



Deeper

2. The Doctrine of Christ

Truth



CRAWLEY
COMMUNITY
CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of Matthew chapter 24 the disciples ask Jesus an interesting question: “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” I’m not sure what answer they were expecting, but it was probably not the answer they got:

And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. [Matthew 24:4-5]

and

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. [Matthew 24:10-11]

Those are verses that we should take careful notice of. The Christian church throughout the ages, and even more so today is engaged in a battle for the truth. How do we stay true to God’s word and how do we avoid being deceived by false teaching or doctrine? The sad truth is we will all probably know people who at one point were walking strongly in the faith but now seem to have been pulled away. The why’s and wherefores of that are not really the subject of the course, but rather “How do we stay true to God’s word?” How can we do our utmost to ensure we are not deceived or distracted, or worst still become those who deceive or distract others? The simple answer is to study God’s word and to understand the truths in there, and what it says and what it does not say.

We are also more likely to be led astray by subtle twists and modifications to God’s word rather than an outright denial. Satan at no point said to Adam and Eve “God doesn’t exist, help yourself to any fruit you like.” They would have seen through that deception very quickly. Rather he asked:

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” [Genesis 3:1b]

We also need to be aware of those truths that are fundamental to our faith and a denial of such will instantly lead us into error as opposed to other truths that can be interpreted in different ways, and for which Christians can hold different views. An absolute truth that must be defended to the uttermost is the fact that Christ will return. The means and manner of that return, and the whole are of what happens in the end times is however subject to much debate. With such subjects the various viewpoints will be presented.

Likewise, the truth that God created the whole universe out of nothing in one single act of creation is another truth we must hold to. The manner of that creation (was it over seven literal days or seven periods of time) is another area on which much has been written and different view put forth.

This course was first presented as an eight-part course at Crawley Community Church in 2012/13 and the content and accompanying notes have been expanded and revised for 2023/24.

All verses are from the from the English Standard Version (2001)

Bible verses and passages are shown in blue, other quotes are shown in red.

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2. The Doctrine of Christ

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. [2 John 1:9]

Clearly the Doctrine of Christ is of vital importance and covers a wide variety of topics.

We can talk of the need for faith in Christ for salvation, and the place of repentance and the atoning work of Christ that brings salvation and forgiveness from God. The topics will be covered under the Doctrine of Salvation. We can also talk of the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit which will also be covered as a separate doctrine. And so here we will focus on two key principles:

- The Uni-personality of Christ in that he is both fully God and fully man.

We confess that He is very God and very man; very God by His power to conquer death, and very man that He might die for us. [Belgic Confession 1561]

- The offices or roles Christ fulfils namely that of Prophet Priest and King.

Q: Why is he called Christ – that is anointed?

A: Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief Prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance. He is our only High Priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father, and who is our eternal King who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us. [Question 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism 1563]

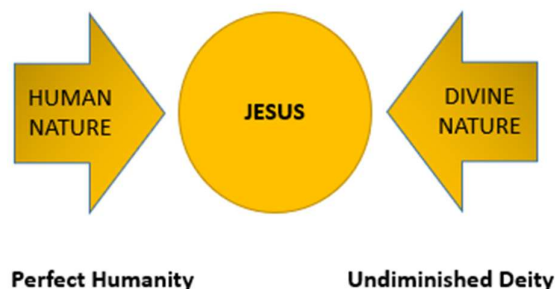
2.1 The Uni-Personality of Christ

The central fact concerning Christ, and the one thing that stands out as the most amazing miracle, is that Christ is both fully man and fully God. It is this miracle that we are talking of when we talk of the 'uni-personality' of Christ.

The nature of Christ is a subject that has been debated probably more than any other theological topic. Its importance can be shown by the fact that most heresies and cults manage to be in error on the nature of Christ. An understanding of the doctrine of the nature of Christ is essential to oppose those who would either deny the deity or the manhood of Christ. This is also defined as the Hypostatic Union or Christ.

Christ is both fully God and fully man, and fully able to save.

