

Bible Training Institute

To proactively accelerate the spiritual growth of Grace Bible Church for the purpose of knowing God more intimately and becoming more effective servants of God in the world

Christology Part 1: Preexistence, Deity, Humanity, Nature of Christ

Introduction

- Jesus Christ cannot be pitted against doctrine
- “This is the incomparable person we are trying to study, whose extraordinary life we try to understand. The closer we make him the object of our study, the more we become aware that he is examining us.” *Thomas Oden*

Preexistence of Christ

In the gospels

- Apostle John—John 1:1-3
- John the Baptist—John 1:15, 30
- Christ—
 - The definitive statement—John 8:58
 - Existence with the Father—John 17:5, 24
 - Came from heaven—John 3:13; 8:23
 - “Sent” statements—John 8:42, 7:29
 - Implied preexistence—Matt 23:37

Preexistence of Christ

In the epistles

- The humble one—Phil 2:5-7; 2 Cor 8:9
- The preeminent one—Col 1:17
- The “spiritual rock”—1 Cor 10:4, 9

Preexistence of Christ

In the Old Testament

- Throne room vision—Isaiah 6; John 12:39-41
- Angel of the Lord—identified with AND differentiated from YHWH—both/and—
 - Received worship (Ex 3:1-5; Josh 5:14-15)
 - No appearance after the birth of Christ
- The messenger of Malachi 3:1 (John the Baptist)
- The eternal Messiah—Micah 5:2

The Deity of Christ

Divine names:

- God—John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Heb 1:8; 1 John 5:20; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13
- Lord (*kurios*)—Luke 2:11, Matt 15:22; John 20:28, etc
- Holy One—Mark 1:24 (Luke 4:34); John 6:69; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 13:35

The Deity of Christ

Divine names (con'd)

- Son of God
 - Familiar to Jews—Ps 2:7, 12
 - Taken to mean “equal to God”—John 5:18; 19:7
 - Others ascribed Sonship to Christ
 - God the Father—Mark 1:11; 9:7
 - Demons—Mark 3:11; Matt 8:29
 - Angels—Luke 1:32, 35
 - John the Baptist—John 1:34
 - Disciples—Matt 14:33; 16:16
 - Nathanael—John 1:49
 - Martha—John 11:27

The Deity of Christ

Divine names (con'd)

- Son of Man (cf. Dan 7:13)—Matt 26:63-66
 - Jesus equates “Son of Man” with “Son of God” in Matt 26:63-66

The Deity of Christ

Divine attributes applied to Christ—Col 2:9

- Holiness
- Faithful and True (Rev 3:7; 19:11)
- Righteous (1 John 2:1; 2 Tim 4:8)
- Love (1 John 3:16)
- Omnipresence—Matt 18:20; Col 1:17; John 1:47
- Omniscience—John 2:24-25; Col 2:3
- Sovereignty—Phil 3:20-21
- Self-Existence—John 5:26
- Immutability—Heb 13:8

The Deity of Christ

Divine works done by Christ

- Creator and sustainer—Is 44:24; Heb 1:2-3; John 1:3; Col 1:16-17
- Forgives sin (Mark 2:5-12; Luke 7:37-38, 44-48; Col 3:13)
- Bestows eternal life—John 10:28
- Receives and answers prayer—John 14:14

The Deity of Christ

Divine works done by Christ (con'd)

- Will raise the dead—John 5:21, 28-29; 11:24-25
- Final judge of the world (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rev 20:11-15)
- Builds and heads the church (Matt 16:18; Eph 4:7-16)
- Sender of angels—Matt 13:41
- Miracles of healing, raising the dead, nature, power over demons—John 21:25

The Deity of Christ

Divine claims made by Christ

- Absolute authority
 - Over the law (Matt 5:31-38)—“A new commandment I give you.”
 - Over the temple (Matt 12:6)
 - Over the Sabbath (Matt 12:8)
 - Over the kingdom (Matt 16:19)

The Deity of Christ

Divine claims made by Christ (con'd)

