

# Christology - Jesus

The uniqueness of Christianity is the Person, Jesus Christ, and the distinctiveness of Christ is the fact that He is God-man. In other words, He is a divine-human Being, something unique in time and eternity. It is also a concept very difficult to understand, for we have no basis for comparison with another God-man in history nor do we get any help from our experience. But this is not a dogma imposed on us simply to receive without question; it is a conclusion which grows out of the evidence of the Bible. Many facts point to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is God; many others lead to the conclusion that He is truly human. This union of undiminished deity and perfect humanity forever in one Person is called the doctrine of the hypostatic union (that is, the union of two hypostases or natures), and this is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

## The Deity of Christ

### His Preexistence

Jesus existed before He was born at Bethlehem. He Himself claimed to be preexistent, for He said "Before Abraham (came to be), I am (John 8:58). The statement "I am" is not only a claim to existence before Abraham but also is a reference to the sacred name of God, Yahweh, and therefore a claim to be God (Ex 3:14-15). Certain works which are said to have been done by Christ could only have been accomplished if He existed before time (e.g. creation, Col 1:16). His claims to be God include preexistence.

### His Deity

Faith in the deity of Christ is necessary to being a Christian. It is an essential part of the New Testament gospel of Christ. Opponents of His deity assert that Jesus never claimed to be God. It was His followers, they say, who made that claim for Him. This is simply not so, for He did claim to be God, as we will see.

### His assertions.

Jesus claimed equality with God when He said that He and the Father were one (John 5:18,; 10:30). Those who heard Him make that statement understood the force of such a claim, for they accused Him of blasphemy. When Christ stood before the high priest, He gave a clear affirmative answer to the question of whether He was the Christ (Mat 26:63-64).

Not only did Jesus make the claim to be equal with God for Himself, but the writers of the New Testament did the same. John 1:1-3 says that He was in the beginning with God and also that He is God. . See also John 20:28 Romans 9:5 Philippians 2:6 Titus 2:13.

### His works.

Jesus claimed to do certain things which only God can do. In a classic confrontation with the scribes the Lord demonstrated He had the power to forgive sin by healing a man sick of the palsy. The scribes considered this claim to be blasphemy because they recognized that only God can forgive sins. The miracle of healing was done in order to validate Christ's claim to be able to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12).

He claimed that all judgment was given into His hands (John 5:27), the He would send the Holy Spirit (John 15:26), and that He would be the one to raise the dead (John 5:25). Since these are all prerogatives of deity, they substitute His claim to be God or else they make Him a liar.

Other works are attributed to Christ which only God can perform. John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 said He was the creator. Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3 say he upholds all things, and Acts 17:31 says He is the Judge of all men.

## **His characteristics**

Jesus possessed characteristics which only God has. He claimed to be all-powerful (Mat 28:18 Rev 1:8). He displayed knowledge that could only have come from His being omniscient (Mark 2:8, John 1:48). He made a promise which we often quote that depends on His being present everywhere (Mat 19:20 Mat 28:20 Eph 1:23)

## **His ascriptions**

Others ascribe to the Lord the prerogatives of deity. He was worshiped by men and by angels (Mat 14:33 Phil 2:10 Heb 1:6). His name is coupled with other Members of the Trinity in a relationship of equality (Mat 28:19, 2 Cor 13:14). The writer to the Hebrews declared that He was the same substance with the Father – “the exact likeness of his substance”. Coupled with Paul’s statements that “in Him dwells all the fullness of deity in bodily form” (Col 2:9), these are very strong declarations of His full deity equal with the deity of Father and the Spirit.

## **The Humanity of Christ**

### **The Incarnation (The Virgin Birth)**

The incarnation was the way in which Christ took on humanity. The word means “in flesh”, and the method of incarnation was the virgin birth. Though there has been debate over the meaning of the word “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14, there can be no question that the New Testament quotation of the prophecy intends us to understand “virgin” (Mat 1:23). The Scriptures say only that the Holy Spirit came upon Mary to generate the child within her (Luke 1:35).

