The Doctrine of Jesus Christ

All Scriptures are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

This treatise will present an overview of Christology, which is the study of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It deals with the Person of Christ, including His pre-existence, incarnation, and resurrection. It explores His role in salvation history, His divine and human natures, His revelation of God the Father, and His ongoing ministry in heaven.

Understanding Christ's Person and work is essential for grasping the central message of the Bible. Every major theme of Scripture finds its fulfillment in Him. Christ is the hinge on which all of history turns, and without knowing Him, we can't fully know God or understand His plan for humanity.

Important Theological Terms

First, we need to understand some key theological terms that explain who Christ is and how His divine and human natures relate. These terms, drawn from Scripture and church history, help us convey the mystery of Christ.

1. Hypostasis

Hypostasis is a Greek term used by later theologians to mean "person." It refers to an individual, distinct subject, often used to describe the three Persons of the Trinity. This term is crucial in distinguishing between Christ's Person and His natures. Without it, we can't properly explain how Christ is a distinct Person within the Godhead, yet fully united to His divine and human natures.

2. Person

This comes from the Latin "persona," meaning a self-aware subject capable of relationships with others. Theologians use this term to describe Christ as a distinct Person of the Godhead who relates to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Understanding Christ as a Person helps us grasp that He is not an impersonal force or abstract principle, but Someone we can know and with whom we can have a relationship.

3. Nature

Nature is what is essential or inherent in someone or something. Christ has two distinct natures—divine and human—which are fully united in His Person. This term is important because it clarifies that Jesus' divinity and humanity are real and complete. He is not a mix of the two, but fully God and fully man.

4. Consubstantial

This term means "of the same substance" and is equivalent to the Greek term “homoousios.” It means that the Son is of the same divine essence as the Father. This is vital in defending the full divinity of Christ, ensuring that we do not see Him as a lesser or created being, but as God Himself.

5. Godhead

This is an older English word for divine nature or deity. It refers to the full divinity of God as seen in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This term is significant because it helps us speak of the unity of the Trinity while recognizing the distinct Persons within the Godhead, including Christ’s full divinity.

6. Hypostatic Union

This refers to the union of two natures—divine and human—in one hypostasis, or Person, called Jesus Christ. This concept is central to Christian theology because it describes how Christ can be both fully God and fully man without mixture or separation. It affirms the miracle of the incarnation while maintaining the truth of Christ’s full humanity and full divinity.

7. Incarnation

This term comes from the Latin “in carne,” meaning "in the flesh." This refers to the Son of God taking on human flesh and dwelling among us as Jesus Christ. The incarnation is at the heart of the Christian faith, because without it, Christ couldn’t fully represent humanity, nor could He accomplish the work of salvation on the cross as both God and man.

Each of these terms plays a key role in explaining Christ’s Person and work. They uphold the truth of His identity and help us understand the depth of His relationship with God and humanity.

Historical Views of the Person of Christ

Throughout history, different groups and individuals have developed various views on the Person of Jesus Christ. Some of these views upheld biblical truth, while others strayed into heresy. Understanding these historical positions helps us appreciate the clarity of the orthodox view and the need for doctrinal precision.

1. The Orthodox View

The orthodox position, affirmed at the Council of Nicaea (in 325 AD) and the Council of Chalcedon (in 451 AD), teaches that Jesus Christ has two natures—human and divine—perfectly united in one Person. Theologians call this the “hypostatic union.” The distinction between His divine and human natures is not blurred or compromised by their union. Jesus is not divided into two persons; He is one Person, the Son of God. This view is essential for understanding the full divinity and full humanity of Christ, ensuring that He can represent humanity and accomplish divine salvation.

2. The Ebionites

The Ebionites were a remnant of early Judaizing Christianity that rejected the deity and virgin birth of Christ. They taught that Jesus was merely a human being, the natural son of Mary and Joseph. According to the Ebionites, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Mosaic Law, so God selected Him to be the Messiah. The Ebionites rejected the pre-existence of Christ and misunderstood His role as the Son of God, reducing Him to a mere prophet or moral teacher rather than the divine Savior. Their view was condemned as heretical by the early church because it denied the incarnation and divinity of Christ.