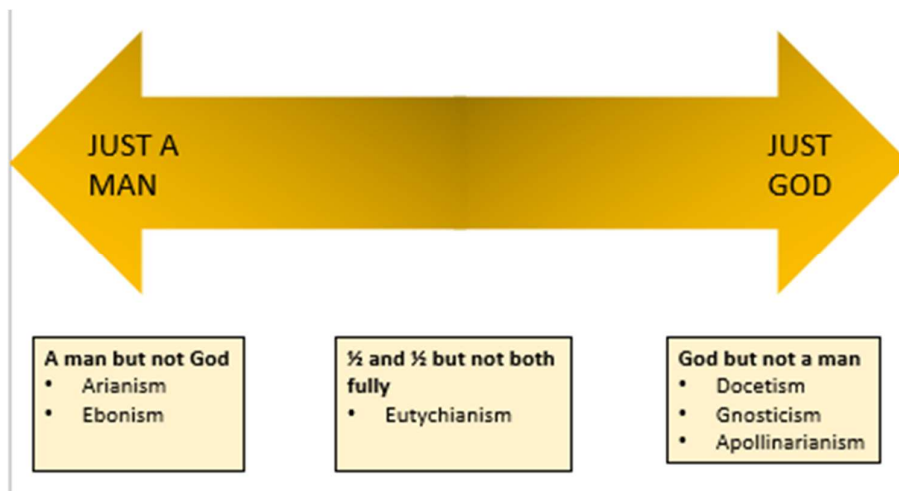
This is a simplified statement but is at the heart of the uni-personality of Christ.



THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

The first heresies that the church encountered emerged around the second Century onwards, and although there were subtle differences, they all denied in some way the full deity or full manhood of Christ.

Arianism	<p>From Arius of Alexandria (256 AD – 336 AD) who was influenced by the Greek philosopher Plato. Arius taught that God the Father and the Son did not exist together eternally. He taught that the pre-incarnate Jesus was a divine being created by (and therefore inferior to) God the Father at some point, before which the Son did not exist.</p> <p>Arius and his followers appealed to Bible verses such as where Jesus says that the father is "greater than I" (John 14:28) and says, "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work" (Proverbs 8:22), although this verse is now generally held to refer to some concept of "wisdom" rather than to the Son of God.</p>
Ebonism	<p>An offshoot of Jewish Christianity practiced by a Jewish sect called Ebonites who viewed poverty as a blessing. They embraced an 'adoptionist' view of Christ which saw him as mere man who by virtue of his righteousness was chosen to be God's messianic prophetic.</p> <p>Whilst some would accept the virgin birth, all would deny the pre-incarnate Christ. Ebonites practiced a strict adherence to the law, and it is likely that it is this doctrine that Paul is confronting in his letter to the Galatians.</p>
Docetism	<p>Jesus only appeared to be a human. His human body was not real, just a form that God assumed.</p>
Gnosticism	<p>From the Greek word Gnosis (to know. Gnosticism emphasised the spiritual world over the physical and taught that Jesus was a spiritual being, but not a human being. It taught that salvation could only be gained through a secret and special form of revelation.</p> <p>In the Gnostic view, there is a true, ultimate and transcendent God, who is beyond all created universes but who was 'unknowable' and lesser, intermediate deific beings who exist between this ultimate God and ourselves.</p> <p>Christ was therefore just a spiritual intermediary, between God and mankind.</p>
Apollinarianism	<p>Jesus had a divine mind, but a human body. This separated Jesus into a human part and a divine part rather than him being one 'whole' being.</p>
Eutychnism/ Monophysitism	<p>Christ's human nature and divine nature mixed together to make new nature, thus Jesus was neither human nor divine but something else.</p>



It was against these competing voices that the early Church had to formalise a clear doctrine of the nature of Christ.

In 312 AD Emperor Constantine became a Christian and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and it became politically expedient to have a unified view of Christ. The councils of Nicea in 325 AD and Constantinople in 381 AD attempted to provide this unified view. The champion of true Christian thinking was Arthanasius (293 AD to 373 AD). He rejected the claims of Ebonism, Gnosticism, and Arianism and declared that anything less than a fully divine saviour would be insufficient to meet our need of salvation.

