

# CHRISTOLOGY

- I. Biblical references to "Christology"
- A. There are no Biblical usages of the word "Christology"
1. "Christology" is derived from two Greek words
    - a. *Christos* meaning "Christ"
    - b. *logos* meaning "word, reason, study of"
  2. "Christology" is the study of the Person of Jesus Christ
    - a. distinct from "soteriology," which is the study of the work of Jesus Christ in redemption and salvation.
    - b. Christology addresses the issue of Jesus being both God and man, and becoming such in the incarnation
      - (1) Scripture has abundant references both to the deity and humanity of Jesus
      - (2) "Christology" attempts to correlate and explain how Jesus could be both God and man in the same person.
- B. Some references to Jesus' Deity
1. Pre-existence - Jn. 1:1,2; 17:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:17; Rev. 1:8
  2. Creator - Jn. 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16
  3. Sustainer - Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3
  4. Source of life - Jn. 5:26; 11:25; 14:6; 17:3; Rom. 6:23; I Jn. 5:12
  5. Revealer of God - Matt. 11:27; Jn. 1:18; 14:7; II Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3
  6. Son of God - Mk. 1:1; 9:7; Lk. 1:35; Jn. 1:34; 10:36; Rom. 1:4
  7. Identified as God - Jn. 5:18; 10:30; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; I Jn. 5:20
  8. I AM - Mk. 14:62; Lk. 22:70; Jn. 8:24,58; 11:25; 14:6; 18:5
  9. Trinity - Matt. 28:19; I Cor. 12:4-6; Eph. 3:14-17
  10. Holy One - Mk. 1:24; John 6:69; Acts 2:27; 3:14
  11. Object of faith - Mk. 8:34-38; Jn. 6:29,40; I Jn. 5:13
  12. Forgives sin - Matt. 9:6; Mk. 2:7,10; Lk. 5:21,23; Acts 5:31
  13. Savior - Matt. 1:21; Lk. 2:30; Jn. 1:29; 4:42; Acts 4:12; 5:31; Heb. 5:9; II Pt. 1:1,11
  14. Lord - Lk. 2:11; John 20:28; Rom. 10:9,12; 14:9; I Cor. 12:3; II Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:5; Rev. 17:14
  15. Pre-eminent - Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 1:18; 2:10
  16. Judge - Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46; Jn. 5:22-30; II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:1,8
  17. Worshipped - Acts 7:55,59; Phil. 2:8,9; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 3:21
- C. Some references to Jesus' humanity
1. Genealogy - Matt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-38
  2. Birth as infant - Matt. 2:1; Lk. 2:7; Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4
  3. Human flesh - Lk. 24:39; Jn. 1:14; Rom. 8:2; Heb. 2:14; I Jn. 4:2
  4. Tangible - Col. 2:9; I Jn. 1:1-3
  5. Development and growth - Lk. 2:40,46,51
  6. Human senses - Matt. 4:2; Jn. 4:6; 11:34; 19:28
  7. Emotion - Matt. 9:36; 26:37-40; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 10:21; Jn. 11:35; 12:27
  8. Temptation - Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-3; 22:44; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:7
  9. Prayer - Matt. 14:23; Mk. 1:35; Lk. 5:16; 22:39,41
  10. Derivative activity - Jn. 8:28; 14:10; Acts 2:22
  11. Death - Jn. 19:30; Phil. 2:8
  12. Son of Man - Mk. 8:31; 9:12; 10:33
  13. Man - Acts 2:22; Rom. 5:15; I Cor. 15:21; Phil. 2:7,8; I Tim. 2:5
- D. Particular references to God becoming man in the incarnation of Jesus

John 1:1,14 - "the Word was God...the Word became flesh..."  
 Rom. 1:3 - "His Son, who was born a descendant of David according to the flesh"  
 Rom. 8:3 - "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh... condemned sin in the flesh"  
 Rom. 9:5 - "the Christ according to the flesh"  
 Gal. 4:4 - "in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman"  
 Phil. 2:5-8 - "Christ Jesus...existed in the form of God..., but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men...found in appearance as a man..."  
 I Tim. 3:16 - "He who was revealed in the flesh"  
 Heb. 2:14 - "He Himself likewise partook of the same (flesh and blood), that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death...the devil"  
 I Jn. 1:1,2 - "the Word of Life...was manifested"

- II. A brief history of Christian discussion concerning the Christological incarnation
- A. Greek Gnosticism suggested Jesus only "appeared" to be human - Docetism
  - B. Ebionites (Jewish Christians) asserted Jesus was fully human, and Holy Spirit descended upon Him at baptism - Adoptionism.
  - C. Arius (c. 250-336) argued that Jesus was subordinate to God the Father. "There was a time when the Son was not" - Subordinationism; denial of pre-existence.
  - D. Council of Nicea (325) affirmed that Jesus was fully God and fully man in *homoousion*
  - E. Apollinarius (c. 310-380) posited that human rational soul of Jesus was replaced by divine *logos* in single nature - Monophysitism
  - F. Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389) stated, "the unassumed is the unhealed"
  - G. Nestorius (c. 380-451) suggested that there were two separate beings in Jesus Christ; no real union
  - H. Eutyches (c. 378-454) indicated that the human nature was absorbed into the divine in a synthesis - Absorption
  - I. *Tome* of Pope Leo (449), Council of Chalcedon (451) established orthodoxy as "two natures (divine and human) in one *hypostasis* or Person (Lat. *personae*).
  - J. Leontius of Byzantium (c. 500-560) introduced concept of *enhypostasia*, that human nature of Jesus did not have independent existence.
  - K. German theology of 18th and 19th centuries - quest for "historical Jesus." Led to R. Bultmann's "demythologization"
  - L. Nineteenth century theology - argument of kenotic theories of Christology
  - M. Karl Barth (1886-1968) - Christocentric revelation of God. Humanity of God- assumption of humanity into Deity, leading to universalism.