3. The Gnostics

Gnosticism was a diverse movement that emerged in the early centuries of the church. The Gnostics believed in dualism, which said that the spiritual realm is good and the material realm, including the human body, is evil. This led them to reject the idea that God could take on human flesh. Cerinthian Gnosticism claimed that the divine Christ descended upon the human Jesus at His baptism and left Him before His crucifixion, suggesting that Jesus was not truly God during His entire earthly life. Docetic Gnosticism taught that Jesus only seemed to have a physical body but was only a spiritual apparition. Both forms of Gnosticism denied the true humanity of Christ, undermining the gospel's teaching that Jesus truly suffered, died, and rose in the flesh.

4. The Arians

In the early fourth century, Arius of Alexandria argued that Christ was not co-eternal or co-equal with God the Father. Instead, Arius taught that God created the Logos (the pre-incarnate Christ) as the first and highest of all creatures, through whom the rest of creation came into being. According to Arius, Christ was a kind of demi-god, greater than humans but not fully divine. The Council of Nicaea condemned Arianism and affirmed that Christ is of the same substance (or essence) as the Father, fully God and fully eternal. Arianism posed a major challenge to the early church and required Christians to define and defend the doctrine of Christ's full divinity.

5. The Apollinarians

Apollinaris, a fourth-century bishop, argued that Jesus had a true human body but not a rational human soul or mind. In place of a human mind, Apollinaris claimed that the divine Logos filled this role. By denying that Jesus had a fully human mind, Apollinaris diminished Christ's full humanity. This view was rejected by the church because it compromised the completeness of Jesus' humanity. If Christ did not have a fully human mind, then He could not fully represent or redeem humanity, since He would not be like us in every respect apart from sin.

6. The Nestorians

Nestorius, a fifth-century bishop of Constantinople, denied the real union of Christ's two natures into one Person. He emphasized the distinction between Christ's human and divine natures to such an extent that he implied a separation between them, leading to a kind of dual personality. In Nestorius' view, the divine Logos dwelt in the man Jesus, but they were not united in one Person. The Council of Ephesus condemned this error in AD 431 because it threatened the unity of Christ's Person and risked presenting Jesus as two separate beings. The church maintained that Jesus is one Person with two distinct yet fully united natures.

7. The Eutychians

Eutyches, a monk in the fifth century, argued that after the incarnation, Christ had only one nature. He believed that the divine and human natures were so thoroughly united that they blended into a third nature, which was neither fully divine nor fully human. This view, known as "monophysitism," was rejected at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. The church affirmed that Christ has two distinct natures, fully divine and fully human, without mixture, change, division, or separation. The Eutychian error diminishes both the humanity and divinity of Christ, compromising His ability to act as our representative and our divine Savior.

Each of these historical views represents an attempt to explain the mystery of Christ's Person, but only the orthodox position preserves the full truth of Scripture: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, two distinct natures united in one Person.

The Preincarnate Christ

The doctrine of the preincarnate Christ teaches that Jesus existed before His birth. His divine nature is not bound by time, and His involvement in creation and history began long before the incarnation. We can summarize this biblical teaching into five main points.

1. Christ Existed Before His Human Birth

The Old Testament predicted the coming of a divine figure who existed from eternity. These prophecies reveal that the Messiah, though born as a child, preexisted from eternity past, showing that Christ is not merely human but divine.

> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
>
> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. (Micah 5:2)

2. He Was with the Father in Eternity Past

The Gospel of John confirms that Christ was with God from the beginning. These verses affirm Christ's eternal existence and His divine relationship with the Father.

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)
>
> And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (John 17:5)

3. He Created All Things

Scripture teaches that Christ was not only present at creation but also actively involved in it. These passages show that Christ is the Creator of all things, sustaining the universe by His power, demonstrating His divine authority and eternal nature.

> ...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8:6)
>
> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16–17)

4. He Appeared to Moses in the Old Testament

Moses encountered God at the burning bush, who identified Himself as "I AM." Jesus later revealed that He is the great "I AM" who appeared to Moses. Furthermore, no one has ever seen God the Father, but the Son has made Him known, indicating that it was the preincarnate Christ who interacted with people in the Old Testament.

> Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13–14)
>
> Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)
>
> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

5. He Accompanied Israel During Their Journey Through the Wilderness

God promised to send an angel to guide and protect Israel, and Paul identified this figure as Christ. This shows that the preincarnate Christ was actively involved in the salvation history of Israel, guiding, protecting, and sustaining them during their time in the wilderness.

> Behold, I am sending an angel before you to protect you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to his voice; do not defy him, for he will not forgive rebellion, since My Name is in him. But if you will listen carefully to his voice and do everything I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes. For My angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will annihilate them. (Exodus 23:20–23 BSB)
>
> ...and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:4)

The doctrine of the preincarnate Christ reveals His eternal nature and divine role in creation and redemption. Long before His incarnation, He was actively involved in human history, making His appearances throughout the Old Testament and serving as Creator and Sustainer of all things.

The Incarnate Christ

The doctrine of the incarnation is central to the Christian faith. It refers to the Logos, the Word of God, taking on human flesh, fully entering the human experience. In the incarnation, Jesus did not cease to be God but added a human nature to Himself. This profound mystery demonstrates the depths of God's love, as He became one of us to save us.

He Took On Human Nature

The Bible teaches that He took on human nature. Consider the following evidence:

1. He Was Given a Human Body

God the Son willingly received a physical body, making it possible for Him to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins.

> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me" (Hebrews 10:5)

2. He Partook of Flesh and Blood

Jesus shared in our humanity in every way, taking on real flesh and blood. The eternal Word entered human history as a real, physical person.

> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14)
>
> 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. (John 1:14)

3. He Is the Fullness of Deity in Bodily Form

Even in His humanity, Jesus was still fully God. His divine nature was not diminished or set aside in the incarnation but was perfectly united with His human nature. This union allows us to know God personally through the incarnate Christ.

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

He Experienced Human Life

The Bible also reveals that He fully experienced human life. Again, there is a large body of evidence to support this conclusion.

1. He Had a Human Birth

Jesus' humanity began with a real human birth. His birth was the beginning of His life as a man, subject to the same physical conditions as any other human.

> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18)
>
> ...but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:25)

> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law (Galatians 4:4)

2. He Grew and Matured

These passages show that Jesus experienced the normal process of physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth, just like any other human.

> And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. (Luke 2:40)
>
> And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)

3. He Was Hungry and Thirsty

Like all humans, Jesus experienced physical needs. These verses show us that Jesus fully shared in the physical limitations and needs of humanity.

> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (Matthew 4:2)
>
> In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. (Matthew 21:18)
>
> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” (John 19:28)

4. He Grew Tired and Slept

These details show that Jesus felt the same fatigue and need for rest that we experience.

> And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. (Matthew 8:24)
>
> Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. (John 4:6)

5. He Was Tempted to Sin

Though fully God, Jesus experienced real temptation. His sinlessness in the face of temptation is key to His role as our perfect substitute, who overcame sin on our behalf.

> 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. (Hebrews 4:15)

6. He Died

Jesus’ death was the culmination of His human experience. His real, physical death was necessary for our salvation and was followed by His glorious resurrection.

> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)
>
> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

The incarnation reveals that Jesus fully entered the human condition. He experienced every aspect of life, from birth to death, while remaining fully divine. This makes Him the perfect mediator between God and humanity, able to sympathize with our weaknesses and save us from our sins.

The Kenosis Question

The “kenosis” question is one of the most debated aspects of Christology: How could Christ be fully God and fully human during His incarnation? This issue arises from Philippians 2:6–8, where Paul states that Christ "emptied Himself" using the Greek term *kenoo*. Understanding what this "emptying" means is critical to maintaining a biblically sound view of Christ’s deity and humanity.

Background

1. Some claim that the incarnate Christ couldn’t be fully human and fully divine.

They argue that if Jesus was fully human, He could not have retained His full deity. They claim that His divinity must have been altered, diminished, or set aside during His time on earth. This idea stems from a misunderstanding of how Christ's two natures—divine and human—coexist in one person.

