

Systematic Theology, Lesson 19: Christology: The Doctrine of Christ, Part 2

1. Defining the Person of Christ

- a. “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”¹
- b. The definition has four parts. Jesus Christ was . . .
 - i. Fully God
 - ii. Fully man
 - iii. In one person
 - iv. And will be so forever.

2. “In One Person”: The Incarnation (Hypostatic Union)

- a. The importance of incarnation: the incarnation is foundationally important to Christianity. “The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity.”²
- b. The means of incarnation: _____ conception.
 - i. Jesus Christ was “conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary” (The Apostles Creed).
 1. **Matt 1:20:** But when he [Joseph] had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”
 2. **Matt 1:25:** But [Joseph] kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.
 - ii. The virgin conception allows for the uniting of full humanity and full deity in one person.³ This does not mean, however, that Christ *had* to be

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 490.

² John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1969), 96.

³ For more reasons why the virgin conception/birth is important, see Dan Burrus, “Why is the Virgin Conception Important?” sermon available at www.gracelakeville.org.

conceived by a virgin, for God could have chosen another method for his Son to come to earth:

1. God could have had Jesus beamed down from heaven resembling something of what you might see on Star Trek. The problem with this, though, is it would allow for his deity, but not his humanity. We would have a hard time believing that Jesus was actually human if he came down from heaven. To be human, he needed to be born of the human race.
2. God could have had Jesus born from the relations of both a man and a woman. The problem with this, though, is that it would allow for his humanity, but not his deity. Jesus would have had to become deity at some point early in his life. But this would deny his full deity, if his divine nature began at a point in time.
3. To be sure, Jesus was not God because he was virgin conceived; he was virgin conceived because he was God. The virgin conception then allows for the full humanity and full deity of Christ in one person.

c. The heresies of incarnation:

i. Docetism (1st century)

1. Christ only _____ to be man. Comes from the Greek word, *dokeo*, which means “to seem or to appear.”
2. Rejected because it denies the humanity of Christ. The apostle John addresses this teaching in his first epistle. **1 John 4:2-3**: By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

ii. Ebionism (2nd century)

1. Christ was the natural son of Joseph and Mary and elected to take on divine attributes at his baptism.
2. Rejected by the Early Church Father, Irenaeus, because it denied the full deity of Christ, which Irenaeus argued is needed for salvation.

iii. Arianism (4th century)⁴

1. Christ was created by the Father, thus not eternal. As well, Christ was of _____ substance (*homoiousios*) as the Father.⁵ (Note: Arianism is typically discussed with the doctrine of the Trinity.)
2. Rejected at the Council of Nicaea in 325 because it denies the full deity of Christ. The Son was declared (at Nicaea) to be “co-equal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father,” which exact words GCBC uses in our doctrinal statement. Jesus is “begotten of the Father . . . begotten not made” (the language of Nicaea). Jesus is “of one substance with the Father” (*homoousios*) (cf. John 1:14; 3:16, 18; Col 1:15; 1 John 4:9).

iv. Adoptionism (Dynamic Monarchianism)⁶ (4th century)

1. Christ lived as a man until his baptism at which time the Father “adopted” him as his Son and conferred on him supernatural powers. (Note: Adoptionism is typically discussed with the doctrine of the Trinity.)
2. Rejected at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 because even though Jesus had supernatural powers, he was not eternal, and thus was not fully God.

v. Apollinarianism (4th century)

1. Christ had a human body, but not a human mind or spirit.
2. Rejected by the First Council of Constantinople in 381 because not only does our human bodies need redemption but so does our minds and spirits. Christ had to be fully man—in every way. So, **Heb 2:17**: Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

⁴ Sometimes Arianism is lumped together with another similar view, namely, Subordinationism. While the views are similar, they are technical not the same. Subordinationism believes that Christ was eternal (i.e., not created), but Christ was not equal to the Father in being or attributes (i.e., “subordinate” to the Father).

⁵ Others also believed that Christ was of difference substance (*heteros*) as the Father.