The councils of Nicea and Constantinople finally affirmed Christ was of 'one substance' (Homousious) with the Father i.e., divine. In later years there were those who would oppose the Manhood of Christ and so in 451 AD another council was formed, this time at Chalcedon, and the declaration from this council was as follows:

"We should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same son, perfect in Godhead, perfect in manhood, of one substance with the Father in godhead, with us in manhood, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in the one person and one substance." ***[Chalcedon Formula 451]***

Although, as we have said, this was not the first definition of Christ's nature, and there have been others since, this remains one of the clearest available. It is these three points from the Chalcedon formula that we shall consider in more detail:

- a) Christ is perfect in Godhead; of one substance with the Father.
- b) Christ is perfect in manhood; of one substance with us.
- c) Christ is made known in two natures, both of which exist in the one person.

2.1.1 Perfect in Godhead

The deity of Christ had been firmly established by the Councils of Nicea, and Constantinople, the Council of Chalcedon again confirmed this right at the beginning of their statement of faith.

When we assert belief in the deity of Christ we mean that the person known to history as Jesus of Nazareth existed in eternity before He became man, as the infinite and eternal God, the second person of the Trinity. We have already examined the early heresies concerning the deity of Christ and it is important to note that most modern cults have this error at their root:

Jehovah's Witnesses: Christ was a prophet and appointed by God, but not God himself.

Mormons: Christ bought teaching from God, but this revelation was incomplete and has since been added to.

2.1.1.1 Scriptural Proof for the deity of Christ

Let us consider the scriptural proof for the deity of Christ. Those who oppose the deity of Christ would argue against many of the references we might quote but there are at least six clear declarations for the deity of Christ that are impossible to dispute:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. *[John 1:1]*

To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. *[Romans 9:5]*

No one has seen God, but God the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made Him known. *[John 1:18]*

waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. [Titus 2:13]

Thomas answered Him; 'My Lord and my God'.

[John 20:28]

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ:

[2 Peter 1:1]

The scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ is spread throughout the whole of scripture and not just confined to certain parts of the gospels:

a) In the Old Testament:

Psalm 2:6-12, Psalm 45: 6-7, Jeremiah 23:6, Daniel 7:13, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 13:7, Malachi 3:1

b) In the Synoptic gospels:

Matthew 5:17, 9:6, 11:1-6, 11:27, 14:33. 16:16-17, 25:31, 28:8, Mark 8:38

c) In the writing of John (as distinct from the Synoptic gospels):

John 1:1-3, 1:14, 1:18, 2:24-25, 3:16-18, 3:35-36, John 5, John 11:41-44, 1 John 1:3, 2:23, 4:14-15, 5:5, 5:10-13

d) In the writings of Paul:

Romans 1:7, 9:5

1 Corinthians 1:1-3, 2:8

2 Corinthians 5:10

Galatians 2:20, 4:4

Colossians 2:9

1 Timothy 3:16

e) From Christ himself:

Matthew 11:27, Luke 10:22, Matthew 21:37-38, Mark 12:6, Luke 20:13, Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 13:35-37, Luke 20:41-44, Matthew 24:36 Mark 13:32, Matthew 28:19

Twelve times in Matthew, three times in Luke, and countless times in John, Jesus refers to himself as 'the Son of God'.

2.1.1.2 The necessity of the deity of Christ

Having seen the overwhelming evidence for the deity of Christ let us consider the 'why' of the deity of Christ. Why must we defend this truth so strongly? Why is it so important? Is it not sufficient to acknowledge Jesus as just a good man or even indeed a prophet sent from God, why must He **be** God?

There are four main reasons why it is essential for Christ to be fully God:

a) It is necessary for the validity of scripture.

Given the basis of all the scripture we have just considered we must conclude that a rejection of the deity of Christ involves a rejection of scripture as a whole. If Christ is not God, then scripture is not true in its description and depiction of him.

b) It is necessary for the finality of revelation.

Christ is the means by which the Father has chosen to reveal himself to us, it is an ultimate and final revelation, and in Christ we see as a true picture of God as we could wish for. It is not distorted or diminished in any way simply because Jesus is God. If Jesus were not God then the revelation he brings of God would be incomplete.

that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [Colossians 2:2b-3]

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 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. [Hebrews 1:2-3a]

Whoever who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say; 'show us the Father?' [John 14:9b]

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. [Revelation 22:18]

There is no further revelation to come from God, but if Jesus is not God himself come to us then the revelation that he brings is not of the God head and therefore not a final and complete revelation. Furthermore, the possibility would always exist of a later, more complete revelation. The scriptures above speak of the finality of God's revelation in Christ and that can only be true if Christ is fully God.