2. Philippians 2:6–8 states that the incarnate Christ "emptied Himself."

In this passage, Paul wrote that Christ, "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." The phrase "emptied Himself" has been at the center of kenosis debates, leading some to conclude that Christ must have set aside His divine attributes.

3. The term *kenosis* is used to denote this apparent contradiction.

The term “kenosis” refers to the act of Christ’s self-emptying, but the key question is: What did He empty Himself of? Did He give up His divine nature, or is there another explanation?

Range of Theories

1. Full Kenosis Theories (Change of Attributes)

Full kenosis theories suggest that Christ emptied Himself by giving up certain divine attributes, such as omniscience, omnipotence, or omnipresence, thus diminishing or denying His deity during the incarnation. These explanations are heterodox because they contradict the biblical teaching that Christ remained fully God even while on earth. Denying Christ’s deity undermines His ability to be our perfect mediator and Savior.

2. Partial Kenosis Theories (Change of Action)

Partial kenosis theories affirm Christ’s full deity but argue that, while on earth, He chose to cease acting as God. In other words, Christ still possessed His divine attributes but voluntarily refrained from using them. However, this view creates difficulties, since it implies that Jesus

could simply "switch off" His divinity, which is inconsistent with the inseparable union of His divine and human natures.

3. Non-Kenosis Theories (Change of Appearance)

Non-kenosis theories hold that Christ did not give up any divine attributes or cease acting as God but took on a humble form that concealed His divine glory. These theories maintain that Christ continued to exercise His divine power and authority while on earth, even though He appeared as an ordinary human. This view is most consistent with biblical teaching, as it upholds the unity of Christ's two natures without diminishing either His deity or His humanity.

Interpreting Philippians 2:6–8

We can summarize the biblical teaching about Philippians 2:6–8 with three key points:

1. Paul didn't mean that Christ emptied Himself of His divine attributes.

The context of Philippians 2:6–8 doesn't suggest that Christ set aside His divine attributes. Rather, Paul emphasized Christ's humility. The "emptying" refers to Christ's voluntary act of becoming a servant, not a literal loss of deity.

2. Paul didn't mean that Christ ceased to make use of His divine attributes.

Christ's divine power remained fully intact, but He chose not to display His full divine glory. For instance, while Jesus sometimes performed miraculous works, He often chose to live and suffer as any human would, showing His identification with humanity. This humility did not diminish His deity but highlighted His love and obedience to the Father's will.

3. Christ came in a form that did not exhibit or manifest His divine glory.

The "emptying" in Philippians 2 refers primarily to Christ taking on human form. He "emptied" Himself not by losing divine attributes, but by veiling His divine glory and taking on the limitations of humanity. Jesus was still fully God, but He appeared as an ordinary man, not clothed in the outward splendor of His divine majesty.

So, the kenosis does not mean that Christ gave up His deity. Instead, He willingly took on a human nature and humbly accepted the limitations and sufferings that came with it, all while remaining fully God. This view preserves both His divinity and humanity, ensuring that He is fully able to save those who trust in Him.

The Sinlessness of Christ

The doctrine of Christ's sinlessness is essential to understanding His unique role as our Savior. While all humans are born into sin, Christ was without sin though fully human. However, debates about His ability to sin and the nature of His temptation have led to a range of views on the impeccability of Christ.

The Range of Views

Clearly, there is a wide range of views on this issue:

1. Hard Impeccability

Christ was "not able to sin" in any sense. Because of Christ's divine nature, it was impossible for Him to sin. Since God can't sin, and Christ is fully God, this position holds that Christ couldn't have sinned, even though He experienced real temptation.

2. Soft Impeccability

Christ was "able to sin" physically. While Christ was unable to sin morally due to His divine nature, He was physically capable of sinning. In other words, His human nature allowed Him to feel the temptation, but His divine will was such that He could not give in to sin.

3. Soft Peccability

Christ was made "not able to sin" by the Holy Spirit. According to this view, the Holy Spirit's work in Christ's life ensured His sinlessness, though Christ's human nature could have made sin possible in theory.

