created)
- Jesus is the way to save us to become children of God (v. 12)
- Jesus added a human nature (v. 14)

## **On the Incarnation: Athanasius**

**“There were thus two things which the Saviour did for us by becoming Man. He banished death from us and made us anew; and, invisible and imperceptible as in Himself He is, He became visible through His works and revealed Himself as the Word of the Father, the Ruler and King of the whole creation.” p. 44**

# **Jesus is God**

## **Hebrews 1:2-3**

**“but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”**

- Jesus has God’s nature**
- Jesus couldn’t be merely human – he upholds the universe**

# Why Jesus Added a Human Nature?

## Hebrews 2:14-15, 17-18

**“<sup>14</sup>Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,<sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”**

- In order to deliver us from death and the devil, Jesus needed to take on flesh and blood

**“<sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”**

- In order to be a merciful and faithful high priest who could remove divine wrath/punishment against sin, he had to be like us in our humanity
- God the Son taking on a human nature also better helps us overcome temptation

# Why could only God save us? Hebrews 7

**“<sup>24</sup> The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, <sup>24</sup> but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.**

**<sup>26</sup> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.**

- Only the eternal and sinless nature of Jesus enabled him to be our ultimate/final high priest and one-time sacrifice for our sins
- No additional need for sacrifice for sins because no additional sin that wasn't already paid for!
- There was no other way to save us:
  - Jesus prayed let this cup pass from me if there was another way Matt 26:39 (but there wasn't)

# **Romans 5:18b-19**

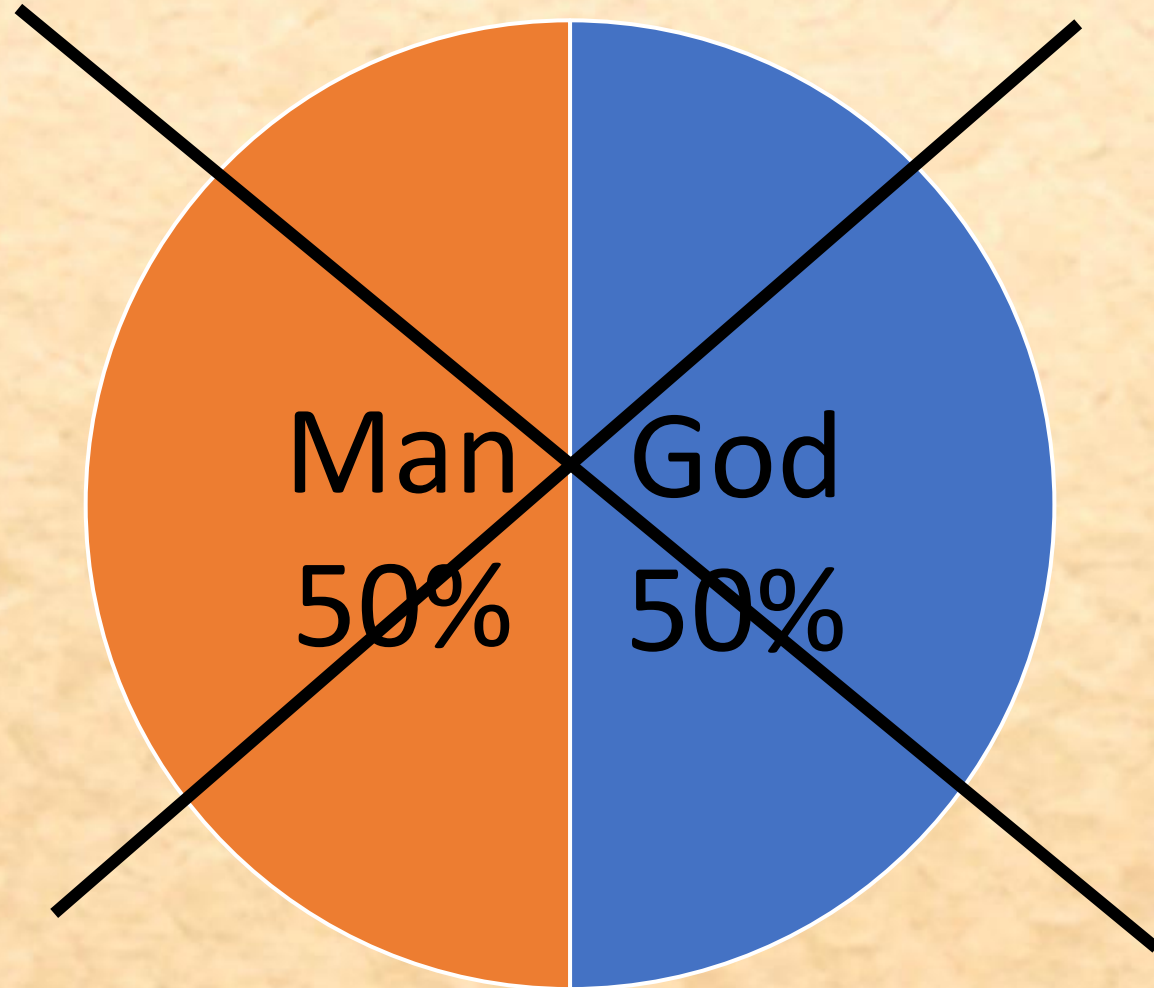
**“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”**