Many modern heresies insist on a further revelation and thus deny the deity of Christ:

Jehovah's Witnesses: Christ's revelation + further teaching

Mormonism: Christ's teaching + the Book of Mormon

Remember also the problems faced by the Philippian Church (3:2) as people added to Christ's revelation the Old Covenant teaching of circumcision.

c) It is necessary for the purity of sacrifice.

He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. [Hebrews 7:27-28]

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify[a] for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. [Hebrews 9:13-14]

The writer to the Hebrews points out what a miracle it is that God accepted the sacrifices offered by the early priesthood since they were so tainted by sin. He points out that Christ, who alone is perfect, is the only pure sacrifice. Christ was that perfect sacrifice because had a purity that came directly from the Godhead. Just as it would be impossible to imagine God tainted by sin, so too it is impossible to imagine Christ, who is God, tainted by sin either. The divinity of Christ is necessary for his sacrifice to have been a pure and acceptable one.

If Jesus were just a man who had lived a perfect life he would still be guilty of Adam's sin – being born in Adam, It is only as the God-Man that he is free also from hereditary sin.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. [Romans 5:14]

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

[1 John 5:1a]

d) It is necessary for the forgiveness of sin.

Quite simply, if Jesus is not God then he cannot forgive our sin and we remain in condemnation and separation from God. It is God we have wronged and only God can forgive us. If Jesus is not God then he is not party to our relationship with God and his death and atonement are irrelevant to our status before God.

Because of the importance of this final point let us consider some further verses indicating the necessity for the deity of Christ.

I, I am the LORD ,and besides me there is no saviour.

[Isaiah 43:11]

Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.

[Jeremiah 3:23b]

Salvation cannot be found outside of God; no human agency can bring it to us (remember the inadequacy of human sacrifice), nor can we obtain it by human endeavour. It is for God alone to forgive sins, frequently in scripture Jesus forgives sins, and is seen as the saviour of the sinners.

Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

[Mark 2:7]

And he [Jesus] said to her, your sins are forgiven.

[Luke 7:48]

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

[Acts 4:12]

The Pharisees opposition to Jesus was not on the basis of him performing miracles on the Sabbath, nor was it because of his popularity with the people, but it was because of his declaration that it was within his power to forgive sin, which was a declaration that he was divine and one with God.

2.1.2 Perfect in Manhood

Nowadays the humanity of Jesus is not so widely questioned. People might deny he ever existed, but for those who accept the historical person of Jesus there is little issue with accepting him as human. In the past however there was opposition to Christ's humanity and it is just as important for Christ to be fully man as it is for him to be fully God.

Opposition to his humanity was rooted in a movement called Docetism. It in turn came from the Greco-Oriental idea that matter is inherently evil and that God cannot be subject to feelings or human emotions. However, the Chalcedon Formula clearly states:

"Perfect in manhood...of one substance with us."

[Chalcedon Formula 451]

2.1.2.1 Scriptural Proof for the humanity of Christ

Just as the scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ is overwhelming, so too is the evidence for his humanity:

- a) Jesus called himself a man and was called a man by others.

John 8:40, Acts 2:22, Romans 5:15, 1 Corinthians 15:21

- b) He had a normal human birth (although his conception was miraculous)

Matthew 1:25, Luke 2:7, Galatians 4:6

- c) He experienced normal growth and development in adulthood.

Luke 2:40 -52, Hebrews 5:8, Mark 6:1-6

- d) He was subject to human limitations (hunger, weariness)

John 4:6, Matthew 21:18, Matthew 11:9, Mark 14: 33-36, Luke 22:63, Luke 22:33

- e) He experienced human emotions (joy, sadness)

Luke 10:21, Matthew 26:37, John 11:25, Matthew 9:36, Luke 7:9, Mark 3:5

- f) He was tempted by sin (but did not succumb to it)

Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 27:42, Mark 1:24, Mark 8:33, Luke 11:15-20

2.1.2.2 The necessity of the humanity of Christ

We have shown that scripture clearly confirms the humanity of Christ; let us now consider four reasons why it is necessary for Christ to be fully human.