4. Hard Peccability

Christ didn't sin because He depended on the Holy Spirit. This view proposes that while Christ was able to sin in His human nature, He remained sinless by perfectly depending on the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes Christ's humanity and the genuine possibility of sin, while recognizing that He overcame temptation through complete reliance on God's Spirit.

Biblical Considerations

The Bible provides specific data about this question for our consideration:

1. Jesus Was Physically Capable of Sinning

This suggests that Jesus experienced real temptation in His human nature, which would imply the physical capability of sinning. However, despite these temptations, He never sinned.

> 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. (Hebrews 4:15)

2. Jesus Was Prophetically Incapable of Sinning

Isaiah 9:6 and 53:5 provide prophetic insight into the coming Messiah, describing Him as the "Prince of Peace" and the one who would bear our iniquities. These prophecies indicate that Christ, as the sinless Savior, was predestined to remain sinless in His mission to save humanity.

> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
>
> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

3. Jesus Was Psychologically Incapable of Sinning

This statement points to the perfect unity between Christ and the Father, suggesting that Jesus was incapable of sinning because His will was perfectly aligned with the Father's will. His psychological state as the divine Son prevented any possibility of choosing to sin.

> So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (John 5:19)

4. Jesus Had a Human Nature with the Potential for Sin

Jesus' human nature included all the physical and emotional experiences of humanity, including the possibility of temptation. In this sense, His human nature had the potential for sin, yet He remained sinless.

> 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. (John 1:14)

5. Jesus Had a Divine Nature with No Potential for Sin

Jesus' divine nature remained fully intact during His earthly life. Since God cannot sin, Christ's divine nature made it impossible for Him to sin, despite the temptations He faced in His humanity.

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

The sinlessness of Christ is a vital doctrine because it underscores His qualification as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Though tempted in every way as we are, He never sinned. This unique combination of genuine human temptation and divine impeccability makes Christ the only one capable of bearing our sins and restoring our relationship with God.

Reasons for the Incarnation

The doctrine of the incarnation is central to Christian theology. Scripture reveals several important reasons why Christ had to take on a human nature to fulfill God's plan of salvation.

1. To Fulfill God's Promises

The incarnation fulfilled God's covenant promises made throughout history. From the promise to bless Abraham to the prophecies of a virgin birth and the coming of a Savior, Christ's arrival confirmed God's faithfulness. His birth, life, death, and resurrection show that God keeps His promises, especially those related to salvation and blessing for all nations through the seed of Abraham.

> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1–3)
>
> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and

bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6–7)

2. To Reveal the Father

Christ came to make God known in a way no one else could. He is the ultimate revelation of the Father, showing us what God is like in both His character and will. In Christ, we see God on full display.

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Hebrews 1:3)

3. To Be Our Example

Jesus came to show us how to live in accordance with God's will. He calls us to follow His example of humility, obedience, and love. The life of Christ is the pattern we are called to imitate in our own lives, as we strive to live faithfully before God.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

...whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:6)

4. To Defeat the Devil

From the beginning, God promised to crush the head of the serpent, and Christ's incarnation was a critical part of that victory. Through His death and resurrection, Christ broke the power of the devil, who held humanity in bondage through the fear of death.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. (John

12:31)

> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Hebrews 2:14–15)

5. To Atone for Our Sins

The primary purpose of the incarnation was to provide the perfect sacrifice for sin. Without the incarnation, there could be no atonement, because the only way for Christ to die in our place and reconcile us to God was by becoming human.

> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)
>
> ...for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:26)
>
> You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. (1 John 3:5)

6. To Become Our High Priest

Christ's incarnation enabled Him to serve as our High Priest, mediating between God and humanity. Because He became fully human, Christ understands our weaknesses and temptations. We can draw near to God through Him, knowing that He sympathizes with our struggles and intercedes on our behalf.

> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)
>
> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14–16)

The Resurrected Christ

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is foundational to the Christian faith. It not only proves His victory over sin and death but also provides a preview of the future resurrection for believers. Jesus' resurrection body had both physical and spiritual qualities, offering insights into the nature of His glorified state and the promise of life after death.