- Only a sinless human could die for sins of humans**
- Atonement must be substitutionary to satisfy the penalty of sin**

# Doctrine of The Hypostatic Union

- The union of two complete natures (human and divine) in the one person (hypostasis) of Jesus
- Was formalized at Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD to counter heresies
  - They argued using Biblical texts such as John 1:1-14 and Colossians 2:9 “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”
- 2 natures aren’t blended into a 3rd entity, nor split into 2 separate persons
- 4 guardrails affirmed at council
  - Without mixing                      God ≠ mixed into man
  - Without change                      God doesn’t become less God
  - Without division                      Not split into two persons
  - Without separation                      Natures never act independently

# What is the Right View of Jesus?



# A Better View

## The Person of Jesus

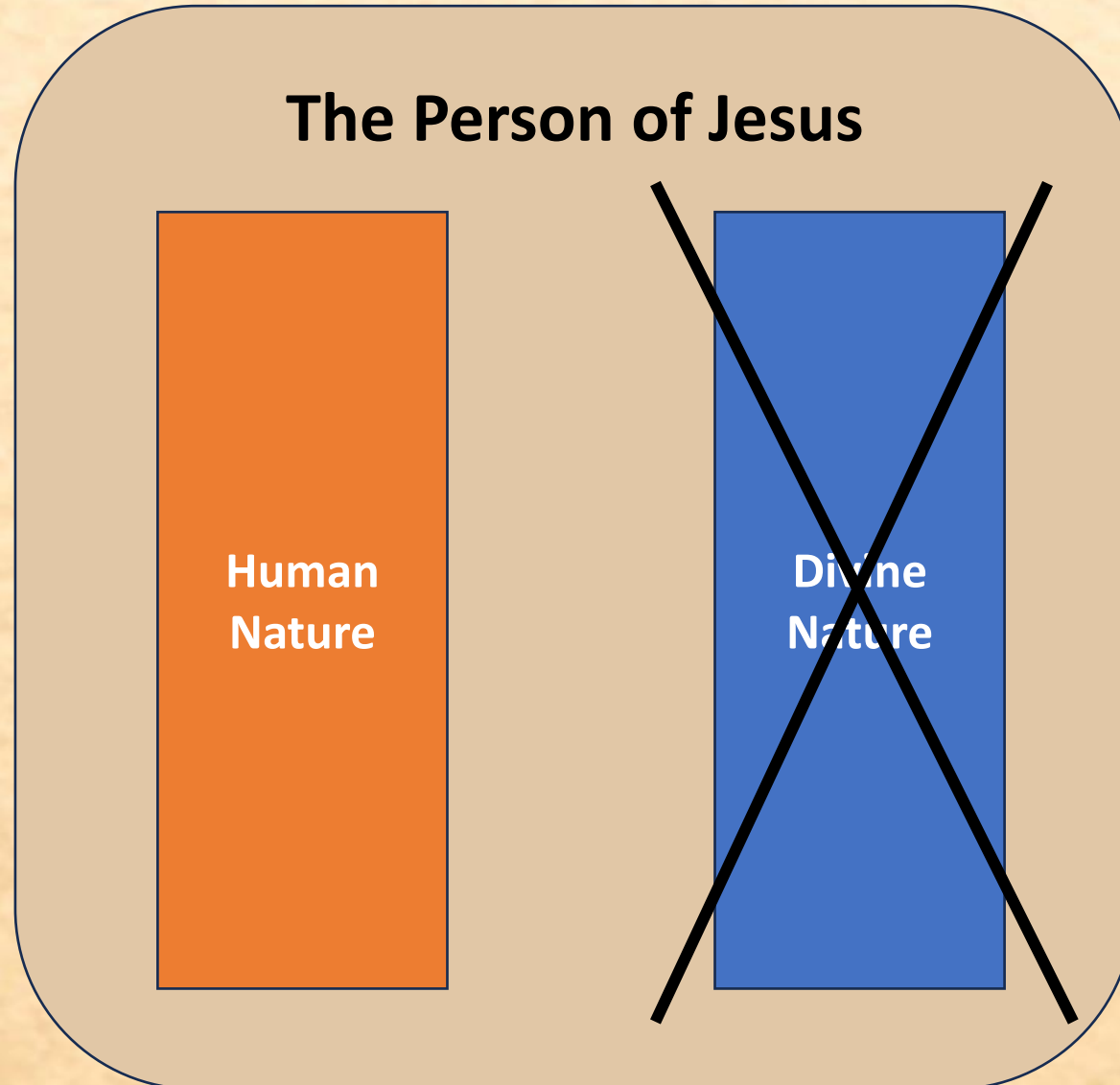


The diagram consists of a large, light beige rounded rectangle. Inside this rectangle, at the top, is the text 'The Person of Jesus'. Below this text are two vertical bars. The left bar is orange and contains the text 'Human Nature'. The right bar is blue and contains the text 'Divine Nature'. The two bars are separated by a small gap.

Human  
Nature

Divine  
Nature

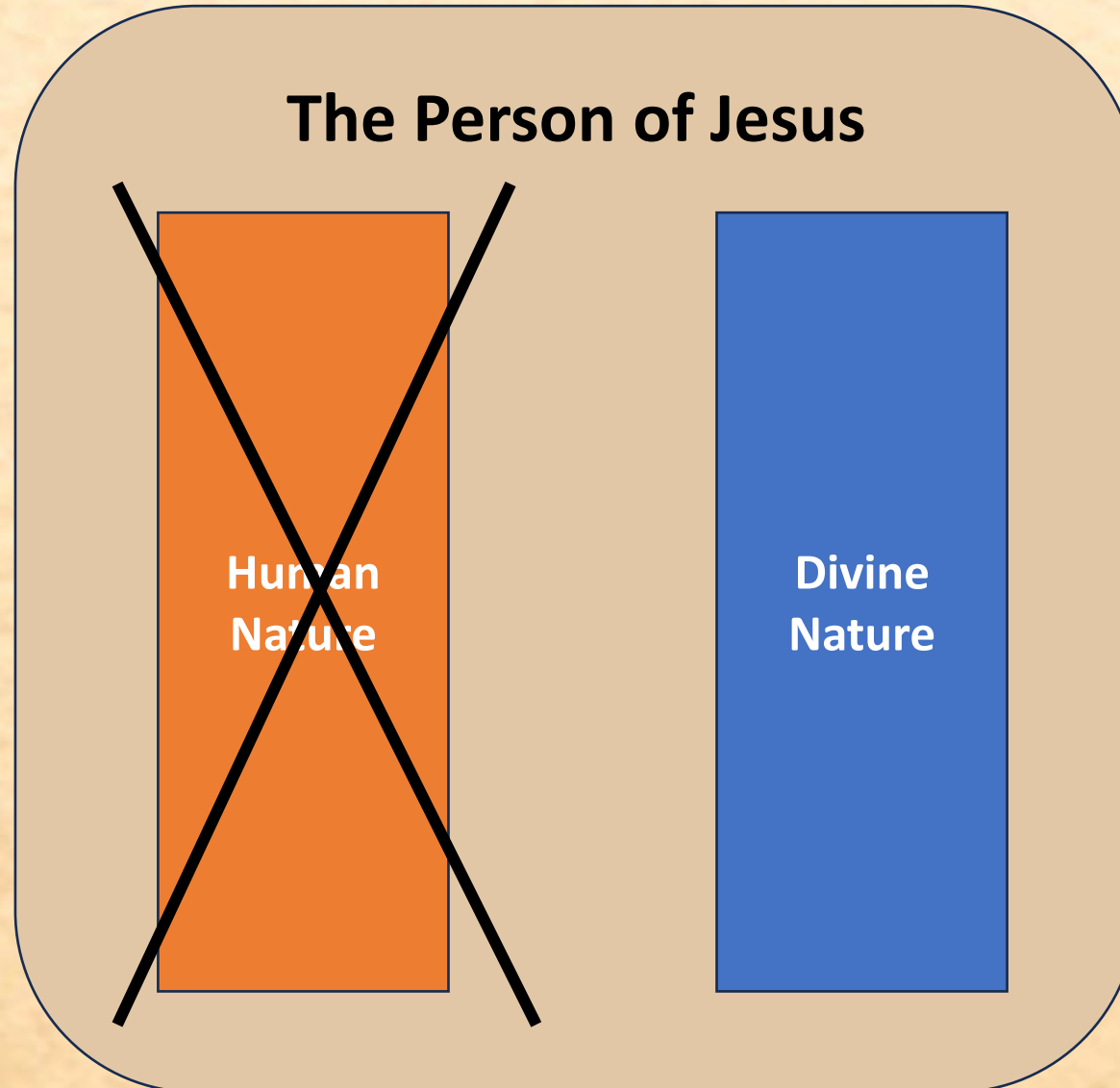
## A Key Heresy Athanasius Fought Against



