
Christ (1)

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'"

"They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ." (Matthew 16:13-20, NIV)

Why study Christology

Many Christians do not have a correct understanding of the person and nature of Jesus Christ.

- some believe that He was not truly human
- others teach that He was not divine while here on earth
- some suggest He had two persons, or one at a time
- or that He was always subordinate to God the Father, even before the incarnation (and therefore could not have been part of "Godhead" of equality)
- others, still, teach that He became God's Son through adoption, at His baptism
- cults teach a variety of additional positions

Each of these creates theological problems. We need to have a clear understanding of Jesus' person and ministry.

The theme of Christology goes beyond the chronology of Jesus' life. It is more concerned with the person of Jesus.

Tensions within the Christian movement (especially between the Western and Eastern Roman divisions) over the humanity and divinity of Jesus led to divisions in the church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Subsequent church councils were organised to deal with the issues. They decreed that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human. However, some branches of Christianity were not included in the final decisions; some were officially designated heresies. See p. 11 for a useful secular treatment of the issues.

Major obstacles were resolved in the First Council of Nicea in 325; participants agreed Jesus Christ was fully divine and fully human; however, they did not explain how and technicalities arising from this position led to deep-seated and ongoing controversies that lasted for centuries and led to the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451. We are still facing many of the same issues.

Remember, this course is "introductory"; there is a lot of information in the market about the matters outlined above.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

1. Son of God

The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35, NIV)

Not everyone agrees:

Ebionites - early 2 nd Century	Denied the reality of Christ's divine nature; regarded Him as a mere mortal, whether naturally or supernaturally conceived.
Arians	Taught that Christ was the first of the created beings (this meant there was a time when He did not exist); not fully God; called Logos, or begotten son, to distinguish Him from God.
Jehovah's Witnesses	"A" son of God. The first son that God brought forth, or "begot". A created being.

The Bible proclaims His deity.

- called God - John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13
- called Son of God, even before His birth - Luke 1:35
- named Emmanuel, or "God with us" - Matthew 1:23
- called Lord - Matthew 22:43-45; Luke 2:11; Acts 4:33; 9:17; 16:31;
- worshipped as God - Matthew 14:33; 28:17; Luke 5:8; 24:52; John 20:28
- pre-existent - John 8:58
- self-existent - John 1:4; 5:26
- immutable (unchanging)- Hebrews 1:12; 13:8
- the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him - Colossians 2:9

Evidences

(a) The Consciousness of Christ

He knew that He was God's Son. At the age of 12, "I must be doing my Father's business (Luke 2:49). He was always called God's Son, cf Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5.

Confirmed at His baptism (Matthew 3:17). Satan challenged during the wilderness temptation ("If you are the Son of God", Matthew 4:3). Confirmed by Peter (Matthew 16:15-17). Jesus taught that understanding this was divinely imparted. Declared during His trial before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:63-64).

(b) The Claims of Christ

Jesus claimed to have a special relationship with God the Father - Matthew 11:27; John 14:9-11; 16:28; 17:25; 20:21.

He made specific claims about Himself as the **"I Am"**.

John 6:51: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever"
John 8:23: "And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world' "
John 8:12 (and 9:5): "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life'."
John 8:58 "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'." The Jewish leaders recognised that Jesus was addressing Himself with an expression only Jehovah could use; "I AM, the Eternal/Self Existent One, אהיה אשר אהיה; the response God used in the Hebrew Bible (the Torah) when Moses asked for His name (Exodus 3:14). Therefore they tried to stone Him - they knew exactly what He was saying.
John 10:9: "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."
John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."
John 10:36: "do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" "
John 11:25: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'."
John 13:13: You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am.
John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'."
John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."
John 19:2: "Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews'."
Revelation 1:1: "I am the Alpha and the Omega*," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (A and Ω, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.)
Revelation 1:17: "I am the First and the Last."