Initially, His Resurrection Body Was Physical

The Bible reveals that, after His resurrection, Jesus initially appeared to His disciples in a real, physical body. This wasn't a ghost or vision, but a tangible, flesh-and-bone body.

1. He Had Flesh and Bones

His resurrected body retained the characteristics of a physical body. Jesus invited His disciples to touch Him to verify that He was real.

> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. (Luke 24:36–40)

2. He Could Eat Food

Jesus asked for food and ate fish in the presence of His disciples to prove His bodily resurrection. This confirmed that He wasn't merely a spirit, but a living, breathing human being.

> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. (Luke 24:41–43)

3. He Breathed on the Disciples

This shows that He had physical functions, such as breathing, highlighting the reality of His physical resurrection.

> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22)

4. His Crucifixion Wounds Remained

Jesus' physical resurrection body still bore the marks of His crucifixion. The wounds served as a lasting testimony to His sacrifice and the continuity between His pre- and post-resurrection bodies.

> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26–28)

Later, His Resurrection Body Was Spiritual

The Bible also reveals that Jesus' resurrection body later underwent a transformation, becoming suited for His heavenly existence.

1. Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom

While Christ's body was physical after His resurrection, it had to be transformed into a glorified

state to enter the eternal kingdom.

> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed (1 Corinthians 15:50–51)

2. He Became a Life-Giving Spirit; He Changed

Jesus' resurrection body changed from a natural, perishable body to a glorified, imperishable one, suited for eternity. His body was no longer bound by the limitations of time, space, or physical death.

> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:42–45)

3. Although Changed, He Is Still a Man

Despite the transformation, Christ remains fully human in His glorified state. His humanity did not cease; He remains the God-man, the mediator for humanity.

> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:30–31)
>
> For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)

The resurrection of Christ points forward to the resurrection of believers. His physical resurrection shows the continuity between the old and the new, while His transformed body reveals the glorified state believers will share in eternity. Through His resurrection, Christ conquered death, offering eternal life to all who trust in Him.

The Exalted Christ

The exaltation of Christ signifies His ascension to a position of supreme authority after His resurrection. Seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ now reigns over all creation, intercedes for believers, and will ultimately return to establish His eternal kingdom. Each aspect of His exaltation reveals His continuing work in both the present and future.

1. He Governs the Church

This authority includes His headship over the church, the body of Christ. Christ directs and sustains the church, ensuring its growth and mission in the world. His authority over the church is comprehensive, and it assures believers that He is guiding His people to accomplish His purposes.

> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18)
>
> ...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:20–23)

2. He Intercedes for His People

As the exalted High Priest, Christ intercedes for His people before the Father. His intercession is ongoing, ensuring that those who trust in Him have continuous access to God's grace and mercy. We can approach God’s throne with confidence, knowing that Christ is our advocate.

> 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. (Hebrews 4:15)
>
> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:18)
>
> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)

3. He Will Rule the World

Although Christ currently reigns in heaven, He will return to establish His visible rule over the earth. His rule will be just and righteous, and His reign will bring peace and restoration to a broken world. His victory over sin, death, and the devil ensures that His rule will be final and complete.

> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (1 Corinthians 15:25)
>
> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15)

4. He Will Raise the Dead

As the one who conquered death, Christ will also raise the dead at His return. This resurrection will include both the righteous and the wicked—those who have believed in Christ will rise to eternal life, while those who have rejected Him will rise to judgment. The resurrection of the dead points to Christ’s ultimate victory over death and the final restoration of all things.

> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28–29)
>
> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians

15:21–23)

5. He Will Judge All People

At the end of the age, Christ will judge every person who has ever lived. His judgment will be perfect and just, rewarding the righteous and condemning the wicked according to their deeds.

> When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25:31–32)

> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

The exaltation of Christ assures believers that He is not only our Savior but also our reigning King and future Judge. His ongoing intercession strengthens us in the present, while His future reign and judgment motivate us to live faithfully as we await His return.

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