**Arianism denies  
Jesus is truly  
God by claiming  
He was a  
created being**

## An Even Earlier (but Opposite) Heresy

**Docetism  
acknowledges  
Jesus is God but  
denies his  
humanity**



# Different Views About Natures and Persons Of Jesus

View	Person(s)	Nature(s)	Salvation?	Who Believes This
Arianism	1	1 (created)	No (creature can't save)	Jehovah Witnesses
Docetism	1	1 (divine only)	No (didn't really die)	Gnostics
Nestorianism	2	2	No (God didn't suffer)	Nestorians
Monophysitism	1	1 (mixed)	No (natures lost)	Some Eastern Orthodox churches
Hypostatic Union (as at Chalcedon)	1	2 (full)	YES (God-man dies)	Catholics, Protestants, other Orthodox

Key:

Heresy

Orthodoxy

# **But Aren't Divine and Human Properties Contradictory?**

- **God never sins but humans do**
- **God has unlimited power but humans have limited power**
- **God is eternal but humans were created beings**
- **God is unchangeable but humans are constantly changing**
- **God knows everything but humans have limited knowledge**
- **Key question is what does the Bible mean about Jesus being human**

# Jesus Took on Only Essential Human Properties

- A property is essential if it's part of a nature
  - Example: humans must have a body
- A property is universal if every member has it currently but this could change
- What kind of property of a tree is that it resides on Earth?
  - Universal – it is true of all trees but that is not an essential attribute of a tree because one could transport a tree to the Moon and it would still be a tree
- Previously mentioned properties are universally true of humans but not essential to being a human
  - Sinning is not an essential property of humans
    - It's not even universal across all times either: Adam and Eve were humans before they sinned

