

The Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

I. Introduction to the Doctrine of Christ

Christology, the study of the person and work of Jesus Christ, is foundational to Christian faith and theology. The identity of Christ, who He is and what He has accomplished, is the heart of the gospel. It is essential for the believer to understand Christ as fully God and fully man, the Savior of the world who accomplishes redemption through His life, death, and resurrection. This doctrine is not just a theological abstraction but has practical implications for the believer's salvation, worship, and daily walk with God.

The early Church faced intense challenges in defining the nature of Christ, especially as heretical teachings, such as Gnosticism, Arianism, and Nestorianism, sought to distort His identity. Over the centuries, the Church, guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit, came to a clearer understanding of the nature of Christ, culminating in the creeds and confessions that have shaped orthodox Christian belief.

II. Biblical Foundations for the Person of Christ

A. The Full Divinity of Christ (John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:3)

The full divinity of Christ is one of the central doctrines of Christian faith. The Gospel of John opens with a profound statement of the pre-existence of Christ: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This passage affirms that Jesus (the Word) is not merely a created being but is fully divine, existing with God from the very beginning.

John 1:14 further clarifies this by stating, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This affirms the doctrine of the Incarnation—Jesus, the eternal Word, took on human nature. His divinity is not lost or diminished in the incarnation; rather, He is fully God and fully man.

In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul speaks of the preeminent position of Christ in creation and redemption. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created... and in Him all things hold together" (vv. 15-17). Christ is the Creator and sustainer of the universe, underscoring His divine nature and role in salvation.

Hebrews 1:3 echoes this truth, declaring that Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." This affirms the doctrine of the full divinity of Christ, portraying Him as being of the same essence as the Father.

B. The Full Humanity of Christ (Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:14-18; Matthew 4:2-3)

The full humanity of Christ is equally crucial to understanding His work of salvation. Philippians 2:6-8 speaks of Christ's humility: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." This passage affirms that Jesus, while fully divine, took on human nature—He became like us in every way except for sin.

Hebrews 2:14-18 further expands on this, emphasizing that Christ shared in humanity's experiences, including suffering and temptation, so that He might be a faithful High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses. The text also explains that Jesus' full participation in humanity's nature was necessary for Him to provide atonement for our sins.

In Matthew 4:2-3, during the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, we see His genuine humanity. Though He was the Son of God, He was also hungry, weak, and tempted, just as any human would be. This affirms that Christ's human experience was not a façade but a real participation in the human condition.

C. The Hypostatic Union: Fully God and Fully Man (John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 2:9)

The doctrine of the Hypostatic Union refers to the union of the full divinity and full humanity of Christ in one person. This doctrine was central to the early ecumenical councils, particularly the Council of Chalcedon (451), which affirmed that Christ is "truly God and truly man."

John 1:14 speaks to the mystery of this union, stating that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The eternal Word, who was fully God, became fully human without ceasing to be divine.

1 Timothy 3:16 also affirms this union: "He appeared in the flesh, 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." This passage highlights the condescension of Christ, who, though divine, entered into human history to fulfill God's redemptive plan.

Colossians 2:9 further underscores this by stating, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." In the person of Jesus, the fullness of God is fully and completely present in a human body.

III. The Work of Christ: Atonement and Redemption

A. The Necessity of Atonement (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 2:2)

The doctrine of atonement holds that Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the means by which humanity is reconciled to God. The necessity of atonement arises from the doctrine of sin—humanity is separated from God because of sin, and there must be a sacrifice to restore that relationship.

Romans 3:25 speaks of Jesus being "a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood." This sacrifice was necessary because "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), and Jesus' death was the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

Hebrews 9:22 affirms that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness," pointing to the sacrificial nature of Christ's death. Jesus' sacrifice is the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system, where blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins.

1 John 2:2 echoes this, affirming that Jesus "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." This underscores the universal scope of Christ's atonement—His death was sufficient for the sins of all who would believe.

B. The Nature of Christ's Work in Salvation (Matthew 20:28; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24)

The nature of Christ's work is multifaceted: He came to serve, to suffer, and to redeem. Matthew 20:28 reminds us that Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This speaks to the voluntary nature of Christ's death—He willingly gave Himself up for the salvation of humanity.

2 Corinthians 5:21 emphasizes the doctrine of substitution: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Christ's death was not just a martyrdom; it was a substitutionary atonement, where He took on the penalty for sin that was due to humanity.

1 Peter 2:24 speaks of Christ bearing our sins in His body on the cross, so that "we might die to sins and live for righteousness." His work on the cross not only paid the penalty for sin but also provides the power for believers to live a life of righteousness.

IV. The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

A. The Importance of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:17; Romans 4:25; Philippians 3:10-11)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of Christian hope and salvation. 1 Corinthians 15:17 declares, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." The resurrection proves that Jesus' atoning work was effective and accepted by the Father. It is the guarantee of the believer's future resurrection and eternal life.

Romans 4:25 reminds us that Jesus "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." The resurrection is the vindication of Christ's sacrifice and the means by which believers are justified before God.

Philippians 3:10-11 speaks of the believer's hope in the resurrection: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings." The resurrection not only confirms Christ's divinity and work but also empowers the believer to live in victory over sin and death.

V. The Implications of Christ's Person and Work

A. Christ's Role in the Church and Christian Life (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23)

Christ is the Head of the Church and the source of all Christian life. Colossians 1:18 states, "He is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead." This affirms that Christ is not only the Savior of individuals but also the Head of His body, the Church.

Ephesians 1:22-23 affirms that God has "placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body." Christ's work in salvation leads to the formation of the Church, the community of believers who are united to Him by faith.

B. The Return of Christ and Final Judgment (Revelation 22:12; Matthew 25:31-46)

The second coming of Christ will bring the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. Revelation 22:12 records Christ's promise: "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done."

Matthew 25:31-46 describes the final judgment, where Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. This serves as a reminder that Christ's mission is not only to redeem but also to establish His eternal kingdom of justice, peace, and righteousness.

VI. Conclusion

The doctrine of Christ is central to the Christian faith. He is both fully God and fully man, the Savior of the world, and the One through whom all things were created and redeemed. Through His atoning death, resurrection, and ascension, He has provided a way for humanity to be reconciled to God.

THCCI affirms the Doctrine of Christ, recognizing His full divinity, full humanity, and the central role of His person and work in the redemption of all who believe. The Church continues to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, our Savior, Redeemer, and King.