- a) The punishment for sin must be borne by a man.**

Since man had sinned it was necessary for the penalty to be borne by a man. Only someone who was fully man could step in and take the place of mankind. This is the essence of the Belgic Confession:

...and very man that He might die for us.

[Chalcedon Formula 451]

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

[Romans 5:19]

Christ is spoken of as the second Adam, the one who restores what Adam caused to be lost, and in this way, it is necessary for Christ to be human.

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

[1 Corinthians 15:21]

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

[1 Corinthians 15:22]

- b) The punishment for sin must be suffered.**

If Christ were not a man he could not bear the suffering that accompanied the bearing of sin i.e., the pain, agony and ultimate physical death.

For the wages of sin is death.

[Romans 6:23a]

But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

[Acts 3:18]

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]

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. [Hebrews 9:22]

Satisfaction for sin could only be met by a fully human death and the shedding of blood. The punishment had to be borne by a man and all the attendant suffering experienced and endured.

c) Christ can sympathise with our humanity.

On the positive side we now have one who knows our frailty and our weaknesses.

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]

He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. [Hebrews 5:2]

Notice also the requirement for a priest in the preceding verse in so far as he must be 'selected from among men'. We will consider the priestly work of Christ in more detail later on, but for now note one of the requirements of a priest is that he be 'from among men' i.e., human.

d) Christ can be a human example to us.

In teaching the Christian life it is all very well for God to give commandments and rules to live by, but it is far better to lead by example. It is this that he did in Christ, not only detailing the requirements, but giving us an example to follow and in that regard, Christ is fully human.

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. [John 13:15]

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 2:5]

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. [Hebrews 12:2-3]

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]

If Christ were not fully human we could well say the demands that God sets are unobtainable and unrealistic. Only if Christ is fully human can he set an example for us as humans.

2.1.3 Made known in two natures.

Simply put, Christ is fully man and fully God. This doctrine transcends human reasoning and can only be accepted by faith.

The best illustration that can be offered is that of the body and the soul in man. The two natures are side by side; everything that happens in the body and the soul can be ascribed to the one person.

Likewise in Christ we have the two natures of divinity and manhood; everything that happens can be ascribed to the person Jesus. Although the concept is difficult to explain we can examine it further by considering what the two natures of Christ **do not** mean:

2.1.3.1 Not a dual or split personality

In the Trinity we have the distinct persons in unity. God, Son, and Spirit exist together but also have separate natures. They are distinct persons as well as distinct natures. Because they are separate persons we can refer to the trinity as 'they' God speaks of 'we' and one person in the trinity can address others:

Genesis 11:7, Psalm 2:7, Psalm 40:7-8, John 17:1, John 17:4-5, John 17: 21-24

Nowhere however does Jesus refer to himself in the plural; nowhere does Jesus the deity address Jesus the man; nowhere does God refer to just one aspect. Both natures exist in the one person. Jesus is one person just as you or I are single persons.

Remember Gnosticism which taught of a spirit inhabiting a historical person. Gnosticism would imply a dual personality to Jesus.

2.1.3.2 Both natures are represented in harmony

Again, we are saying the same thing but in a slightly different way. Jesus is not schizophrenic; he is not sometimes God and sometimes man. We cannot look at a particular event such as Jesus asleep in the boat as the storm raged and say; "here is Jesus being human" and look at another instance; perhaps as he performs a miracle, and say; "here is Jesus being God."

Both natures are equally represented and united and present at all times. There is scriptural evidence to show ere both natures are spoken of in regard to the one person.

concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,
[Romans 1:3-4a]

The son (a frail human born of the flesh) is described as having the power of God.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
[Galatians 4:4-5]

Again, the son (a frail human) is the one who gives us sonship under God.

who, 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.
[Philippians 2:6-7]

2.1.3.3 The one person is spoken of in terms true of either nature.

The harmony of the two natures is shown by the fact that human attributes and actions are spoken of Jesus when he is being spoken of as the son of God.

None of the rulers of this age understood for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"
[1 Corinthians 2:8]

Also, divine attributes are spoken if in regard to Jesus when he was being spoken of a human.

