Community Bible Church

Adult Bible Fellowship, January 22, 2016

**Church History, Lesson 12**

(This lesson is based on The Story of Christianity by Justo Gonzalez.)

**Christological Debates and the Council of Chalcedon…**

* The ancient debates over how divinity and humanity were joined together in Jesus Christ centered in the Byzantine Empire. Both sides generally agreed that Jesus was both divine and human, the question was how to understand this mystery.
* Because the western church often played a balancing role in these debates it came out of them with greater prestige.
* **Apollinarianism –** Apollinaris thought that the eternal Word of God took the place of rational soul of a human being. This would mean that Jesus was physically human but spiritually divine. But this would also mean that Jesus was less than fully human. This view was rejected by the Council of Constantinople in 381.
* **Nestorianism –** The teachings of Nestorius, who became the patriarch of Constantinople in 428, focused on what could be said of Mary. Early on, she was called “the bearer of God” to emphasize the divinity of Christ. However, Nestorius stated that she should be called “the bearer of Christ.” The concern was that if the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ were two closely associated, the divine would overwhelm the human. (And if Christ did not come as fully human, how could He save humanity?)
BUT… he ended up teaching that in Christ there were two natures and two persons. One divine and one human. This position sounds a lot like a “schizophrenic Jesus”. And it rejects the very early and very simple teaching that Jesus was one person with two natures, fully man and fully God. This position was finally rejected by the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

***The Definition of the Council of Chalcedon:***

*Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and 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 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, apart from sin; 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; 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; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.*

* **Monothelism –** This was taught by Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the early 600’s. He claimed that the divine will replaced the human will in Christ. So this was like having a Savior who was only partially human. He did not have a fully human nature if He did not have a human will. AND, we see examples, especially in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus specifically submits His human will to the Father. This position was condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 680 / 681.
* **Monophysitism –** After the Council of Chalcedon, Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Syrian Christians rejected the formulation of “1 person, 2 natures”. They claimed that after the incarnation the person of Christ consisted on only the divine nature, or that the divine and human natures were synthesized into one nature. Again, this is important because if Jesus was not fully human, how could He be a substitute for us?
* **Iconodulism –** In the very early church, there seemed to be no rejection of artwork. The catacombs include images of baptisms and the Lord’s Supper. The church leaders preached against the worship of these images, but not the images themselves.
	+ Eventually however, some either worshiped them or considered them aids in worshiping God. Of course, at the same time there were those who strongly objected to this corruption of worship.
	+ Eventually, those who opposed the worship of images were called “iconoclasts” (destroyers of images), and those who supported it were called “iconodules” (worshipers of images).
	The Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicea, 787) dealt with this issue and declared that there was a difference in *latria* (worship) which was appropriate to God alone and *dulia* (service / honor) which was appropriate to images.
	+ The argument in favor of images was that God Himself had taken on human form so that we might see the glory of God in an understandable form and that was no different than what the images were accomplishing.
	+ In the Western churches this distinction of *latria* and *dulia* was difficult to translate into Latin and for a time the iconoclasts strongly resisted this argument and regained the upper hand in the debate. But in 842 the use of images in worship was definitively restored. By this time, most Christian accepted the use of images in worship and on venerating them.

**Eastern Orthodoxy after the Arab conquests…**

* Eastern Orthodoxy was affected much more by the Arab conquests than Western Christianity.
* Their expansion was blocked by Islam both to the south and to the east, so they turned northward. Eastern Orthodoxy came to be the primary expression of Christianity in the nations that we know today as Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic countries, Yugoslavia, and Greece.
* The greatest missionary success of the Orthodox Church was the “conversion” of Russia.
	+ Around 950 Queen Olga was baptized by Germanic missionaries.
	+ Under her grandson Vladimir, Christianity began to truly grow in Russia. He sent for Christian missionaries from the Byzantine Empire to come to Russia. There is some question regarding how much force was used to convert the population.
	+ His son, Yaroslav, strengthened ties with Constantinople and weakened any ties with Rome.
	+ By the time the Mongols invaded Russia in 1240, Christianity was the bond that held the population together as a nation and the motivation to eventually rid themselves of the invaders.
	+ By the time of the 1500’s when Constantinople was taken by the Turks, Russia declared that Moscow was “the Third Rome” and the Russian leaders took the title “czar” and the bishops of Moscow took the title “patriarch”.

**The final split between East and West…**

* Once Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope in 800, the Western church and the Pope’s didn’t need as much support from the Byzantine church.
* And then the “Filioque Controversy” broke out. Western churches had added the word “filioque” to the Nicene Creed so that it basically said that the Spirit had proceeded from both the Father “and the Son”. Whereas the original creed had only said that the Spirit had proceeded from the Father *through* the Son.
* Western Christians wanted this addition to elevate the deity of Christ. However, this was scandalous to the Eastern church that had so very carefully worked out the Christological debates.
* Added to this were MANY political tensions between east and west. In fact, the final schism in 1054 was due much more to political wrangling than theological differences.
* Finally, in 1054 the Bulgarian archbishop, Leo of Ochrid, accused the west of error for two reasons:
	+ They made clerical celibacy universal…
	+ They celebrated communion with unleavened bread…
* Pope Leo IX sent an ambassador to Constantinople to deal with the issue. However, the ambassador, Cardinal Humbert, didn’t know any Greek and considered these married bishops his enemies! He and the patriarch of Constantinople traded insults but didn’t discuss the issues.
* Finally, on June 16, 1054, Cardinal Humbert marched up to the high altar in Saint Sophia’s Cathedral while the patriarch was preparing for communion. He placed a sentence of excommunication on the altar against Patriarch Michael Cerularius and any who would dare to follow him.
* This was the final break between eastern and western Christianity.