- Supreme Object of saving faith
 - Together with the Father (John 14:1; 17:3)
 - Alone (John 3:36; Matt 11:28)
- Supersedes all relationships—Matt 10:37
- Meets all needs, spiritual and physical (John 7:37; John 14:6)

The Deity of Christ

Divine worship applied to Christ

- Commanded by the Father (Heb 1:6)
- Offered by heavenly host (Rev 5:8-14; cf. Phil 2:10-11)
 - Accepted by Jesus
 - From disciples (Matt 14:33)
 - From Syrophoenician woman (Matt 15:25)
 - From women after resurrection (Matt 28:9)
 - From healed blind man (John 9:38)
- Ultimately, all will worship (Phil 2:10-11)

The Humanity of Christ

Not “God IN a body” or “God IN a man”—Jesus is God AS a MAN

Descriptions of the Incarnation

- Word became flesh (John 1:14)
- Came down from heaven (John 3:13)
- Sent into the world (John 3:17)
- Born (Rom 1:3; Gal 4:4)
- In the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3)
- Partook of flesh and blood (Heb 2:14)
- Manifested in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16)

The Humanity of Christ

- Self-Humbling of God—Phil 2:6-8
 - “form of God”—had the form of God because He IS God
 - “emptied Himself”—nullified his position, but did NOT divest himself of deity or attributes—concealed his glory, not his identity

The Humanity of Christ

The Virgin Birth

- Foretold in Isaiah 7:14
- Affirmed in the gospels—Matt 1:23, 25; Luke 1:34

DEFINITION: *That miraculous act whereby Jesus Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary with the result that the Second Person of the Triune God was joined eternally to a real human body and nature.*

The Humanity of Christ

Evidence of Christ's Humanity

- Human birth—miraculous conception but normal pregnancy and birth
- Human growth and development (Luke 2:40, 52; cf. Heb 2:14; 4:15)
- Human ancestry (Matt 1; Luke 3)
- Human appearance
- Human experiences

The Humanity of Christ

Evidence of Christ's Humanity (con'd)

- Human relationship to God
- Dependence on the Holy Spirit
 - Was given the Spirit (Jn 1:33-34; 3:34)
 - baptism (Lu 3:22)
 - Jesus likely had the Spirit prior to baptism, but at His baptism He was given special empowering. The Spirit led Him out into the wilderness.
 - Temptation (Luke 4:1, 14)
 - Ministry (Luke 4:16-21)
 - “by the Spirit” (Matt 12:28)

The Humanity of Christ

Evidence of Christ's Humanity (con'd)

- Human relationship to God
 - Exemplary prayer life
 - Before decisions—Luke 6:12
 - Before miracles (John 11:41-42)
 - In public and private, short and long
 - Taught his disciples how to pray
- Title: SON OF MAN

The Nature of Christ

Nature and Person

- Has been expressed in terms of “nature” and “person”
 - Nature—a complex of attributes when taken together identify a particular kind of thing
 - Person—a substantive, self-conscious entity characterized by attributes (nature)
- JESUS: One person with TWO natures: Divine and human
- God the Son came down and took on human attributes in addition to His divine attributes.

The Nature of Christ

Hypostatic Union (*hypostasis*)—Heb 1:3 “nature”

- Substantial nature, personhood, essence
- Son of God did not UNITE with a human person
- Not God IN a man, but God AS a man

The Nature of Christ

- **The touchiness of this issue**: errors in this doctrine were identified and dealt with at the councils of Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople (431, 451, 381)
 - **Ebionites**—denied the deity of Christ
 - **Arians**—denied the complete deity of Christ
 - **Docetists**—Jesus appeared to be human but just came in a human manifestation of some kind
 - **Apollinarians**—denied the complete humanity of Christ—Human body and Divine soul—still a separation
 - **Eutychianism** (Eutyches)—humanity and deity united and fused into a THIRD thing = neither completely human or completely divine
 - **Nestorians**—Divine person united with a human nature: TWO PERSONS in one existence