The following purposes are given for the incarnation:

- To reveal God to men (John 1:18)
- To provide an example for living (1 Peter 2:21)
- To provide a sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:1-10)
- To destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)
- To enable Him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb 5:1-2)
- To fulfill the promise of a son to sit on the throne of David forever (Luke 1:31-33)

### **The Proofs of Humanity**

*He had a human body.* Although His conception was supernatural, He did possess a human body, born as a baby and developing as human beings do. (Mat 1:18 Gal 4:4 Luke 2:52). He referred to Himself as a man and was recognized by others as such (John 8:40; 1 John 1:1).

*He had the characteristics of a human being.* Jesus was hungry (Mat 4:2), He was thirsty (John 19:28), He grew tired (John 4:6), He experienced love and compassion (Mat 9:36), He wept (John 11:35), and He was tested (Heb 4:15)

*He possessed human names.* He called Himself the Son of man, linking Himself to the work of Savior and coming King (Luke 19:10). He was called the Son of David (Mark 10:47), Jesus (Mat 1:21), and a man (1 Tim 2:5).

### **The Kenosis**

The meaning of Philippians 2:1-11 has been greatly debated in relation to the person of the incarnate Christ. It is the connotation of the verb that appears in verse 7 that is disputed (kenoo, from which comes the name of this doctrine, kenosis, translated “made himself of no reputation” in the AV and “emptied himself” in the NASB). Simply stated, Did Christ empty Himself of some of the aspects of deity when He came to earth? The concept involves the veiling of Christ’s preincarnate glory (John 17:5), the condescension of taking on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), and the voluntary nonuse of

some of His attributes of deity during the time of His earthly life (Mat 24:36).

### **The Impeccability (Sinlessness)**

The meaning of impeccability has been debated. Some of course, do not think Christ was sinless, but among those who do there are two views of impeccability. One says that He was able not to sin while the other states that He was not able to sin. In either case He did not sin, though one viewpoint involves the possibility that He could have.

The difficulty is related to Hebrews 4:15: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Literally, the verse reads this way: “... having been tested according to all, according to likeness, apart from sin.” It does not say that Christ was tempted with a view to succumbing to sin. He was tempted with a view to proving He was sinless. His temptations were really not to see if He could sin, but to prove that He could not.

### **The Subordination of Christ**

In our language it is clear that to be subordinate to someone is to be “under” that person’s authority. A subordinate is not a peer; a subordinate is not on an equal level of authority with his or her superordinate.

When we speak of the subordination of Christ we must do so with great care. Our culture equates subordination with inequality. But in the Trinity all members are equal in nature, in honor and in glory. All three are eternal, self-existent; they partake of all aspects and attributes of deity.

In God’s plan of redemption, however, the Son **voluntarily** takes on a subordinate role to the Father. It is the Father that sends the Son into the world. The Son obediently comes to earth to do the will of the Father. The Son is eager to perform the work of salvation, just as the Father is eager for Him to do so. Jesus declared that zeal for His Father’s house consumed Him (John 2:17) and that His meat and His drink was to do the will of the Father.

By submitting Himself to the perfect will of His Father, Jesus did for us what we were unwilling and unable to do for ourselves, He obeyed the law of God perfectly.

By obeying the law perfectly, Jesus accomplished two vitally important things. First, He was qualified to be our Redeemer, the Lamb without blemish. Second, by His perfect obedience He earned the rewards God promised to all who keep His covenant. He merited the rewards of heaven that He bestows upon us. As the subordinate One, He saved a people who had been insubordinate.

### **Jesus Christ as the only begotten**

That the Bible refers to Jesus as “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14) has provided great controversy in church history. Both Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons deny the deity of Christ by appealing to the concept that Jesus was not divine but an exalted creature. The term begotten is used in a qualified way in the New Testament. In John 1:14 Jesus is referred to as the “only begotten”. Again in John 1:18 He is called the “only begotten Son”.

There is significant manuscript evidence that suggests that the original Greek read “only begotten God”. But even if that text is not accepted we still have a crucial qualifier. Jesus is called the only begotten (monogenais). The prefix mono- is stronger in the Greek than the word only is in English. Jesus is absolutely singular in his begottenness. He is uniquely begotten. No one or nothing else is begotten in the sense Jesus is begotten. The Son proceeds eternally from the Father, not as a creature, but as the Second Person of the Trinity.