III. Issues of consideration concerning the Christological incarnation

- A. What is meant by God and man?
  - 1. Identifying God
    - a. Word of God - Jn. 1:1,14
    - b. Son of God - Rom. 1:3; 8:3
    - c. God the Father
    - d. Holy Spirit
    - e. Deity, Divinity, Godhead
  - 2. Identifying man
    - a. Flesh - Jn. 1:14; Rom. 8:3
    - b. Physical embodiment
    - c. Human form - cf. Phil. 2:7
    - d. Human individual

e. Humanity at large; human race

B. How can deity and humanity be unified?

1. Attributes and functions appear mutually antithetical

<u>God</u>	<u>Man</u>
Infinite	Finite
Eternal	Temporal
Omnipresent	Space-time limitation
Spirit	Tangible
Not visible	Visible
Not temptible	Temptible
Not mortal	Mortal
Independent, autonomous	Dependent, derivative

2. The Creator/creature distinction must always be maintained, and never allowed to merge monistically.

C. How is it that two become one?

1. Identifying the twoness - what is commonality of God and man?

- a. Persons
- b. Beings
- c. Natures
- d. Substances
- e. Essences

2. Identifying the oneness

- a. Person
- b. Nature
- c. Distinction
- e. Individual
- f. Embodiment
- g. Personification

D. What type of union is formed?

1. Biblical statements

- a. Word *became* flesh - Jn. 1:14
- b. Son *in the likeness* of sinful flesh - Rom. 8:3
- c. *taking the form* of a bond-servant - Phil. 2:7
- d. *being made in* the likeness of men - Phil. 2:7
- e. *partook of* flesh and blood - Heb. 2:14
- f. Word of Life *was manifested* - I Jn. 1:1,2

2. Human explanations

- a. Synthesis
- b. Hybrid
- c. Conglomeration
- d. Amalgamation
- e. Combination
- f. Consolidation
- g. Fusion
- h. Association
- i. Unification

E. Necessary balance

1. Ontological Christology (Being)

- a. Being, nature, life inherent in God
- b. Even if one can conceive of Jesus being God and man simultaneously; it seems impossible to fathom the simultaneous function/behavior/action of God and man.

2. Operational Christology (Action)

- a. Kenotic "emptying" of Phil. 2:7 cannot refer to ontological

Being, and must therefore refer to operational Action of the voluntary laying aside of the prerogative of independent Divine action.

- F. Some additional questions
  - 1. If we refer to “two natures” or any other commonalities of God and man...
    - a. does this not establish an equality or equity?
    - b. Is this based on inadequate anthropological understanding?
  - 2. Is the union of God and man in Jesus Christ an eternal union?
    - a. Not in same sense as eternal unity of Godhead in Trinity
    - b. The union was commenced in time - Gal. 4:4
    - c. Is the God-man union everlasting? If so...
      - (1) Does Jesus still have physical flesh, embodiment?
      - (2) Is Jesus human forever?
      - (3) Does the humanity of Jesus come to indwell us also?
      - (4) Is Jesus still visible, mortal, temptible, dependent?
  - 3. Did God become man?
    - a. Not a Biblical statement
    - b. Is this statement overly inclusive and unitary?
- IV. Implications of attempting to understand the Christological incarnation
  - A. Correlation of Trinitarian and Christological considerations
    - 1. 3 in 1 of Trinity sets up 2 in 1 of Christology
    - 2. Sequence of unity and union considerations
      - a. Trinity - essential Divine unity
      - b. Christology - integral personal union
      - c. Christian and Christ - indwelling identificational union
  - B. Alternative responses to the Christological incarnation
    - 1. Reject as unreasonable - absurdity
    - 2. Reduce to human reason by attempting to resolve antinomies; inevitably emphasize deity or humanity to neglect of other
    - 3. Accept the revelation of God concerning Christological incarnation
      - a. finite human reason will never explain or define
      - b. must accept manner in which God has revealed Himself
      - c. failure to do so is deification of human reason
  - C. Accepting the imprecision of Christological explanation and definition
    - 1. Vagaries of translation and interpretation of meaning from the very beginning of such Christological study
      - a. Greek *ousia* translated as Latin *substantia* or *essentia*
      - b. Greek *phusis* translated as Latin *substantia*
      - c. Greek *hypostasis* translated as Latin *personae, subsistentia*
    - 2. Early creeds and formulations not as precise as many Christians think.
    - 3. Man’s finite understanding still attempting to explain
  - D. Must look beyond Christological explanations
    - 1. Don’t want to get mired in abstractions of thought
    - 2. Teleological purpose of Christological incarnation
      - a. II Cor. 5:19 - “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”
      - b. “Man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5) serves as “one mediator between God and man”
        - (1) having effected redemption by taking the death consequences of sin vicariously on man’s behalf,
        - (2) in order to reinvest and restore Divine life (I Jn. 5:12) and Divine nature (II Pet. 1:4) to man by His Spirit.