Theirs are the patriarchs and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah who is God over all.
[Romans 9:5]

2.1.3.4 The two natures are separate.

Jesus the divine second person of the trinity; the 'logos' possessed a divine nature from eternity, assumed a human nature and now has both.

who, 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.

[Philippians 2:6-7]

This is different from the idea of the two natures being mixed or fused into some indistinguishable combination. This ultimately leads to a dilution of both natures.

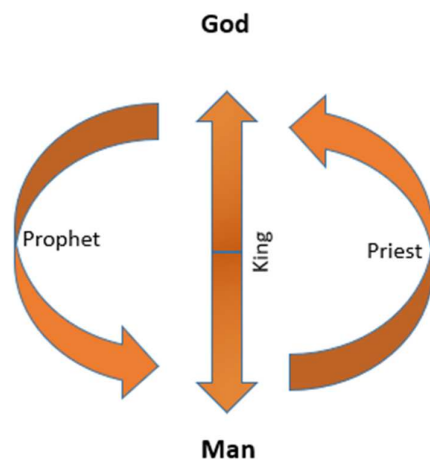
2.2 The Offices of Christ

We often talk of the three 'offices' of Christ namely, Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ's role as messiah was to restore the relationship between man and God which had been broken by sin. Initially man had a perfect relationship with God; he had no need of an intermediary:

Man was given knowledge and understanding of God:	Prophet
Man was righteous and holy:	Priest
Man had dominion over creation:	King

Sin tainted all these qualities replacing them with ignorance, blindness, error, unrighteousness, guilt, death and destruction. Hence for Christ to restore our relationship with God he had to become for us these three links to God.

- As a Prophet he is God's representative before man
- As a Priest he is man's representative before God
- As a King he both models Godly and authority to men and rules men on God's behalf



The doctrine, (Munus Triplex in Latin) was first described by Eusebius (AD 263 – 339) and then more fully by John Calvin (1509 – 1565)

Christ, the divinely inspired and heavenly Word, who is the only high priest of all, and the only King of every creature, and the Father's only supreme prophet of prophets. [Eusebius c 260 – 339]

Q. Why is he called "Christ," meaning "anointed"?

A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance, our only high priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the father, and our eternal king who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.

[Heidelberg Catechism 1563]

With regards to these three roles, all are anointed to fulfil their ministry (although in the case of the prophet there is a spiritual anointing rather than a physical one).

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

[1 Samuel 16:13]

And he [Moses] poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him.

[Leviticus 8:12]

¹ *The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.*

[Isaiah 61:1]

And whilst there have been many prophets, priests, and kings in the past only the Messiah can lay claim to fulfilling all three roles. If Christ is to be Messiah and mediator then we must make a case for him fulfilling all three of these offices.

That itself is a challenge for we see in scripture priest and king are mutually exclusive roles; the priests were historically from the tribe of Levi, whilst the Kings (Solomon, David) came from the tribe of Judah.

2.2.1 The Office of Prophet

2.2.1.1 Historical basis for the prophet

These words are used in the Old Testament to give us the word 'prophet'; 'nabhi', 'ro'eh', and 'chozeh'.

Sin had come into the world as a barrier between God and man, in this instance the knowledge of God had been corrupted and mankind was now ignorant of God and His ways; spiritually blind. There was a requirement for someone who would speak for God; literally someone who would speak for someone else; the prophet.

And the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.

[Exodus 7:1-2]

In the calling of each Old Testament prophet there is a clear directive from God to 'receive my words', and to 'pass them on to the people'.

Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1:4-10, Ezekiel 3:1-4

Notice that the most important aspect of the prophet is that he passes on the word of God; he is a clear channel through whom God can speak. Abimelech, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar all received revelation from God but we would not call them prophets; they were not given a message to pass on to others. The prophet not only receives the word of God he passes it on. In that regard he is God's representative before men; he is God's ambassador, or spokesperson, or delegate.

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2.2.1.2 Scriptural proof for Christ's role as a prophet

No one would doubt the basis that on this definition of a prophet Christ fulfils the role easily. He comes as the ultimate revelation of the Father, his whole three-year ministry was spent passing on God's word and message to mankind, and so this idea needs little proving. Nevertheless, let us look at some verses that clearly show Christ fulfilling the role of a prophet:

- a) Christ is foretold of as a prophet.