# Properties Refer to Natures not Persons

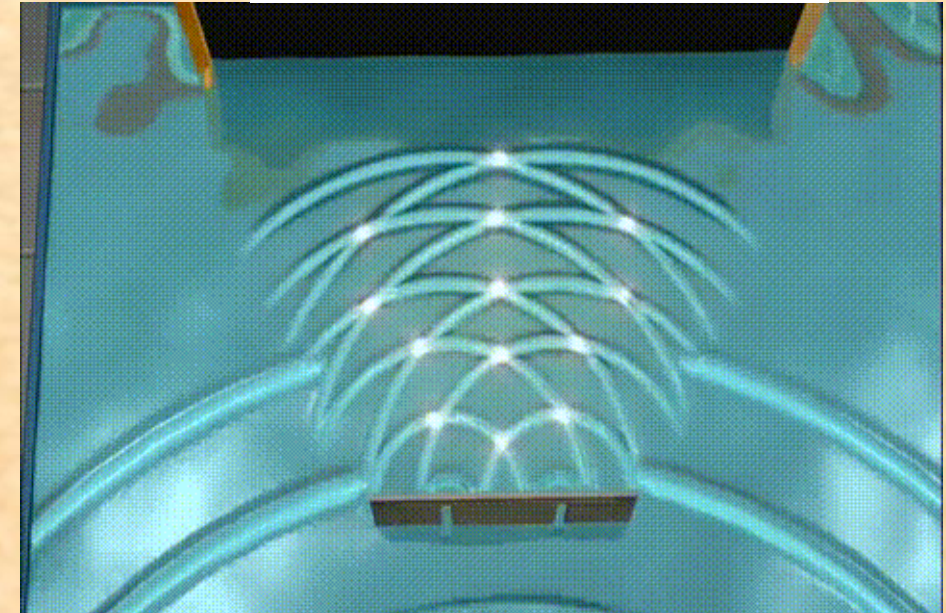
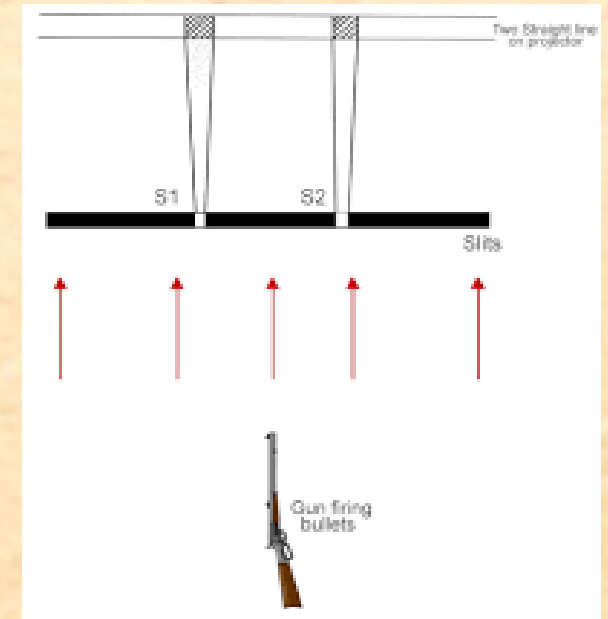
- When the Bible speaks of Jesus increasing in wisdom (Luke 2:52) or not knowing when He will return (Matt 24:36) this refers to His human nature
- The following properties have always been true of the divine nature of Jesus and were NOT done away with when Jesus took on human flesh:
  - Omnipotence, Omniscience, Eternality

Some are skeptical that Jesus has both human & divine natures because they claim there is nothing else like this in our known reality ....

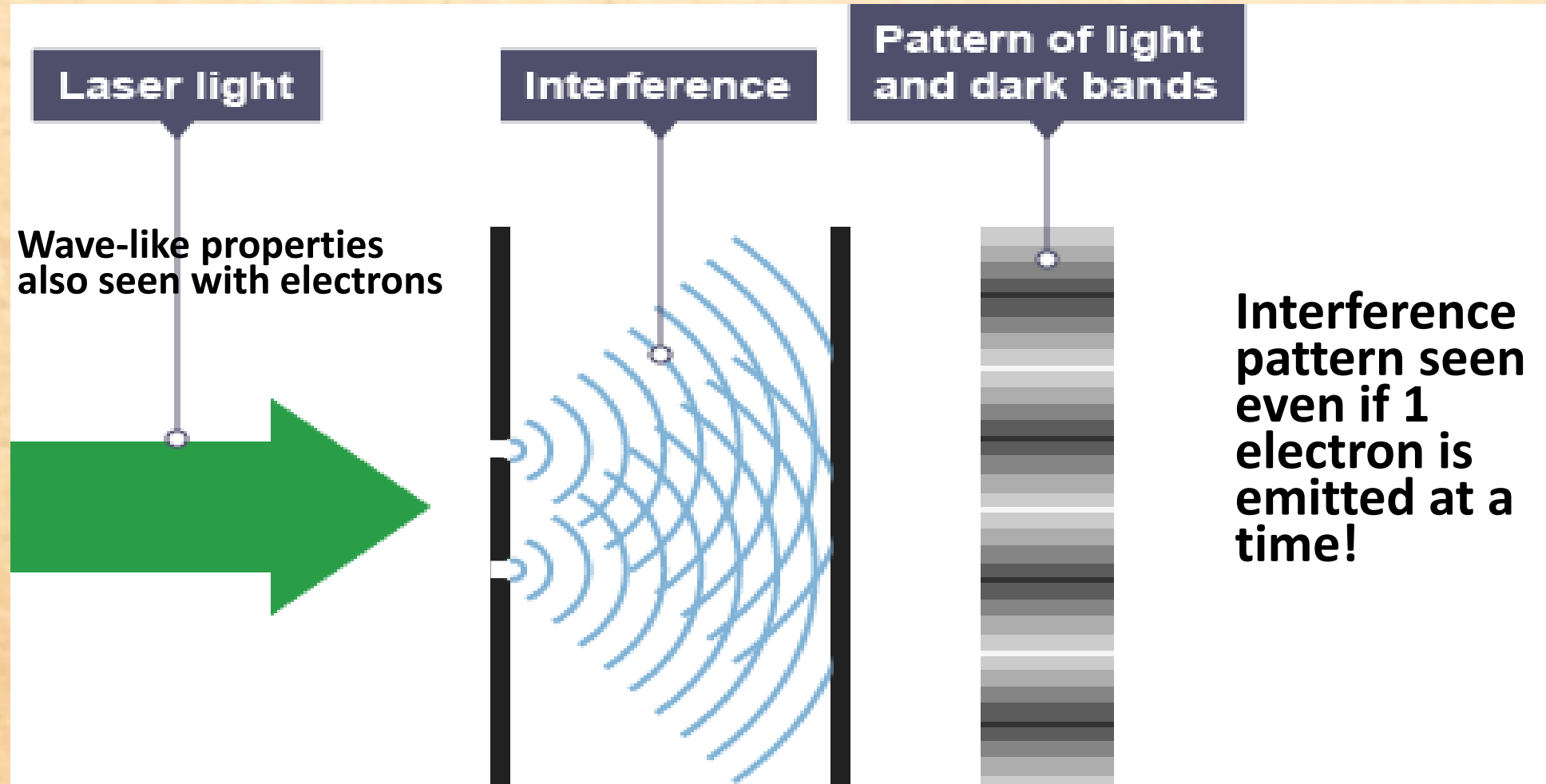
But actually, we have an example in our physical world!

