

## Resources:

Doctrine 2 Notes - John Miles - Frontier School of the Bible

Lewis Chafer - Systematic Theology Vol. 1

Charles Ryrie - Basic Theology

Nathan Reichert - Church History notes - Frontier School of the Bible

David E. Thompson - Christology notes - Texas Corners Bible Church

***Which is He.. Is Jesus God? Or is He man?***

That is the question of the hypostatic union. In order to find our answer, I think we ought to ask and answer 6 questions.

**Question #1** - What does the term hypostatic union mean?

The word "Hypostatic" comes from the word "Hypostasis." Hypostasis, according the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, can be defined as sediment, but also can be defined as the substance or essential nature of an individual. It has to do with the nature of an individual.

There is a difference between God and man. God, by nature, is not a created being. He is the creator of everything. Man, however, is by nature, a created being. God created man. There is a clear difference between the nature of God and the nature of man, and the two don't mix. It's like water and oil. If you pour oil into a bucket of water, the two won't mix together. When it comes to God and man, like oil and water, the two do not mix. But the unique person of Jesus defies that standard.

In the Person of Jesus, there is a union of the nature of God and the nature of man. In the person of Jesus, the natures, that cannot mix together, have become united together in one person - The Lord Jesus Christ.

For us, mixing the divine and human together is like trying to mix oil and water together, but for Jesus, He is not like oil and water. He is like peanut butter and jelly. Two natures - peanut butter and jelly - united together making one perfect sandwich.

With Jesus, you have the Creator God of the universe becoming a man. He still is God, but in addition to Him being God, He is also man. Jesus remains one person, but He has two natures - divine and human.

John Miles wrote, "this Theological term means the uniting of the divine and human in the one person of Jesus. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man - the God/man." (Doctrine 2 notes - FSB)

**Question #2** - What is so difficult about this concept of the God-man?

I'll give you 3 reasons why this concept is difficult to understand and grasp.

- #1 - We, as 21st century people, have never seen God outside of what we read of Him in the Bible.
- #2 - We also have never seen a perfect man. Outside of what we can read about Jesus in the Bible, we have never seen perfect humanity. We have only ever seen and experienced that man is not perfect.
- #3 - We have never seen the hypostatic union with our eyes. We have never seen a person be fully God while being a full and perfect human. It is only recorded of Jesus that He meets these two qualities.

We have never seen with our eyes what is written about Jesus. We are only left to trust in what is written about Him.

**Question #3** - What are the features of the Hypostatic union?

(Feature #1) - Jesus was and is one person. He is not two persons.

The Bible does not indicate that Jesus could be two persons. The Bible teaches Jesus is one person. For example, Jesus did not communicate between Himself as though He is two persons. Within the Trinity, we do see communication between Persons, but that is not the case in the person of Jesus. His divine nature never spoke to his human nature. He does not have two persons in one body. He remains one person.

(Feature #2) - Jesus possesses two natures - Divine nature and perfect human nature.

While Jesus is not two persons in one body, He is one person with two distinct natures. His natures are not mixed up and jumbled together. He is not a weird blend of God and man. He is purely and fully God and purely and fully man united in one person.

(Feature #3) - Jesus is not part God and part man. He is fully God while being fully man - the God-man.

John Miles wrote, "the divine and human natures do not act independently of one another. It is the one Person, the God-man who acts. It is the God-man Who went to Calvary and died. As man, He can shed His blood, and as God, His death has infinite value." (Doctrine 2 notes - FSB)

**Question #4** - What are some false ideas about this concept?

The hypostatic union is a Christian understanding of the natures of the Person of Christ that took centuries of debate and centuries of ruling out different ideas and proposals in order to come to its conclusion.

**(Heresy #1) - Docetism - 1st Century denial of the humanity of Christ**

This idea was promoted by gnostic theology. It said that Jesus was not really a human. They taught He only appeared to be a man. John refuted this idea in **1 John 4:1-3**. The problem with this teaching is that it denies what the Bible says about Jesus actually coming in the flesh and living, dying, and resurrecting in the flesh.

**(Heresy #2) - Ebionism - 2nd Century denial of the deity of Christ.**

This teaching believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but only a man, and that He was the natural son of Mary and Joseph. This teaching taught that Jesus became the son of God at His baptism, but it denied that Jesus is God. The Bible affirms that Jesus is God in **John 1:1**. To deny the deity of Christ goes against the Bible.