## **The Baptism of Christ**

One of the difficult questions in Christianity is “Why was Jesus baptized?” It was **not** for the forgiveness of sin, since He was sinless but it was to “fulfill all righteousness”. Besides all the other New Testament requirements, this stands as the ultimate example of the mandate that all believers are to be baptized.

Mat 3:13-17 (NASB) Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

## **The Glory of Christ**

The glory of Christ perhaps never became more evident than at His transfiguration. The Greek word for transfiguration is metamorphoomai, from which we get the word metamorphosis. It denotes a change in form as, for example, the transformation that occurs when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. The prefix trans – means literally “across”. In the transfiguration a limit or barrier is crossed.

At the transfiguration a brilliant light shone from Jesus. This light was the visible manifestation that the barrier had indeed been crossed. There are some similarities between this manifestation of glory and the shining face of Moses when he returned from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. The differences however are significant. Moses’ face shone with reflected glory. Christ did not merely reflect the brightness of divine glory, but His glory is the brightness of divine glory. In this respect, His glory clearly transcends the reflected glory on the face of Moses.

That the glory of Christ shone forth at the Transfiguration should not surprise us. The surprise is that He willingly veiled His glory for the sake of His children.

## **The Ascension of Christ**

Jesus described His departure from this earth as being better for us than His abiding presence. When He first announced His departure to the disciples, they were saddened by the news. However, they later came to realize the significance of this great event.

Jesus’ ascension refers to His going to a special place for a special purpose. He goes to the Father, to the Father’s right hand. He rises to the seat of cosmic authority. Jesus goes to heaven for His coronation. His coronation as the King of Kings.

## **Jesus Christ as Mediator**

A mediator is a go-between. He is one who stands between two or more persons or groups who are in dispute and tries to reconcile them. In biblical terms human beings are described as being at enmity against God. We rebel, revolt, and refuse to obey the law of God. As a result, God’s wrath is upon us. For this catastrophic situation to be changed or redeemed it is necessary that we become reconciled to God.

To effect our reconciliation, God the Father appointed and sent His Son to be our Mediator. The mediating work of Christ is superior to all other mediators.

## **The Titles (Names) of Jesus**

The chief titles given to Jesus are:

### **Christ.**

The title Christ is so often given to Jesus that people often mistake it for his last name. It is, however not a name, but a title that refers to his position and work as Messiah. The term Christ comes from the Greek Christos which is used to translate the Hebrew word for Messiah. Both Christ and Messiah mean ‘Anointed One.’

In the Old Testament the concept of the promised Messiah, who would be uniquely anointed by the Holy Spirit, was a many-sided and complex idea. The Jews did not all have the same idea about the Messiah.

This is extremely important because it tells us Jesus was set apart by God for a specific task, to redeem us. He was not just an anointed person such as a prophet or a priest, but was the ultimate Priest. This title is used more than the any other title for Jesus.

### **Lord.**

The second most frequently used title (over 600 times) for Jesus in the New Testament is the title Lord (“kurios”). It means “Jesus is Lord”, similar in scope and meaning to “Adoni”. This title is of supreme importance to understanding the New Testament portrait of Jesus. The term Lord is used in three distinct ways in the New Testament.

The first is as a common form of polite address, similar to the English word “sir”.

The second usage refers to a slave owner or “master”. This word was also used for nobility such as the English “Sir” as used to refer to a King, or someone who was knighted. Here it is implied in a figurative sense to Jesus, He is our master.

The third usage is the imperial usage. Here it refers to one who is sovereign.

To call Jesus Lord was radical from a Jewish viewpoint because it was title given to God Himself in the Old Testament. The title Lord was bestowed upon Jesus by God the Father. It is the “name which is above every name” that Paul speaks of in Philippians 2:9.

The NT use of Lord for Jesus meant, “every knee will bow.” In Phil. 2:6, this is the decisive imperial form. The early Christians were required as all people in the Roman Empire to declare Caesar as “Lord”. This is the same imperial word meaning. Most Christians would not say it to refer to anybody besides Jesus; thus, many were martyred.

