

## What We Believe – 5. Person of Christ

We believe in: *“The Lord Jesus Christ as true God and true Man; His deity, incarnation, virgin birth and sinless life; the divine authority and inerrancy of all His teaching and utterances.”*

### A) Introduction

The centre of the Christian faith concerns the identity and activity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who Jesus is and what He has done form the hub of all Christian theology and practice. An accurate understanding of the person of Jesus is therefore essential: if we believe in the “wrong” Jesus then we believe in the “wrong” gospel ([Galatians 1:6-9](#)) – one that cannot save.

Many of the theological battles fought by Christ’s church over the centuries have concerned this very point, and the battles continue today in different guises. Whilst the early Gnostics could not fathom that God’s Son Jesus could be “truly man”, many religious groups today (such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslims) cannot accept that He is “truly God”. The battles will likely rage until Christ returns, since distortion over Jesus’ identity is one of Satan’s favourite elements of false teaching (see [1 John 4:1-6](#)).

### B) Who is Jesus?

As with all elements of Christian theology, we determine the Bible’s teaching on the person of Christ by bringing together all the available “evidence” and then seeking to hold it together in harmony. This is especially important for this topic since common distortions occur when one aspect of Christ’s person is held as more dominant than others. We must seek to hold all things in balance together.

#### 1. He is truly God

Jesus is clearly declared throughout the Scriptures to be truly God. His own claims that the entirety of God’s Word centres upon Him would be

extraordinary arrogance and presumption, were He anything less than God Himself (see [Matthew 5:17](#); [Luke 24:27, 44](#); [John 5:39](#)).

### *OT References*

The above references in the gospel accounts demonstrate that Jesus believed that the Old Testament speaks of Him throughout. Whilst it does so often in shadowy terms, it nonetheless affirms that the coming Messiah would be “*Mighty God*” ([Isaiah 9:6](#)). The Psalmists sing to the Messiah “*You throne, O God, is forever and ever*” ([Psalm 45:6](#)) and anticipate plurality in the Godhead, “*The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.*” ([Psalm 110:1](#))

The Old Testament narratives also feature a curious character who is clearly God, and yet appears as a man. He is sometimes called the Angel of the LORD (e.g. [Genesis 16:7-14](#), [Judges 13](#) etc.) and once the Commander of the army of the LORD ([Joshua 5:13-15](#)). Some speak of this character as a Pre-incarnate Christ.

### *NT References*

The New Testament is far more explicit in its identification of Jesus as God. John describes Him as the eternal Son, the co-Creator of the world and perfect expression of the Father ([John 1:1-18](#)). Paul speaks of Him as the One in whom the “*fullness*” of God dwells ([Colossians 1:19, 2:9](#)). Thomas confesses “*My Lord and my God!*” ([John 20:28](#)). And Jesus Himself makes no secret of His equality with the Father (e.g. [John 8:58, 10:30, 14:9, 17:1-5](#)).

### *The Lord and the LORD*

Old Testament references to the LORD (i.e. *Yahweh* in Hebrew) are used in the New Testament with reference to Jesus. The title “Lord” is the most common title attributed to Jesus, and the link with *Yahweh* is made explicit in such places as [Acts 2:36](#) (ref. [Joel 2:32](#)) and [Philippians 2:10-11](#) (ref. [Isaiah 45:22-23](#)).

## *The Attributes of God*

Jesus has attributes that are only true of God. He is the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things ([Colossians 1:16-17](#), [Hebrews 1:2-3](#)), the Forgiver of sins ([Matthew 9:1-8](#)) and the Judge of the Last Day ([John 5:22, 27](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#)). He is eternal ([John 1:1-2](#)), immutable ([Hebrews 13:8](#)) and the “Alpha and the Omega” ([Revelation 22:13](#)). He is prayed to ([Acts 7:59](#)) and worshipped ([Matthew 2:11, 28:17](#); [Revelation 5](#)).

Since Jesus is God, He speaks with the authority of God. His Words spoken in the gospels are placed on the same level as the Scriptures ([Matthew 5:17-48](#)), being both inerrant and authoritative.

Since Jesus is God, He is worthy of all our worship and love and adoration. Christians are literally “Christ followers” – we should be known as those absolutely enthralled with our God and Saviour.

## 2. He is truly Man

Demonstrating Jesus’ deity from Scripture is the more contested claim today, but it has not always been the case. Some leaders in the early church were heavily influenced by a dualistic worldview that believed the material cosmos to be inherently evil. For them it was impossible to accept that Jesus was in fact truly human, and some New Testament letters were written to address this (see [1 John](#) for instance).

Yet it is very clear from the New Testament that Jesus was truly human. He was born as any other human ([Luke 2:1-7](#), though not conceived in the same way) and grew up as an ordinary child ([Luke 2:40](#)), needing to grow in wisdom and understanding ([Luke 2:52](#)). He experienced the usual human limitations of needing to drink ([John 4:7](#)), eat ([Luke 4:1-2](#)) and sleep ([Mark 4:38](#)). He experienced the full range of human emotions, such as sorrow ([Luke 19:41](#), [John 11:35](#)) anger ([Mark 3:5](#)) and anguish ([Luke 22:41-44](#)). He faced ordinary human limitations like being in one place at a time and not knowing everything ([Matthew 24:36](#)).

In order to save us, Jesus became as one of us ([Hebrews 2:14-18](#)). In the incarnation He took a human nature into Himself. He was born a true human and died a true human. Though there remains one Person, Jesus, He has both a divine nature and a human nature. The natures remain distinct, but not separate. Though this is difficult to comprehend, it is pastorally helpful. If Jesus was a “divinely charged human” then His temptation and suffering are hard to identify with. But if He was tempted and suffered as a true human then He is truly *“able to help those who are being tempted.”* ([Hebrews 2:18](#)).

### 3. He is a [second Adam](#)

Jesus came as a new head of humanity. Luke draws our attention to this by taking Jesus’ genealogy all the way back to Adam ([Luke 3:38](#)) and following it immediately with the temptation ([Luke 4:1-13](#)). Adam was the covenant head of the human race. When he fell in sin, all humans fell with him ([Romans 5:12](#)). Jesus came as a *“second man”* ([1 Corinthians 15:47](#)) – that is, a second covenant head. Since He was born of a virgin ([Matthew 1:18-21](#), ref. [Isaiah 7:14](#)), Jesus was mysteriously shielded from the corruption of sin. He was therefore truly human but *“knew no sin”* ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

Jesus had no sin nature, and never committed any sin in His life, resisting faithfully the fierce temptations of Satan (e.g. [Matthew 4:1-11](#)). In His death He offered Himself up as the pure and spotless Lamb of God ([John 1:29](#)), suffering only for the sins of others and not of Himself ([Hebrews 7:26-28](#)). All humanity is now either “in Adam” or “in Christ”.

### C) Conclusion

Jesus is truly God and truly Man; He is both God the Son and the Son of God. We will never fully grasp the mystery of His nature, but we can know Him and love Him through faith, and honour and obey Him through worship.