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—
(quoted in Acts 3:22-23 by Peter in regard to Jesus) *[Deuteronomy 18:15]*

- b) Christ is an example to us (he demonstrates God's standard)

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. *[John 13:15]*
(washing the disciples' feet)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus *[Philippians 2:5]*

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]*

- c) Christ speaks of himself as a prophet.

Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' *[Luke 13:33]*

- d) Christ speaks of 'coming with a message from the Father'.

I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." *[John 8:26]*

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. *[John 12:49]*

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. *[John 14:10]*

For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. *[Luke 17:8]*

- e) Christ foretold future events.

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" *[Matthew 24:3 ff]*

For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side. *[Luke 19:43]*

f) Christ was recognised as a prophet by the people.

And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." [Matthew 21:11]

And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet. [Matthew 21:46]

Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" [Luke 7:16]

And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, [Luke 24:19]

"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." [John 3:2]

The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. [John 4:19]

"This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" [John 6:14b]

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." [John 7:40]

So, they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." [John 9:17]

Some theologians talk of Christ's death on the cross not so much as an act of atonement, but as the ultimate message or communication from God to man: Christ the ultimate prophet.

2.2.2 The Office of Priest

2.2.2.1 Historical basis for the priest

The word 'kohen' is usually used for a priest in scripture; the only exception being 'chaucerum' which means 'idolatrous priest.'

Sin had robbed man of his righteous standing before God and he was unclean, tainted, and impure. There was the requirement for someone to restore our righteousness; the priest.

Also, if the prophet is God's representative before men, then the priest is man's representative before God. He is our ambassador or spokesperson. He is the channel through whom we can communicate with God.

The New Testament uses the word 'hierous' – a mighty one or a sacred person.

Under the Old Testament law, the priest would offer sacrifices on behalf of the people to atone for their sin. It was, of course, a shadow of things to come, but the principle was that man might still be able to have a relationship with God and not be condemned by him. The historic role of the priest can be summed up in five functions:

- a) A priest is taken from among men to be their representative.
- b) A priest is appointed by God.
- c) A priest is active on behalf of men in matters relating to God.
- d) A priest is especially called to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin.
- e) A priest is called to make intercession for the people, and in the name of God, bless them.

We therefore have a job description of the priest, and we now need to show that Christ fulfils that description.

It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and shall bear royal honour and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

[Zechariah 6:13]

2.2.2.2 Scriptural proof for Christ's role as a priest.

Let us look at the five functions of the priest and apply them to Christ.

a) Christ was taken from among men.

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 2:17a]

note also all we have said concerning the humanity of Christ. If he were not fully human, he would have no right to call himself 'man's representative.'

b) Christ was appointed by God.

You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

[Hebrews 5:6]

c) Christ is active on behalf of men.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate [one who speaks on our behalf] with the Father – Jesus Christ the Righteous.

[1 John 2:1b]

From this verse we have the word 'paraclete', Jesus our advocate, our defence attorney, before the father.

d) Christ offers a sacrifice for sin.

whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins

[Romans 3:25]

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

[Romans 5:6]

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[Ephesians 5:2]

So, Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,

[Hebrews 9:28a]

Whereas priests offered gifts and sacrifices of blood Christ sacrificed himself. He was both the one making the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself – a far superior sacrifice than that offered by the earthly priesthood.

e) Christ makes intercession for men and blesses them.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost[a] those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

[Hebrews 7:25]

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray.

[Matthew 19:13]

Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

[Romans 8:34]

2.2.3 The Office of King

Christ comes to re-establish the rule and reign of God. Initially with Adam all honour and glory were given to God and so ultimately that state must be restored.

¹Every knee shall bow to me, every tongue shall confess to God.

[Romans 14:11]

We need to distinguish two types of kingship:

Regnum Gratiatiae: The rule Christ has over his church and his people.

Regnum Potentiae: The rule of Christ over the universe and his judicial administration of all things

Christ's rule over the universe is something that has existed for all eternity. As the second person of the trinity Christ naturally shares the dominion of God over his creation.

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

[Psalm 103:19]

However, his rule over his church was something with which he was invested. Not that this was a rule over a new realm, for all was already contained within the universe as a whole, but rather it was a kingship that was administered for a different purpose, namely the reconciliation of mankind.