# An example from our Physical World: Wave/Particle Duality (every particle has dual natures)

- Properties of particles
  - Mass, location
- Properties of waves
  - Bend around corners, spread across space
    - Refraction (rainbow), Diffraction
    - Like these water waves here
  - Interference
- Wave and particle properties are vastly different to the point of seeming contradictory
  - Similar to divine vs. human properties



# Double Slit Experiment



What happens if you add detectors to see which slit light particles go through?

**If you test for particle nature, you see particles**  
**If you test for wave nature, you see waves**



**Dual wave-like nature applies to every particle in the universe**

# **Objection: “The Bible Calls Jesus firstborn so ‘there was a time when he was not’ ”**

**“Firstborn” in Bible often meant preeminent status/role**

- **Psalm 89:27 — God made David “firstborn” though he was youngest son**

**Jesus as firstborn means:**

- **Preeminence over all creation – He did the creating!**

**“<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” Col 1:15-16**

- **Firstborn among resurrected humans**

- **“and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead” Rev 1:5**

- **Moral preeminence**

**“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Rom 8:29**

# **Objection: “Claims About A Divine Messiah Are Inconsistent with Old Testament Prophecies”**

**Humanity and Divinity both seen in Isa 9:6**

**“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; .. and his name shall be called ... Mighty God ...” Is 9:6**

**Zechariah 12:10 [God speaks about future salvation presumably through Messiah] “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced”**

# Other Messianic Prophecies Revealing Divinity

**Isa 7:14 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]"**

**Isaiah 40:3 After Isaiah explains how God is pardoning the iniquity of His people says: "A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." – quoted in Mark 1:3 in reference to John the Baptist**

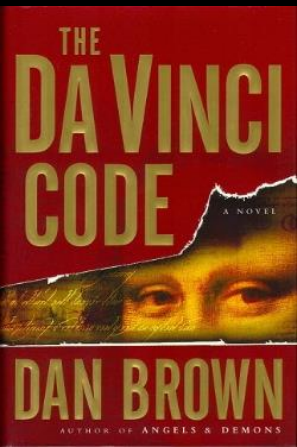
**Daniel 7:13-14 Son of Man comes in clouds, has eternal glory and kingdom/dominion – all peoples will serve him. (All things fitting only for God)**

**Some Jews before Christ believed in a Messiah with divine characteristics – e.g. Melchizedek document found in Dead Sea Scrolls speaks of divine being who will atone for sins: <https://armstronginstitute.org/977-uncovering-the-identity-of-melchizedek-dead-sea-scroll-11qmelch>**