**(Heresy #3) - Arianism - 4th Century denial of the Biblical deity of Christ.**

This teaching came from a man named Arius. This teaching denied the Trinity. Arius taught that Jesus had been created by God at some point in time. This would make Jesus a created being instead of the Creator. This would deny the eternality of Jesus. This would also make Jesus unequal with God. Arius also taught that Jesus had a divine nature but was less than the divine nature of the God who created Jesus. The problem with this is that it teaches Jesus to not be the creator of all things. The Bible does teach that Jesus created all things in **John 1:3** and **Colossians 1:16**. The council of Nicaea declared this teaching to be heretical in the year 325.

**(Heresy #4) - Apollinarianism - 4th century denial of the humanity of Christ.**

This teaching came from a man named Appollinarius. He struggled to believe that Jesus could be fully God and fully man, so he tried to make Jesus part God and part man. He taught that Jesus did not have a human spirit, but that He only had a human body and soul. In other words, he taught that Jesus was divine in His spirit and mind, but human in his body and soul. The problem with this is that it is foreign to what the Bible teaches. The Bible speaks nothing of Jesus having a divided person, rather, the Bible teaches that Jesus was a man who had a human spirit (**John 19:30**). This teaching was declared a heresy at the first Council of Constantinople in 381.

**(Heresy #5) - Nestorianism - 5th century denial of Jesus being one person.**

Nestorianism divided Jesus into two persons. This teaching came from a man named Nestorius. The teaching was that Jesus appeared to be one person, but was in fact two persons in one flesh. This teaching likened it to marriage, where two distinct persons come together to make one flesh. This separated Jesus into two persons. To separate Jesus into two persons would mean that the humanity of Him died on the cross but not the deity. The Bible teaches, however, that the LORD is the one who was pierced and died on the cross. It was God on that cross (**Zechariah 12:10**). Also, if it was only a human dying on the cross, his death could not have infinite value like

**1 John 2:2** explains. Only the death of the full God could have infinite value because God is infinite (**Romans 11:33**). This teaching was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431.

(Heresy #6) - **Eutychanism** - **5th century denial of Jesus being two natures in one person.**

In response to Nestorius, a man named Eutyches taught that Jesus had a mixed nature that was divine and human. This view ultimately minimizes the humanity of Christ because His deity would obviously outweigh His humanity, making Him something like 1% man and 99% God. The problem is that if Jesus is 99% God, He can't be fully God. If Jesus is 1% man, He can't be fully man. In order for Jesus to be a man, He must be 100% man. In order for Jesus to truly be God, He must be 100% God. The Bible teaches that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man (**Colossians 2:8-9**). This teaching was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

These are the classic and famous heresies about Jesus that have been proposed over the years, and these teachings still pop up from time to time in our world today.

Christian Science denies the humanity of Christ much like the gnostic teaching of docetism of the first century.

Jehovah's witness's and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints deny the eternal deity of Christ much like Arianism of the fourth century. They both claim that Jesus was created by God. Unitarianism, liberalism, and Islam all deny the deity of Christ, limiting Him to be a mere man much like Ebionism of the second century.

The more we know about what has been falsely proposed over the years about the Lord Jesus, the more clarity we can gain on accurate teaching of Jesus.

**Question #5** - What has historically been affirmed as the true teaching of the hypostatic union?

At the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451, the attendees (numbering 520) developed what we call the Chalcedon Definition. This definition discussed the two natures in the one person of Jesus. This has historically been understood to be consistent with the teachings of the Bible. This has been affirmed as the Biblical viewpoint.

*"... one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, 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, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ..."* (The Chalcedon Definition (Bettenson and Maunder))

If I could summarize for you this statement in the most simple way possible I would say this: Jesus is one person with two distinct natures. He is fully God and fully man. He is the God-man.

**Question #6** - What are the Biblical references we use to defend the historical teaching of the hypostatic union?

- (1) **Philippians 2:6-7**
- (2) **John 1:1-2, 14**
- (3) **1 Timothy 3:16**
- (4) **Romans 9:5**
- (5) **Romans 1:2-5**
- (6) **Hebrews 2:14**
- (7) **1 John 1:1-3**

**Which is He?.. Is Jesus God? Or is He man? And after considering everything we have looked at tonight and everything we have studied so far in this series, our answer to that question is this: Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. He is fully God and fully man. He is the one and only God-man.**

"The expression *hypostatic union* is distinctly theological and is applicable only to Christ in whom, as in no other, two distinct and dissimilar natures are united. History records no instance of any other being like Christ in this respect, nor will any other ever appear. He is the incomparable theanthropic Person, the God-man, the Mediator and Days-man (Job 9:32, 33). There need be no other, for every demand, whether it be for divine satisfaction or for human necessity, is perfectly answered in Christ." (Chafer. Systematic Theology Vol. 1, pg. 382)