(c) The Authority of Christ

Jesus' authority was demonstrated in His:

- teaching - Matthew 7:24; "I say" 49 times in the Sermon on the Mount (setting His teaching in the context of, and over and above, that of Israel's founders and leaders)
- power over sickness and disease - Matthew 12:15
- command power over demons - Mark 1:24-27
- command power over nature - Matthew 8:27
- divine ability to forgive sins - Mark 2:10
- collaboration with the Father in producing miracles - Mark 6:41; John 11:41, 42
- power over death - John 11:43, 44; Acts 2:24
- authority to call people to abandon everything and follow Him

John's Gospel records nine miracles that show aspects of Jesus' authority

Miracle	Text	Authority Over ...
Turning water into wine	2:11	Quality
Healing the nobleman's son	4:46-54	Distance
Healing of the lame man	5:1-9	Time
Feeding of five thousand	6:1-14	Quantity
Walking on water	6:16-21	Natural law
Healing of the man born blind	9:1-12	Personal misfortune
Raising of Lazarus from the dead	11:1-16	Death
Jesus' own resurrection from the dead	20:1-9	Death, Hell, Satan
Miraculous catch of fish	21:1-7	God's creatures

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31, NIV)

(d) The Sinlessness of Christ

Jesus was fully God and fully human. He was tempted like us, but did not sin. He challenged His enemies to find sin in Him (John 8:46). His sinlessness did not come about because He was God, but because of His choices. Being man He was capable of yielding to temptation.

(e) The Testimony of Others

John the Baptist - John 1:33

The centurion at the cross - Mark 15:39

The disciples:

John - John 1:1-18

Thomas - "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28)

Nathanael - John 1:49

Peter - Acts 2:36; 4:12; 2 Peter 3:18

Paul - Titus 2:13; Colossians 1:17; 2:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14

2. The Word (λόγος , *Logos*)

"In the beginning was the Word (λόγος), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood¹ it. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-5, 14 NIV)

Lit. "word", "reason". Featured in the writings of many Greek philosophers. For Christians, Jesus is the eternal Word, the expression of the Father's character.

Many religions rely on the written word, eg the Koran in Islam and the Vedas in Hinduism (containing hymns, incantations, and rituals from ancient India, the Vedas have also influenced Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism).

By comparison, in Christianity the λόγος took on human flesh, came to earth and spoke to us personally (John 1:14). Jesus is the:

- revelation of God - Hebrews 1:2-3 - in human flesh
- image of the invisible God - Hebrews 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 1:15
- expression of God who relates to us (He does not hide from us, as many other religions teach)

3. Lord

(a) Deity

LORD = "kurios"; used for Jehovah in the Greek Septuagint.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the Jews refused to call the Roman emperor *kurios*, because this title was reserved for God alone.

Paul transfers to Jesus Christ passages in the Old Testament (eg Isaiah 45: 23) which refer to God. It is to the *Lord* Jesus Christ that every knee shall now bow and whom every tongue shall confess (Philippians 2: 10).

(b) Exaltation

Christ is the “Son of God” because of His eternal relationship with the Father (Philippians 2:9). Confirmed by the resurrection (Acts 2:36; Romans 1:4; 14:9)

(c) Sovereign

He is our ruler. He has purchased us with a great price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:15).

4 Son of Man

Christ shared our human nature via what theologians call the “kenosis” (Philippians 2:5-11). He humbled Himself and took our human form on Himself. He was subjected to our weaknesses, temptations, limitations.

When applied to Jesus, the term “Son of Man” (Matthew 8:20; Mark 2:10, 28) had a connection with God. Jesus used the title to refer to His ministry to humanity (cf Luke 19:10), His sufferings (Mark 8:31) and His exaltation over mankind (Matthew 25:31, cf Daniel 7:13, 14). 1 John 1 describes the humanness of Jesus, while acknowledging Him as God. “Son of Man appears 82 times in the New Testament, in all but three cases Jesus used it, referring to Himself.

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law” (Galatians 4:4, NIV)

The Humanity of Jesus Christ was evidenced as follows:

- had human ancestry - Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1) Son of David (Matthew 1:1, 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 31, 21:9, 15; Romans 1:13)
- born to human parents - Matthew 1:1, 16, 18, 2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 12:47, 13:55; Mark 3:31, 32, 6:3; Luke 2:34, 48, 51, 3:23, 8:19, 20; John 2:1, 3, 5, 12, 6:42, 19:25, 26; Acts 1:14, Romans 1:3; Galatians 4:4
- started His human life as a baby - Luke 2:12, 16
- was a child - Matthew 2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21; Luke 2:17, 27, 34, 40
- was a boy - Luke 2:43
- submitted to His parents - Luke 2:51
- had a developed personality - Luke 2:40
- called a man and recognised as such by the community - Matthew 8:27, 12:23, 24, 13:54, 56, 26:61, 72, 74, 27:19, 47; Mark 2:7, 15:39; Luke 5:21, 9:9 15:2, 23:4, 6, 14, 18, 22, 41, 47; John 4:29, 6:52, 7:12, 15, 25, 27, 31, 35, 46, 9:11, 16, 24, 29, 33, 10:33, 41, 11:37, 47, 50, 18:29, 30, 40, 19:5, 12; Acts 2:22, 23, 13:23, 17:31, 25:19; Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 47; Philippians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:5
- had human siblings - Matthew 12:47, 13:55, 13:56; Mark 3:31, 32, 6:3; Luke 8:19, 20; John 2:12, 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14
- had a human body - Matthew 26:12, 27:58, 59; Mark 14:8, 15:43, 45; Luke 23:52, 55, 24:3, 23, 39; John 1:14, 2:21, 6:51-56, 19:38, 40, 20:12, 20:25, 27; Acts 2:31; Romans 1:3, 7:4, 8:3; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:24, 27; 2 Corinthians 4:10, 5:16; Ephesians 1:23, 4:12, 5:30; Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 10:5, 10; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 1:1, 2, 4:2
- had a soul - Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34; John 12:27
- had a spirit - Matthew 27:50; Mark 2:8, 8:12; Luke 23:46; John 13:21
- had a human name - Jesus = Joshua - Matthew 1:21

Jesus became a man through what theologians call the “incarnation”, lit. taking on human flesh.

He had the normal limitations of mankind:

- experienced hunger Matthew 4:2, 21:18; Mark 11:12; Luke 4:2
- ate food - Matthew 4:2; 11:19, 12:1, 21:18; 26:17, 26; Mark 14:18, 22; Luke 7:34, 15:2, 22:19, 24:41-43 (NB this was after His resurrection); John 18:28
- experienced tiredness/slept - Matthew 8:24; John 4:6
- became thirsty - John 4:7, 19:28
- drank - Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34
- tried to escape the crowds - Luke 4:42
- wept at the death of a friend - John 11:35 (cf Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34; Luke 19:41)
- was tempted in every area - Luke 4:2-13; Hebrews 2:18, 4:15
- accepted limitations in His in knowledge - Mark 13:32; John 11:34 (some theologians believe Jesus’ knowledge and spatial limitations, ie he did not act as omniscient and was not omnipresent, were self-imposed)
- needed to depend on God for strength, prayed - Mark 1:35; John 6:15; Hebrews 5:7
- needed to depend on the Holy Spirit - for miracles (Matthew 12:28), teaching (Acts 1:2)
- experienced joy - John 15:11
- felt pain - Isaiah 53:3-4
- bled and physically died - John 19:30, 34; Hebrews 2:9

Jesus was called Himself a man by:

- Himself - John 8:40
- John the Baptist - John 1:30
- Peter - Acts 2:22
- Paul - Acts 13:38; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 1 Timothy 2:5

Jesus was identified as a Jew (John 4:9; 8:57). Stilled referred to as “man” in His ascension (1 Timothy 2:5). He will come again (Matthew 16:27, 28) and judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31) as a man.

He experienced the same temptations as we do, but without sin (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16)

Hebrews teaches that Jesus was “perfected” through the things He suffered (Hebrews 6:8, 9).

Some Incorrect Views About Christ’s Humanity

Mormonism	Firstborn of the spirit children of Elohim.
Roman Catholicism	Immaculate Conception The belief that Mary was protected from original sin, that she did not have a sin nature, and was therefore sinless. Inference that Jesus would have inherited a sinful nature. The Biblical record about the virgin birth of Jesus Christ does not suggest anything about Mary’s conception, in terms of her sinfulness.

Gnosticism	<p>Gnostics variously believed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Christ did not have a real body; ▪ He had a real body, but it was not really real (as they believed matter is inherently evil) ▪ Jesus and Christ were completely distinct (Christ was a power that descended on Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the crucifixion) ▪ Jesus was a lesser “emanation” of God, because He was human; God cannot take on a physical form
Nestorianism	The Logos indwelt Jesus (in the same way the Holy Spirit indwells Christians). Believed that Christ had two personalities.
Islam	Muslims believe Jesus (Isa), son of Mary (Maryam), was the last and greatest prophet, in a line of prophets, before the coming of Mohammed; that Jesus was a true Muslim; that He did not die on the cross/rise from the dead. He is still alive. One day he will return to judge the earth and condemn non-Muslims. The Koran rejects the fact that Jesus was God/the Son of God.
Christian Science	Jesus is the man and Christ is the divine idea.
Spiritualism	Christ was no more than a medium of a higher order.