### **Jesus**

Derived from the Hebrew "Joshua" (Y'shua) or "Je-Hoshua" meaning JEHOVAH IS SALVATION, “Savior,” or the “One who saves.”

### **Immanuel**

“God with us” Mat 1:23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." Isa 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

## **Son of Man**

This title is one of the more fascinating titles given to Jesus and perhaps the one more frequently misunderstood. Because the church confesses the dual nature of Jesus, that He is truly man and truly God, and because the Bible describes Jesus as the Son of Man and the Son of God, it is tempting to assume that Son of Man refers to Jesus' humanity and Son of God refers to His deity. This, however, is not exactly the case. Though the Son of Man includes an element of humanity, its primary reference is to Jesus' divine nature. Its primary focus is on Jesus' obedience as a son. It ranks first by a wide margin of Jesus' use of titles for Himself. The importance of this title is drawn from its link to Daniel's use of it in the Old Testament (see Daniel 7). It is the individual who will be the cosmic Judge.

## **Logos**

No title for Jesus engendered more intense philosophical and theological interest in the first three centuries than the title Logos. Logos was central to the early Church's development of Christology. The prolog of John's Gospel is crucial to this Christological understanding of the Logos. "In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word (Logos) was with God, and the Word (Logos) was God" (John 1:1).

The ancient Greeks were concerned about making sense of the universe and embarked on a quest for "ultimate reality" (metaphysics). Their philosophers sought the unifying factor or power that brought order and harmony to the wide diversity of the created realm (cosmology). They searched for a nous (mind) to which (or whom) they could attribute the order of all things. To this unifying ultimate reality the Greeks gave the name logos. It provided the coherence or "logic" of reality.

Though the word is loaded with pre-Christian Greek philosophical baggage, the biblical use of logos goes well beyond the Greek usage. In Genesis 1:3 we are told that "God said ... and there was." Thus, it is by God's word that creation came into being. What sets the logos concept apart most significantly from Greek philosophy, however, is that the New Testament "logos" is personal – the Word became a man who lived and died in our world.

## **GOD "Theos" (equivalent to the Hebrew Elohim)**

This occurs more than 1,000 times in the NT. If there is any doubt that Jesus is God, this should remove it. In the NT, all the persons of the trinity are called "God" 'Theos' in various passages. Jesus is indeed God.

## **"I AM"**

Jesus upset His generation especially when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," John 8:58, see Exodus 3:14. And also in John's Gospel Jesus claimed to be Yahweh/Jehovah in such phrases as "I AM the Light of the world," "the bread of life," "living water," "the Resurrection and the Life," "the Way, Truth and the Life'. This comes from the Hebrew OT verb "to be".

## **ALPHA AND OMEGA**

The First and the Last, The Beginning and the End (Rev. 1).

**Ichthys, IXIOUS** (Greek:  $\text{ΙΧΘΥΣ}$ , capitalized  $\text{ΙΧΘΥΣ}$ ; also transliterated and Latinized as *ichthys*, *ichthus*, *ichthus* or *ikhthus*; ichthus)

This is the Ancient and Classical Greek word for "fish." This is an acronym not found in Scripture. In English it refers to a symbol consisting of two intersecting arcs, the ends of the right side extending beyond the meeting point so as to resemble the profile of a fish <>, said to have been used by early Christians as a secret symbol and now known colloquially as the "**Jesus fish**" and (to a lesser extent) the "**holy mackerel**." Greek  $\text{ΙΧΘΥΣ}$  is an acronym (or backronym) of  $\text{Ιησοϋς Χριστός, Θεοϋ Υιός, Σωτήρ}$  "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour."

## SOPHIA

"The Wisdom of God," referring to Christ (I Cor. 1,2) refers back to Proverbs. Some people have mistaken this name to be a woman's name, thus claiming God is a goddess, and should be worshiped as so. This is an extreme ignorance of the Greek text and just silly as well as blasphemous.