**Da Vinci Code Objection:** “Constantine...held a gathering known as the council of Nicea...(325 A.D.)...Until that moment in history Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet...not the Son of God...Jesus’ establishment as the ‘Son of God’ was...a relatively close vote”



- **What really happened at Nicea?**
  - Council held in 325 AD (exactly 1700 years ago)
  - Was a vote affirming Jesus’ divinity
    - Wasn’t close (2 dissenters out of more than 300 bishops)
    - Was there pressure from Constantine?
      - These same Christians had been quite willing to die for beliefs under previous Roman emperor
  - Is there an early Christianity without a divine Jesus?
    - “The oldest Christian sermon, the oldest account of a Christian martyr, the oldest pagan report of the Church, and the oldest liturgical prayer (1 Cor. 16:22) all refer to Christ as Lord and God.” William Lane Craig



# Objection: “The doctrine of the dual nature of Jesus and the Trinity arose only much later”

Jesus’  
ministry



30-33AD

Church  
councils



325 AD - on

**We’ve already seen multiple early New Testament affirmations but we can also show a chain of custody of these teachings until formalized at church councils**



# Ignatius

Bishop of Antioch

Wrote letters defending Jesus' deity against Docetism



# Papias

Bishop of Hierapolis, disciple of John

Wrote about the **4 Gospels**, offering same interpretations as us

Jesus' ministry



30-33AD

John



90

Ignatius



110

Papias



110

Polycarp



110

# Polycarp

Bishop of Smyrna, disciple of John

Opposed heretical groups like Marcionites and Gnostics – died defending deity of Christ  
"86 years I have served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How can I speak evil of [blaspheme] my King?"



Church councils



325 AD - on



# Irenaeus

Bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon)

Wrote *Against Heresies* book ~180 AD – very strong and direct affirmation of Jesus's dual nature and the doctrine of the Trinity

Jesus' ministry



30-33AD

John



70

Ignatius



110

Papias



110

Polycarp



110

Irenaeus



180

Church councils



325 AD - on



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Jesus' ministry



30-33AD

John



70

Ignatius



110

Papias



110

Polycarp



110

Irenaeus



180

Hippolytus



220

Church councils



325 AD - on



# Hippolytus

Wrote a detailed exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity and strongly denounced heresies such as modalism (e.g. by Sabellius)

# What happened after Nicea?

- **Some began lobbying Constantine and his wife Helena for a Semi-Arian position and began a strong backlash against orthodoxy**
  - **Athanasius became Bishop of Alexandria (328) but then was exiled 5 times over next 17 years for his orthodox views**
    - **Councils at Antioch in 341 and Milan in 355 held Semi-Arian views (Jesus had a nature like but not identical to the Father – they rejected homoousios (same substance))**
    - **Biblical / Nicene views won out by late 4<sup>th</sup> century and taken today as orthodoxy by Protestant, Catholic & most Eastern Orthodox believers**
- **Lessons Learned**
  - **Don't let politics influence the church!**
  - **Don't trust church councils but trust the Scriptures alone (Sola Scriptura)**

**Questions?**

## **Muslim Objection**

**“God can’t die; Jesus died; therefore, Jesus wasn’t God”**

- **Jesus’ Human Nature died – his divine nature was unaffected by the death of his flesh**
- **Even death doesn’t mean non-existence**
- **Human death was necessary as punishment for human sin**
- **You underestimate what God can do**

## **On the Incarnation: Athanasius**

**“His [Jesus] body was for Him not a limitation, but an instrument, so that He was both in it and in all things, and outside all things, resting in the Father alone. At one and the same time—this is the wonder—as Man He was living a human life, and as Word He was sustaining the life of the universe, and as Son He was in constant union with the Father.” p. 43**

# 4 Safeguards Coming out of Council of Chalcedon(451 AD)

Human and Divine Nature Combine ...	Greek Adverbs	Protects Against this Heresy
Without mixing	Inconfusedly (ἀσυγχύτως)	Monophysitism (blending into one nature)
Without alteration	Unchangeably (ἀτρέπτως)	Divine nature changing into human
Without division	Indivisibly (ἀδιαίρετως)	Nestorianism (two separate persons)
Without separation	Inseparably (ἀχωρίστως)	Splitting Christ into two beings