Why did Jesus Christ Come in Human Flesh?

Part of God’s “mystery”. But we do know that the incarnation was designed to:

- confirm God’s promises - Romans 15:8, 9; Isaiah 9:6
- reveal God in a way that mankind can understand - John 1:18; 5:19, 20, 10:38
- reveal God’s grace and truth - John 1:17
- save us - 1 Timothy 1:15 - by taking our place and offering Himself as an “atoning” sacrifice
- put away sin - Hebrews 9:26
- prepare the means for us to share God’s divine nature - 1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2
- enable Him to be a “faithful high priest”, able to represent men and women (literally) - Hebrews 5:1, 2
- destroy the works of the Devil - 1 John 3:8
- give us a flesh and blood example of the holy life - 1 John 2:6

5. Christ

Jesus was his given name; Christ was His title = lit. “anointed one”, cf Psalm 2:2; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18, 19

Jesus was the Messiah (the Hebrew equivalent) awaited since Old Testament times. The anointing came at his baptism in the Jordan River.

People were looking for a political Messiah/king/deliverer, who would judge the world powers and restore Israel to her former greatness. They were not looking out for a deliverer from sin (cf Luke 1:68-75). Jesus avoided political entrapment or involvement. He spoke of a “kingdom” that was spiritual in nature, but insisted that people also submit to earthly rulers. Even John the Baptist (after his arrest) seems to have had second thoughts until Jesus clarified with reference to the great works He was performing (Matthew 11:1-3).

There were many false Messiahs. The Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as the Christ.

Those who initially recognised Jesus as Christ included:

- angels - Luke 2:11
- Andrew - John 1:41
- John the Baptist - John 3:28
- Martha - John 11:27
- John - John 1:17
- Peter - Matthew 16:16

6. Son of David

This was particularly relevant to the Jews (hence the genealogy in Matthew, the Gospel written to the Jews). Jesus was David’s descendant (cf Matthew 22:42-46). Why is that important to Gentiles? David was promised an eternal dynasty (2 Samuel 7:16), cf Isaiah 11:1). The promise had to do with God’s long-term faithfulness and provision or atonement (at-one-ment) for the whole of humanity.

7. Saviour

Deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt typified spiritual salvation. God told Israel He was their Saviour (Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 43:3, 11; 45:15; Jeremiah 14:8). He then sent Jesus = Joshua = Saviour deliverer (cf Matthew 1:21), in His timing (Galatians 4:4).

8. Judge

The first time Jesus came into the world He did so to be a saviour. The next time will be as a judge, at a time appointed by the Father - Acts 10:42; 17:31. It is important not to view Jesus just in terms of what He looked like during His earthly ministry, cf John the Apostles vision of Him in Revelation Chapter One.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

Holy	Luke 1:35; Acts 2:27, 3:14, 4:27
Impartial	John 8:7
Just	Acts 3:14
Sinless	Hebrews 4:15
Obedient to the Father	John 8:29
Love	Mark 10:21; John 14:31, 15:9; Ephesians 3:19
Humble	John 13:13-15; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8
Friend of sinners	Matthew 11:19
Faithful friend	John 15:13-15
Meek (πραῦς = gentle, mild, humble, strength under control)	Matthew 11:29, 12:20; 2 Corinthians 10:1
A person of prayer	Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; John 6:15; Hebrews 5:7
Motivated and focused to work incessantly for God, in line with His purpose and will (but also knew how to rest)	John 5:17, 8:2, 9:4 (His secret: Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 10:38)
“Recklessly” generous, on our behalf	2 Corinthians 8: 9
Compassionate	Matthew 9:36 - for the community Mark 1:40, 41 - for individuals
Forgiving	Luke 23:24

Assessing Jesus’ claims:

"I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him, 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the sort of thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or He would be the devil of hell. You must make a choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse."

(C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), pp. 55-56)