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### Other N.T. Titles for Jesus:

Son of Abraham: (Matthew 1:1)  
Son of David: (Matthew 1:1)  
Immanuel: "God with us" (Matthew 1:23, see Isaiah 7:14)  
Beloved Son: (Matthew 3:17)  
The Beloved: (Matthew 12:18)  
Rabbi: Teacher, literally "my great one" (Matthew 23:8)  
Son of God: (Matthew 26:63)  
Son of Man: (Matthew 26:64, see Daniel 7:13)  
Yeshua of Nazareth: (Matthew 26:71)  
King of the Jews: (Matthew 27:37)  
King of Israel: (Mark 15:32)  
Stone: (Mark 12:10)  
Chief Cornerstone: (Mark 12:10)  
Son of the Most High: (Luke 1:32)  
Horn of Salvation: (Luke 1:69)  
Sunrise From on High: (Luke 1:78)  
The Expected One: (Luke 7:19)  
Master: "Chief, Commander"" (Luke 8:24)  
The Chosen One: (Luke 9:35)  
Living One: (Luke 24:5)  
God: (John 1:1)  
Only Begotten God: (John 1:18)  
The Prophet: (John 1:25, see Deuteronomy 18:15)  
Lamb of God: (John 1:36)  
Messiah: (John 1:41)  
Son of Joseph: (John 1:45)  
The Bridegroom: (John 3:29)  
Savior of the World: (John 4:42)  
The Bread of God (John 6:33)  
The Bread out of Heaven: (John 6:32)  
The Bread of Life: (John 6:35)  
Light of the World: (John 8:12)  
The Son: (John 8:36)  
Good Shepherd: (John 10:11)  
The Door: (John 10:7)  
The Resurrection (John 11:25)  
The Life: (John 11:25)  
The Way, the Truth, and the Life: (John 14:6)  
The True Vine: (John 15:1)  
The Vinedresser: (John 15:1)  
The Man: (John 19:5)  
Holy One: (Acts 3:14)  
Righteous One: (Acts 3:14)  
Prince Of Life: (Acts 3:15)

Servant: (Acts 4:27)  
Prince: (Acts 5:31)  
Judge of the Living and the Dead: (Acts 10:42)  
LORD: (Romans 10:9-13, see Joel 2:32)  
The Deliverer: (Romans 11:26)  
The Power of God: (1 Corinthians 1:24)  
The Wisdom of God: (1 Corinthians 1:24)  
The Last Adam: (1 Corinthians 15:45)  
Passover Lamb: (1 Corinthians 5:7)  
Abraham's Seed: (Galatians 3:16)  
Head Over All Things: (Ephesians 1:22)  
The Image of the Invisible God: (Colossians 1:15)  
Firstborn of All Creation: (Colossians 1:15)  
The Head of the Body, the Church: (Colossians 1:18)  
God's Mystery: (Colossians 2:2)  
The Mediator: (1 Timothy 2:5)  
Savior of All Men: (1 Timothy 4:10)  
Heir of All Things: (Hebrews 1:2)  
Firstborn: (Hebrews 1:6)  
The Apostle: (Hebrews 3:1)  
The Great High Priest: (Hebrews 4:14)  
The Author and Perfecter of Faith: (Hebrews 12:2)  
Shepherd and Guardian of Our Souls: (1 Peter 2:25)  
Chief Shepherd: (1 Peter 5:4)  
The Word of Life: (1 John 1:1)  
Advocate, Counsel for the Defense: (1 John 2:1)  
Only Begotten Son: (1 John 4:9)  
Son of the Father: (2 John 1:3)  
Firstborn From the Dead: (Revelation 1:5)  
The Faithful Witness: (Revelation 1:5)  
Beginning of the Creation of God: (Revelation 3:14)  
The Amen: (Revelation 3:14)  
Lion of Judah: (Revelation 5:5)  
The Lamb: (Revelation 5:12)  
The Faithful and True One: (Revelation 19:11)  
King of Kings and Lord of Lords: (Revelation 19:16)  
The Alpha and the Omega: (Revelation 22:13)  
The First and the Last: (Revelation 22:13)  
The Beginning and the End: (Revelation 22:13)  
The Root and Offspring of David: (Revelation 22:16)  
The Bright Morning Star: (Revelation 22:16)