

Hebrews Bible Study
The Doctrine of Christ
A Basic Primer

The study of Jesus Christ, Christology, consists of understanding and describing his **person** and **work**.

Person

Christ consists of two natures in one person. The natures are his fully **divine nature** and his fully **human nature**. The divine nature is the second person of the Trinity, the divine Son, which took on flesh (full humanity) in the incarnation without any change or loss to his divinity and yet without assuming a sin nature (which is not inherent to humanity). His humanity is indeed fully human – he has a true body and soul and all of the human faculties, such as a human will, distinct from his divine will. Of these two natures the Definition of Chalcedon, formulated in AD 451, says Jesus Christ is “recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence”. His divine nature is eternal. His human nature came into existence at his conception. And Christ exists since that time as one person with two natures, eternally divine and human, his humanity including his resurrected body. Christ will continue as one person consisting of two natures for the rest of eternity, sharing our humanity forever.

Work

When we speak of the work of Christ, we speak of that work with respect to his person. That is, it is improper to speak of the natures acting. Natures do not act. Persons act. Christ’s work, therefore, does not consist of some acts performed by the divinity (or performed upon the deity) and some acts performed by the humanity (or performed upon the humanity), as though Jesus could only operate in one of the two natures at a time and switched back and forth.

The work of Jesus Christ, the God-man, is **redemption** and is understood in terms of his **active** and **passive obedience**, his **humiliation** and **exaltation**, and his **offices of prophet, priest, and king**. They have as their end the glory of the Father (John 17) and the redemption of the people the Father has given to him to redeem (John 6). This redemption is accomplished by meeting the demands of the Covenant of Works (perfect obedience) and removing the curse of that Covenant (death, alienation from God, the wrath of God, all under the heading of the curse of the Covenant of Works).

Excellent Resources

The Definition of Chalcedon (printed on the back of this sheet)
The Westminster Standards (WCF Chapter 8; WLC 36-57, 68; WSC 21-28)
The Belgic Confession (Article 10; Articles 17-26)
The Heidelberg Catechism (God the Son/Lord’s Day 11-19/Q&A 29-52)

The Definition of Chalcedon (AD 451, Fourth Ecumenical Council)

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.