

Systematic Theology #2:

Jesus Christ

Christology is the theological study of the person and work of Christ.

THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD

Incarnation refers to the eternal Son of God taking human nature to himself through his miraculous physical conception in Mary's womb and so becoming a man.

1. The second person of the Trinity took human nature to himself. He remains forever undiminished deity and true humanity united in one person.

Philippians 2:6–7 (ESV) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Colossians 2:9 (ESV) For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...

2. The Son of God became man; he did not simply dwell in a human person.

John 1:14 (ESV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The two natures of Jesus are inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity. He remains 100% God and 100% man, one person with two distinct natures forever.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

1. Jesus was miraculously born of the virgin Mary.

Luke 1:30–35 (ESV) And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High...

*And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"
And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the
child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."*

2. The virgin birth is a sign that Jesus is unique, unlike any other human who has ever lived, and that God is his Father. It points to him being the chosen one, whom the Father sent to save people from their sins.

In Jesus, God miraculously took to himself human nature like ours except without a sin nature.

SINLESSNESS AND OBEDIENCE

1. Jesus lived a sinless life.

Hebrews 4:15 (ESV) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

2. Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father.

- Jesus was submissive to his earthly parents (Lk 2:51).
- Jesus was faithful as God's servant.

Matthew 20:27–28 (ESV) "... the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Jesus was obedient throughout his sufferings.

Hebrews 5:8–9 (ESV) Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...

- Jesus was obedient to the Father even unto death.

Philippians 2:6–8 (ESV) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

THE ATONEMENT

1. The atonement is the work accomplished by Jesus when he died on the cross for our sins, making possible our forgiveness by God and our reconciliation to him through our repentance and faith.

2. The atonement addresses many critical human needs.

- Humans are separated from God by their sins.

Isaiah 59:2 (ESV) but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

- Humans are in bondage to sin and under the Evil One's influence.

John 8:34 (ESV) Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

Ephesians 2:1–2 (ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...

- Humans deserve to suffer God's righteous wrath against their sin.

Romans 1:18 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

3. Only Jesus could pay the price for our sin, because he is both God and perfect, sinless humanity.

4. The atonement of Jesus brings about many critical benefits for repentant, believing humans, including:

- Propitiation, which in Scripture means God's righteous wrath toward us is instead executed upon Jesus and is fully satisfied, so that we might be granted God's favor instead.

1 John 4:10 (ESV) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- Redemption, which involves God's work in us to conquer the power of sin and restore the image of God.

Romans 6:6 (ESV) We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

- Reconciliation, which is the reestablishment of a favorable relationship between God and humans.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (ESV) in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them...

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

1. Jesus's resurrection ensures our salvation.

1 Peter 1:3 (ESV) According to his great mercy, he (God the Father) has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

2. Jesus's resurrection ensures that we can have power over sin.

Romans 6:4 (ESV) [J]ust as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

3. Jesus's resurrection ensures that we will be glorified.

Philippians 3:21 (ESV) [The Lord Jesus Christ] will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body...

4. Jesus's ascension makes possible the gift of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7 (ESV) Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

THE DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION

1. All the dead will be resurrected. (Acts 24:15)

Acts 24:15 (ESV) [T]here will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

2. It will be a bodily resurrection like Jesus's own resurrection.

Philippians 3:20–21 (ESV) [W]e await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Jesus's resurrected body is described as "flesh and bones" with scarred hands, feet, and side, capable of eating and drinking normal food and drink. (Lk 24:39-43; Jn 20:20ff; Ac 1:4; 10:41).

3. Christians will receive glorious bodies. Paul describes them as follows in 1 Corinthians 15:35-54.

- Heavenly (v. 40)
- Incorruptible, or imperishable (v. 42)
- Glorious, or radiant, or full of splendor (v. 43)
- Powerful, or mighty, or strong (v. 43)
- Spiritual (i.e., of the Spirit of God) (v. 44)
- Not natural (literally, soulical; i.e. of the human soul) (v. 44)
- Immortal, or deathless (v. 53)

"Heavenly" and "spiritual" do not mean non-material. Jesus has a "heavenly" body, but he ate normal food and drink and others could touch him. Paul contrasts a body "of the soul" and a body "of the spirit." Our present bodies are animated by our imperfect souls, but our future bodies will be animated by God's Spirit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was Jesus uniquely qualified to atone the penalty of our sin and to restore the relationship between God and us?
2. Why does it matter if the resurrection is a historical fact and not a metaphor, as some theologically liberal scholars believe?

HOMEWORK

1. Read some of the following texts and write down how Jesus's actions reveal who he is: Luke 4:14-21; 5:18-26; 6:1-5; 9:10-17; 9:28-36; 19:28-36.

How would the Jewish audiences have interpreted what Jesus did?

How should we respond today?