



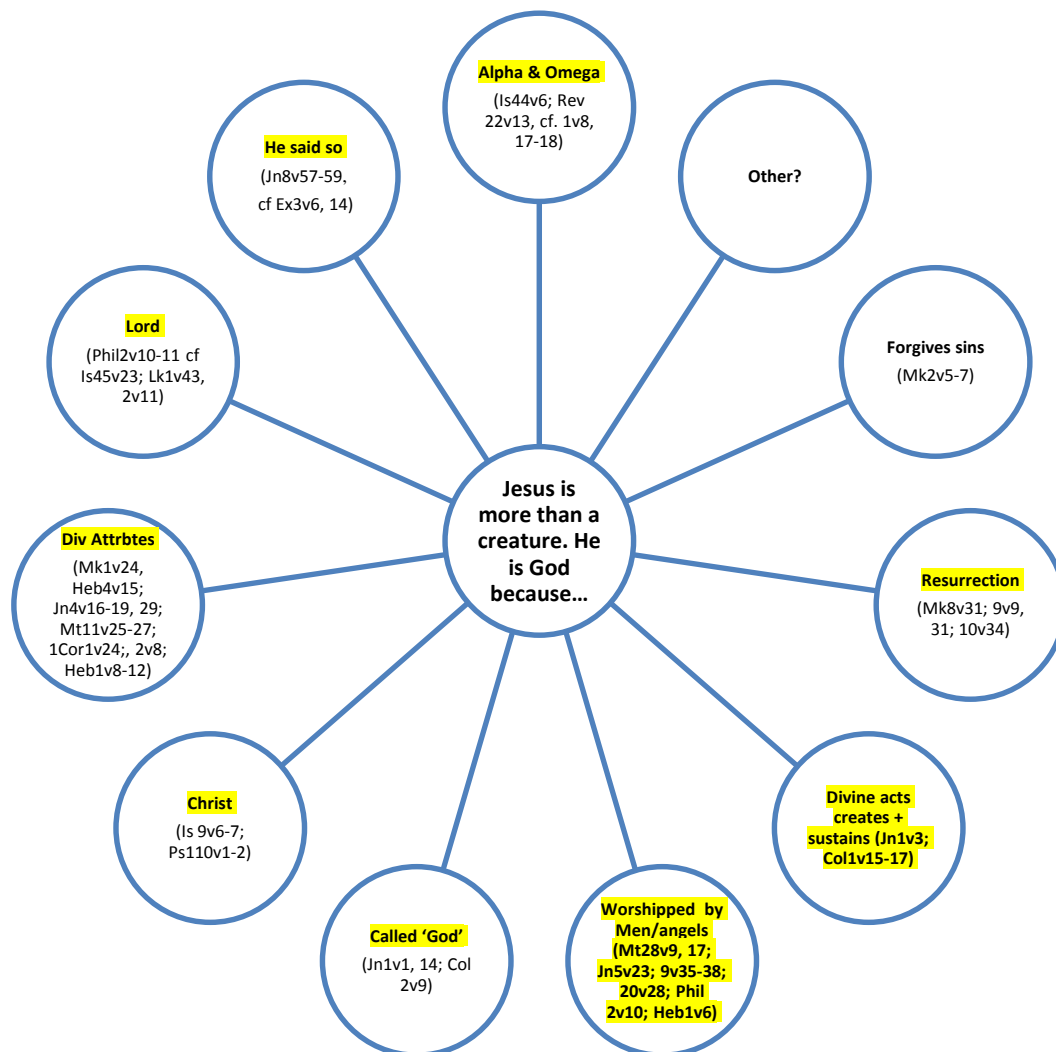
Christology

Aims: By the end of this **Session** we should...

- Have looked at the divinity and humanity of Christ
- Have thought through the pastoral use of affirming both the divinity of humanity of Christ and the disastrous implications of denying either.
- Appreciate the historical understanding of Christ to date (Appendix 1)

As promised, he had come back at a more convenient time. And now Peter the Jehovah's Witness launched into his point: *'The thing is'*, he said, *'...you Christians say that Jesus is God, but actually Jesus is God's first creation, used by God to create every other creation.'*¹ *Jesus was also known as the Archangel Michael in his pre-human existence; his birth on earth was accomplished when he willingly allowed himself to be transferred, by God, from heaven to the womb of the Virgin Mary.'*² *How do you respond...?*

Hopefully(!), you'd reach for a Bible to show that Jesus is not a creature but God...



¹ What Do the Scriptures Say About "the Divinity of Christ"?, *The Watchtower* January 15, 1992 p. 20-23.

² Jesus? The Ruler "Whose Origin Is From Early Times", *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1998, p. 22.