⁶ Not to be confused with “Modalistic Monarchianism” also called Modalism, Sabellianism, and Patripassionism.

vi. Nestorianism (5th century)

1. Christ had two separate persons, a human person and a divine person.
2. Rejected at the Council of Ephesus in 431 because the Scripture nowhere speak of the human nature and the divine nature as an independent person. Rather, the Scriptures speak of Jesus as one person. **John 8:58:** Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” **John 19:28:** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” Furthermore, nowhere do we see in Scripture speech or disagreement between the two natures.

vii. Eutychianism (Monophysitism) (5th century)

1. Christ had one nature (the opposite error of Nestorianism). Christ’s divine nature absorbed his human nature, creating a third new nature.
2. Rejected at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 because it denied the full humanity and full deity of Christ, both of which are necessary for our salvation. Chalcedon declared Christ’s two natures “unmixed, unchanged, undivided, and inseparable.”

d. The orthodox definition of incarnation: The Chalcedonian Definition (451).

- i. We, then, following the holy fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead [Adoptionism rejected] and also perfect in manhood [Docetism rejected]; truly God [Ebonism rejected] and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial⁷ [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us [Apollinarianism rejected], without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead [Arianism rejected], and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably [Eutychianism rejected]; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each

⁷ Consubstantial means having the same nature or substance.

nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons [Nestorianism rejected], but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy fathers [the Nicene Creed] has handed down to us.

ii. The underlined word, “Subsistence,” is the Greek word *hypostasis*, which means “_____.” This is why we sometimes refer to the two natures in one person as the “hypostatic union.”

iii. Chart⁸

GROUP	TIME	HUMAN NATURE	DIVINE NATURE	CHURCH COUNCIL
Docetism	1 st century	Denied – only an appearance of huamanity	Affirmed	
Ebionism	2 nd century	Affirmed	Denied – Jesus was natural son of Joseph and Mary	
Arianism	4 th century	Affirmed	Denied – Jesus not eternal; similar to, but not same as God	Condemned at Nicaea, 325
Adoptionism	4 th century	Affirmed	Denied – Jesus only has supernatural powers	Condemned at Constantinople, 381
Apollinarianism	4 th century	Divine Logos replaced human spirit	Affirmed	Condemned at Constantinople, 381
Nestorianism	5 th century	Christ was two Persons		Condemned at Ephesus, 431
Eutychianism	5 th century	Not fully human	Not fully divine	Condemned at Chalcedon, 451
		Christ was a single mixed nature		
Orthodoxy		Full humanity	Full deity	Defined by Chalcedon, 451
		Christ in one Person		

⁸ Chart adapted from: Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Guide to Understanding Bible Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1999), 291.

- e. The paradox of the incarnation: the relationship of the two natures in one person (or the “communication of attributes”).
 - i. Actions by one nature and not the other nature.
 - 1. Omni-presence vs. local presence.
 - a. With respect to his divine nature, Jesus is everywhere present. **Matt 28:20b**: “and lo, I am [Jesus] with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - b. With respect to his human nature, Jesus is not everywhere present. **John 16:28**: “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”
 - 2. Eternal vs. temporal
 - a. With respect to his divine nature, Jesus is eternal. **John 1:1-2**: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
 - b. With respect to his human nature, Jesus is temporal—he had a beginning. So we can say Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his earthly ministry (**Luke 3:23**).
 - ii. Yet, actions either nature does, the _____ of Christ does. That is, the Scriptures speak of the one person of Christ acting (cf. John 8:58; 16:28; 17:11; Matt 28:20).
 - iii. Therefore the attributes of both natures belong to the one person without mixing the natures or dividing the person. If this is not maintained, we run into problems:
 - 1. Patripassianism. Since Jesus is God, and Jesus died on the cross, therefore, God died on the cross.
 - 2. Lutheran consubstantiation. Since Jesus is God, and God is omnipresent, therefore Jesus is present in the Lord’s Table, “with, by, and under” the elements.
- f. **GCBC doctrinal statement** on incarnation: Under “God,” subsection “God the Son”:

(Paragraph 3) We teach . . . In His incarnation, the eternal existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God man.

(Paragraph 4) We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness.

(Paragraph 5) We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born; that He was God incarnate; and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom.

3. Jesus is the Permanent God-man.

a. Jesus did not give up his humanity after the resurrection.

- i. **John 20:25-27:** So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."
- ii. **Luke 24:41-43:** While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate *it* before them.

b. Jesus is presently human.

- i. **Acts 7:56:** and he [Stephen] said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." *Stephen saw a man.*
- ii. **Acts 9:5:** And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

c. Jesus will return as a human being.

- i. **Phil 3:21:** who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

- ii. **1 John 3:2:** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
- d. Jesus will exist after his second advent as a human being.
- i. **Matt 26:29:** “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”