

## Bible Doctrines: Christology

### Deity

Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity.

- Christ is fully God, being co-equal with the Father, as well as co-eternal (John 10:30).
- Christ possesses all of the attributes of Deity, some of which are eternity (John. 1:1–2), omniscience (Matt. 9:4) immutability (Heb. 13:8) and omnipresence (Matt. 18:20).

### Incarnation

Even though Christ existed eternally, the incarnation was the means by which He took on humanity (John 1:1–2, 14; see discussion below under “Problem: Eternal Sonship or Incarnational Sonship?”).

- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and was born into the world (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:31–35; 2:6–7).
- Jesus Christ is one, undivided Person, fully possessing two natures: Human and Divine. There are various views as to how His humanity and deity coincided. The best way to understand it is that Jesus is one person fully possessing two natures. “In A.D. 451 the Council of Chalcedon agreed that Jesus was at the same time human and divine, involving a ‘hypostatic union’ of two natures without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation.”<sup>1</sup>
- Christ was tempted yet was without sin, for it was impossible for Him to sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 1:8; 2:18; 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22–23).
- In the incarnation, Christ did not empty Himself of Deity (the *Kenotic View*). Instead, Christ voluntarily gave up the independent use of His divine attributes (Phil. 2:5–8). In his hymn *And Can It Be*, Charles Wesley wrote the following verse:

He left His Father’s throne above,  
So free, so infinite His grace;  
*Emptied Himself of all but love,*  
And bled for Adam’s helpless race.

Wesley’s wording seems to indicate that he viewed Philippians 2:7 as Christ emptying Himself of His attributes (except love) in order to take on the form of a slave. In our majesty hymnal, the editors rightly changed the third phrase to read “*emptied Himself and came in love,*” a better and theologically sound statement than Wesley’s original line.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 264.

## **Atoning Death**

Jesus willingly gave Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18).

- On the cross, Jesus shed His blood, bore the sins of the world and suffered God's wrath for sin though He Himself had no sin (Matt. 27:46; John 1:29; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:19).
- The death of Christ was sufficient to pay for the sins of all humanity even though His sacrifice is efficient only for those who trust in Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2).

## **Resurrection**

Three days after His crucifixion Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead (John 10:17–18) in that:

- He displayed Himself as having flesh and bone (Luke 24:39)
- His previously sealed tomb was empty (Mark 16:6)
- He ate food (Luke 24:41–43)
- He bears the imprints of the nails and wound in His side (Luke 24:34–39)
- The angels declared that He had risen (Luke 24:6–8)

Jesus' resurrection is significant in that it confirms His deity as the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and confirmed the truth of all that He said (Matt. 28:6).

## **Christ in the Future**

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18), and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Is. 9:6; Luke 1:31–33), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matt. 25:14–46; Acts 17:30–31). Based on the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, penalty, power, and (one day) presence of sin and is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom. 3:25; 5:8–9; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

## **Problem: *Eternal Sonship or Incarnational Sonship?***

There are several passages of Scripture that seem to describe Jesus as becoming the Son (implying that He was not so before He came to earth). Some texts of Scripture include words like *begotten* and *today*:

**Psalm 2:7** "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You."

**Hebrews 1:5** For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?"

**John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The word *begotten* seems to indicate an origin at a point in time. The implication drawn by some theologians is that Jesus, though He existed in eternity past, did not exist as the Son. Those who draw this implication believe that Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father at the incarnation thereby relegating Himself to the role of Son. This is the *Incarnational Sonship View*. This view essentially means that Christ became God's Son when He was conceived miraculously by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31–35). The problem with this position is that it relegates Christ's Sonship to a temporal moment in time. The question that poses a problem for those who hold to this view is this: *if Jesus only became the Son of God upon His incarnation, what was the nature of His role and function as deity before that time?*

The other view (and the best view) is to recognize that the Son of God has and always will be the Son—the second person of the trinity. This view is the *Eternal Sonship View*. In Psalm 2, the phrase “today I have begotten you” is a “decree” that the Lord makes. The temporal language is meant not to be taken literally, but figuratively.

In John 3:16, the word for “only begotten” (KJV, NKJV) is the Greek word *μονογενῆς* (*monogenēs*) which means “one of a kind” or “only and unique.” Thus, the idea Jesus is conveying is that He is the special and unique Son, signifying that Jesus shares the very same essence of the Father.

Those who hold to the *Incarnational Sonship View* argue that their view is supported by the fact that:

1. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God at His birth (Mark 1:1; Luke 1:32, 35)
2. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God at His baptism (Matt. 3:17)
3. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God at His transfiguration (Matt. 17:5)

However, the point of each of these events is to express the approval of the Father for the ministry and work of the Son. Further, the phrase “that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” can be best understood as the Lord indicating the One who would be born is, in fact, the second Adam.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Jesus has always been the eternal Son of God, existing as the second person of the trinity, possessing the same essence and absolute equality with the Father.

### Notes / Questions:

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<sup>2</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 240.