So far then we've seen that **Jesus is fully God**. *We don't need to rely upon the odd text to prove this but can see this by looking at many different facets of Jesus' person and work. We could do the same exercise to show that **Jesus was fully human**...*³



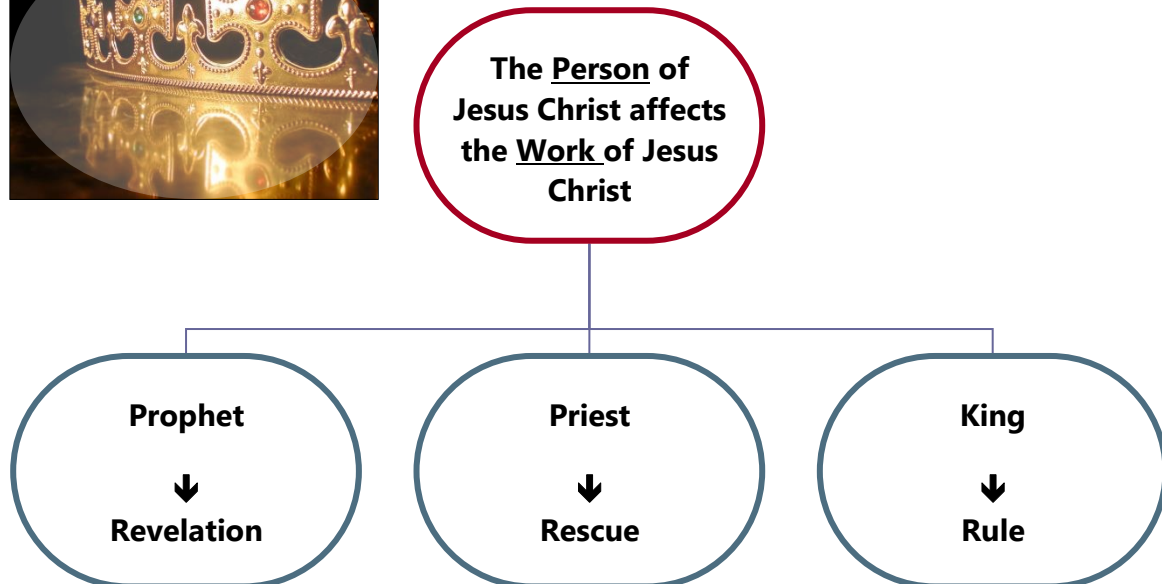
Jesus was like us in every respect, *except* that he remained sinless (Jn15v10; 2Cor5v21; 1Peter 2v22; 1Jn3v5; Heb4v15), neither committing sins of *omission or commission*. **NB:** Sinlessness is the 'normal' human condition, how man was created) and DOES NOT make Jesus abnormal.

Think of some situations where knowing Christ's humanity would help us personally / help us to help someone else?

- e.g. Jesus cried when a friend died so it's fine to cry when bereaved.

³ Of course, Jesus *continues* to be fully human after his resurrection (Lk24v39).

Why is it essential we maintain that Jesus is both God and Man?



In what ways will Christ's work be affected if we deny:

(a) the divinity of Christ? [Hint: Jn 13v34; 14v9; 1Tim2:5]

Prophet – Words don't truly reveal God Jn14

Priest – to represent God 1Tim/ to bear infinite sin

King – Can't rule / words only have relative authority / ignore words about judgement

(b) the humanity of Christ? *obviously this is rather important: see 1Jn4v2-3.*

[Hint: 1Tim 2:5; Rm 5:19; Heb 2:16-18, 4:15, 12v3-13; 1Pet2v21]

Prophet – revelation is a figment, we're deceived.

Priest –

-Representative obedience Rm5

-Substitute sacrifice – Heb2

-Be sympathetic as high priest Heb2v18 cf. 4v15-16

-One Mediator 1Tim2/ pray with empathy

King – be an example to follow in (1Pet2:21), resurrection



Recap

Exercise

- Memorise 5 verses that teaches Jesus' divinity & 5 verses that teaches his humanity.
- Explain: The doctrine of Christ to another apprentice.
- Clarify the importance of a clear understanding of Christology.
- Question contemporary christologies in your context.

Appendix 1: Historical Understanding of Christ

We've seen that Jesus Christ *is* 100% God *and* 100% man. The Church agrees that this was what the Bible taught in 325AD at Nicea.⁴ i.e. That Jesus' essential being is both God and man.⁵ This is often called the 'hypostatic union', which is the idea that Jesus has 2 natures united in 1 person.

The Council of Chalcedon (451AD) tried hard to define this relationship. They said that the unity is without 'confusion', 'change', 'division' or 'separation'.