It is this kingship we need to concentrate on. Christ has since the beginning of time ruled over the universe, but more specifically he has a special role in ruling over and administering the church.

There are five things to note about the kingship of Christ:

2.2.3.1 It is a kingship that is decreed by God.

As with David, all kings are ultimately appointed by God, so too with Christ, his authority to rule comes from the father.

The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.

[Psalm 132:11]

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 9:7]

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

[Jeremiah 23:5]

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]

And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

[Luke 1:33]

2.2.3.2 It is a kingship that is spiritual.

Christ is spoken of as the head of the church. His rule is not over a land or over a specific area, but over his people wherever they are.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

[Ephesians 1:22]

...as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. [Ephesians 5:23]

And he is the head of the body, the church. [Colossians 1:18a]

Also, it is not a kingdom that is administered by external forces, but by the spirit of wisdom and truth.

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world. [John 18:36]

2.2.3.3 It is a kingship that is both present and future.

On the one hand we have the ever-present kingdom of God. Wherever the king's subjects are declaring his power and authority then there is his kingdom.

But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. [Matthew 12:28]

Jesus replied; "The coming of the kingdom is not something that can be observed. nor will people say; here it is or there it is; because the kingdom of God is within you." [Luke 17:21]

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and bought us into the kingdom of the son he loves." [Colossians 1:13]

...and it is also a future kingdom which is yet to come when this earth will cease to be and there Christ will continue to reign as king over his people.

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." [Matthew 7:20-21]

and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [Luke 22:29-30]

Or do you not know that the unrighteous[a] will not inherit the kingdom of God? [1 Corinthians 6:9a]

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do[b] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. [Galatians 5:19-21]

On the one hand we have the ever-present kingdom of God. Wherever the king's subjects are declaring his power and authority then there is his kingdom.

2.2.3.4 It is a kingship that is eternal.

The rule of Christ will not end; he will not be overthrown or voted out of office.

Your throne oh God is forever and ever. [Psalm 45:6a]

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. [Isaiah 9:7a]

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever [2 Samuel 7:13]

For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. [2 Peter 1:11]

The Heidelberg Catechism talks of Jesus as our eternal king.

And who is our eternal King who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us. [Question 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism 1563]

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 talks of the son handing over his kingdom to God when Satan is finally frustrated. However, this is in regard to his regnum potentiae (rule of the universe). His rule over his church however is eternal.

For Christ to establish a spiritual kingdom he needed power and authority over the universe and over all the powers that might frustrate such a kingdom. However, when that purpose is achieved and mankind is finally reunited with God, Christ will no longer need to exercise authority over the universe. He will continue simply to be the head over the church (regnum gratiae).

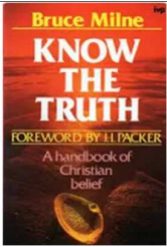
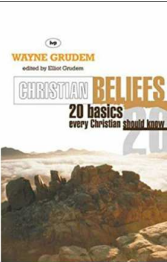
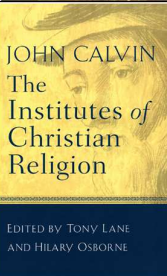
In that regard his rule over the church is superior to his rule over the universe.

Questions for consideration

- How are you encouraged by the fact that Jesu is fully God?
- How are you encouraged by the fact that Jesus is fully man?
- How would you respond to someone who said they believed in Jesus but saw him as just a good man or a wise teacher?

Further Reading

As part of the Doctrine of God a couple of comprehensive Systematic Theologies were recommended, there are however some smaller ones that may make for easier reading.

	<p>Know the Truth Bruce Milne (1982)</p> <p>A handbook of Christian belief to help Christians grasp the overall pattern of the Bible's teaching.</p>
	<p>Christian beliefs Wayne and Elliot Grudem (2005)</p> <p>A reader friendly guide that provides a clear and concise introduction to key Christian beliefs.</p>
	<p>The Institutes of Christian Religion John Calvin (1536)</p> <p>Don't try reading the original, it's very long and written near 500 years ago, but a modern language summary of the key teachings is useful to see the thinking of one of the heroes of the Reformation.</p>

Deeper Truth