Christological Heresies

- *Arianism* which denies the divinity of the Son (nb. JW's) and hence the divine nature of Jesus Christ, saying that the Son was created and not of the same 'substance' as the Father, but only *similar*. Their famous phrase was: "There was a when, when the Son of God was not." I deny!
- *Adoptionism* – The Son of God only associates himself temporarily with the man Jesus.
- *Monophysitism/Eutychianism* - collapsed the natures into one and so made Jesus a 'hybrid', neither God, nor man, but a 3rd thing.
- *Doceticism* – Jesus just takes the *appearance* and not the physical body of a man.
- *Nestorianism* - divided the natures to the extent that they made Jesus 2 different persons.
- *Monarchianism* – Jesus is another God (= polytheism).
- *Apollinarianism* – the divine Word replaces the human spirit. (So Jesus is perfect God but lacks perfect humanity).
- *Kenoticism* – A wrong understanding of Phil2:7 which says that Christ emptied himself of certain divine attributes such as omnipresence and omnipotence at the Incarnation. This makes Jesus not just God minus a couple of bits, but *NOT God!* On the contrary, the Incarnation was an act of addition not subtraction. Christ took an *additional* nature. 'Remaining what he is, he became what he was not.'

How do these natures relate to one another? (The question of the *communicatio idiomatum* – communication of the attributes)

We are here asking how we can understand the fact that Jesus can both be omniscient (all knowing) *and also* not know certain things or how he can be omnipotent (all powerful) *and also* get tired.

The Lutheran answer is that the attributes of divinity and humanity modify each other and so Jesus' physical body is omnipresent and so exists in, with and under the bread at the Lord's Supper. This however, confuses the 2 natures of Christ (*contra* Chalcedon). It is a better reflection of the Bible to say that the *person* of Jesus has all the attributes. Jesus' actions sometimes reflect his omniscience and sometimes his ignorance; he is both at the same time. Regarding the Lord's Supper, he is spiritually omnipresent, but

⁴ And then in 381AD at Constantinople, from which, confusingly, we get the Nicene Creed.

⁵ The Church was alerted to, and rejected; the Christology of the JW's long before they were around.

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physically present in heaven which is why it is correct to say that we feed on him in a *heavenly* manner.

Usefulness?

The Chalcedonian formulation helps us articulate (though not fully understand) how Jesus can be tempted (James 1v13) when God cannot be tempted; and how Jesus can suffer and die though God is immortal (1Tim 1v17). We may say that the person Jesus was tempted, suffered and died *according to his human nature*. The Bible will not let us say that God is tempted nor that a nature is tempted but that the person Jesus is tempted according to his human nature.

The Athanasian Creed

This creed is named after Athanasius (A.D. 293-373), the champion of orthodoxy against Arian attacks on the doctrine of the trinity. Although Athanasius did not write this creed and it is improperly named after him, the name persists because until the seventeenth century it was commonly ascribed to him. It is not from Greek (Eastern), but from Latin (Western) origin, and is not recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Church today. Apart from the opening and closing sentences, this creed consists of two parts, the first setting forth the orthodox doctrine of the trinity, and the second dealing chiefly with the incarnation and the two-natures doctrine.

Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic faith.

Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally.

Now this is the catholic faith:

That we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another.

But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has.

The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated.

The Father is immeasurable, the Son is immeasurable, the Holy Spirit is immeasurable.

The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being.

So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings;

there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being.

Similarly, the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty.

Yet there are not three almighty beings; there is but one almighty being.

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Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God.
Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God.

Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord.
Yet there are not three lords; there is but one Lord.

Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually as both God and Lord,
so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords.

The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone.

The Son was neither made nor created; he was begotten from the Father alone.

The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten; he proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Accordingly there is one Father, not three fathers; there is one Son, not three sons;
there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

Nothing in this trinity is before or after, nothing is greater or smaller; in their entirety the three persons
are coeternal and coequal with each other.

So in everything, as was said earlier, we must worship their trinity in their unity
and their unity in their trinity.

Anyone then who desires to be saved should think thus about the trinity.

But it is necessary for eternal salvation that one also believe in the incarnation
of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.

Now this is the true faith:

That we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and human, equally.

He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is human from the essence of
his mother, born in time; completely God, completely human, with a rational soul and human flesh;
equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity.

Although he is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one.

He is one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh,
but by God's taking humanity to himself.

He is one, certainly not by the blending of his essence, but by the unity of his person.

For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and human.

He suffered for our salvation; he descended to hell; he arose from the dead;

he ascended to heaven; he is seated at the Father's right hand; from there he will come to judge the
living and the dead.

At his coming all people will arise bodily, and give an accounting of their own deeds.

Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.

This is the catholic faith: one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully.