

Christology

The Doctrine of Christ



The Person & Work of Christ

The Person of Jesus	Jesus' Names	Jesus' Metaphorical Names	
	The Unity of Jesus' Person	Jesus' Personal Names Jesus' Titles Jesus' Divinity Jesus' Humanity	
Jesus as Mediator	Jesus as Second Adam		
	Jesus' Prophetic Office		
	Jesus' Priestly Office		
	Jesus' Kingly Office		
	Jesus as Judge		
Jesus' Accomplishment of Salvation	Jesus' Humiliation	Jesus' Incarnation	Jesus' Impeccability Jesus' Kenosis Jesus' Virgin Birth Mariology
		Jesus' Obedience	
		Jesus' Death	Jesus' Suffering
	Jesus' Exaltation	Jesus' Descent into Hell	Theories of Atonement The Extent of the Atonement
		Jesus' Resurrection	
Jesus' Ascension Jesus' Session at God's Right Hand Jesus' Intercession			

The Person & Work of Christ

The Person of Jesus

Jesus' Names

Jesus' Metaphorical Names

Jesus' Personal Names

Jesus' Titles

The Unity of Jesus' Person

Jesus' Divinity

Jesus' Humanity

There is a LOT that can be examined when studying the Doctrine of Christ. However, over the next 2 sessions we will focus on what is also referred to as the "**Hypostatic Union**"

Jesus as Mediator

Jesus as Second Adam

Jesus' Prophetic Office

Jesus' Priestly Office

Jesus' Kingly Office

Jesus as Judge

There are notes in this handout on the Virgin Birth & a short video has been provided to help.

Jesus' Accomplishment of Salvation

Jesus' Humiliation

Jesus' Incarnation

Jesus' Impeccability

Jesus' Virgin Birth

Jesus' Obedience

Jesus' Death

Jesus' Suffering

Theories of Atonement
The Extent of the Atonement

Jesus' Descent into Hell

Jesus' Exaltation

Jesus' Resurrection

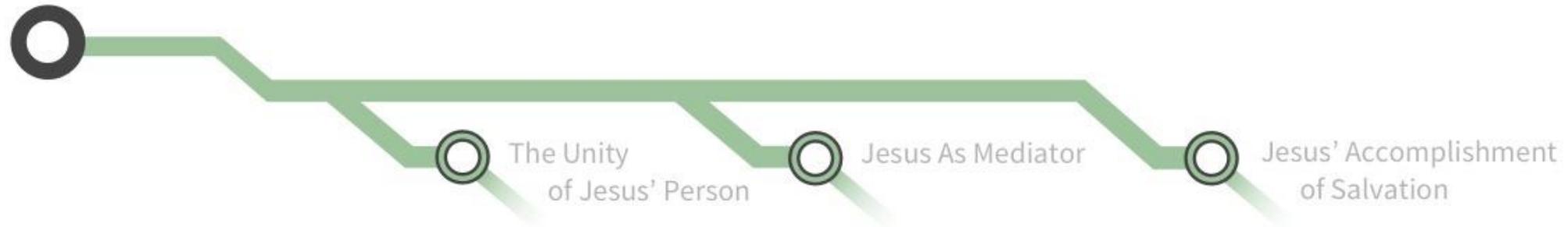
Jesus' Ascension

Jesus' Session at God's Right Hand

Jesus' Intercession

We will study the atonement in later weeks when we cover salvation.

The Person and Work of Christ



The doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ encompasses the various aspects of his identity as the eternal Word made flesh as well as the various aspects of his accomplishment of redemption from his incarnation to his exaltation to the Father's right hand.

The doctrine of the person and work of Christ is the center point of Christian theology; **divinity**, **humanity**, and **salvation** all come together in Christ. Christology answers the question of who Jesus has to be in order to accomplish our salvation—what are his qualifications, his roles, his offices by which he carries out that salvation? Then it turns to the actual work of Jesus Christ, his accomplishment of salvation on our behalf.

Christ is one of the persons of the Trinity, and studying the Bible's testimony about him brings us back into the doctrine of "theology proper": we are actually doing the doctrine of God again here, inside of the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. The one who came and worked out our salvation is fully God, with the full divine nature. For us and our salvation he takes on our human nature.

Everything we say about what it is to be human, in that entire sector of theology called "anthropology," also comes to bear in the doctrine of the person of Christ. And yet, Christ is not just a human nature added to the divine nature; he is the Second Person of the Trinity. We must keep all these things in mind at one time even just to say who this Savior is.

The doctrine of the person and work of Christ also observes his role as our **mediator**. When he undertakes the work of our salvation, he holds the office of prophet, something we learn about from the Old Testament but see fulfilled in him. Christ also holds the offices of priest and king; all of his offices are ways that Jesus Christ situates himself toward us as he steps between divinity and humanity in order to solve the problem of reconciling us to God.

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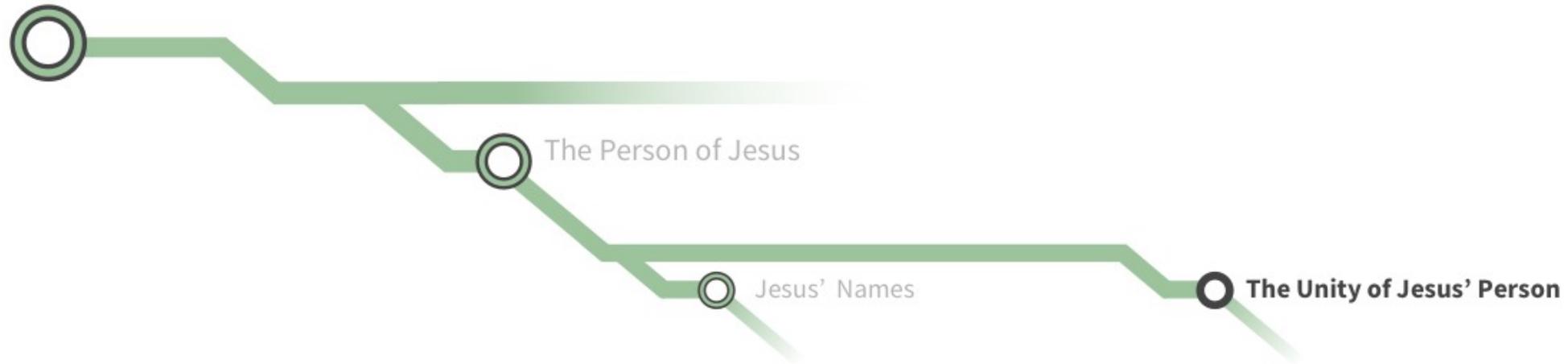
When we turn our attention from the person of Christ to his role as a mediator and finally reflect on the actual work of **redemption** that he accomplishes, a vast field opens up. This is the doctrine of the **atonement**.

This brings us to what functions as the center point of the Apostles' Creed: "We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord." The Creed then recites key events from the life of Jesus Christ—conceived, born, suffered, crucified, died, buried, raised, ascended—each one of them an important opportunity to reflect on how Jesus carries out the work of our salvation. At the center of that center is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the doctrine of the person and work of Christ.

Key Verses

- John 1:1-3
- Col. 1:15-20
- Phil. 2:5-11

The Person and Work of Christ



The unity of Christ is the doctrine that Jesus, although he possesses two distinct and complete natures—he is simultaneously fully God and fully man—is nevertheless one integral person, God the Son incarnate.

The incarnation of the person of the eternal Son as Jesus Christ is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. This personal incarnation, in which “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14), is often referred to as the “hypostatic union” (after the Greek word *hypostasis*, which came to function in the patristic era as a technical term for a “person”).

The Bible affirms repeatedly that Christ is fully God, speaking even of “the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). He is the “image of the invisible God,” the one through whom and for whom “all things were created,” and in whom “all things hold together” (Col 1:15–18). He is “the exact imprint of [God’s] nature” (Heb 1:3), and is addressed by God as God: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Heb 1:8). Before his incarnation (and during it), he had “equality with God” (Phil 2:6).

The Bible also affirms repeatedly that Christ is fully man, speaking of “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5) and the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). “Though he was in the form of God ... [he] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men,” Paul says, “and being found in human form,” he did what only a human can do: “he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6–8).

And yet there is only one Jesus, one will (Luke 22:42), one Jesus who knew the hearts of men because he was omniscient God and yet a man himself (John 2:24–25), one unified divine person.

The unity of Christ is the doctrine that Jesus, although he possesses two distinct and complete natures—he is simultaneously fully God and fully man—is nevertheless one integral person, God the Son incarnate.

The personal unity of the God-man is the theme of one of the ecumenical creeds of Christian orthodoxy, the Definition of Chalcedon (451). The Definition includes several positive affirmations: Christ is “truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial [*homoousios*, “same substance”] with the Father in godhead and the same likewise consubstantial [*homoousios*] with us in manhood.” (The important Greek term *homoousios* is inherited from the First Council of Nicaea in 325.)

The Chalcedonian Definition also makes several important exclusive and negative claims: Christ is said to be “only-begotten, made known in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the two natures being by no means removed because of the union.”

All this means that the church has taught that, though the Bible says many things about Jesus according to either his divine nature or his human nature, everything it says about Jesus is true of him personally. This ecumenical consensus was established over against several competing alternative approaches to understanding what the Bible teaches about Jesus’ identity and the relation between his deity and humanity:

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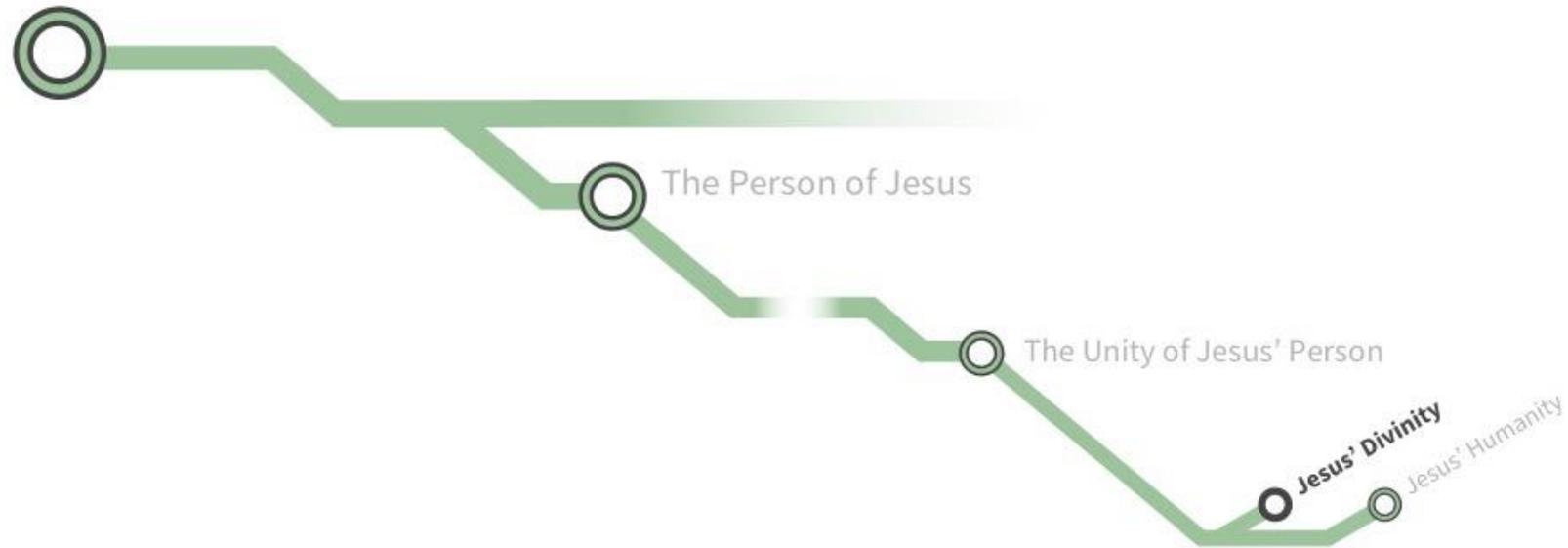
- **Eutychianism** is the belief that the Son's incarnation as Jesus Christ created a novel "nature" or reality representing a combination or mixture of deity and humanity, distinct from either humanity or divinity. Chalcedon disallows this view because it undermines the reality of the deity of Jesus, implying that his divinity is now some other nature than the nature of the one true God. It denies the reality of the humanity of Jesus and therefore his ability to be a true human being in our place and for our sakes. (Oriental Orthodox Christians maintain a "miaphysite" view, describing only one "nature" in Christ, not two [mia- means "one"; -physis means "nature"]. This tradition has been called non-Chalcedonian, though ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches suggests that the dispute over the Definition of Chalcedon is in this case more semantic than substantial.)
- **Nestorianism** took the opposite stance from Eutychianism, drawing a strong distinction between Christ's two natures and the activities of each. Chalcedon disallows this view because it effectively makes Jesus two persons, each with distinct identities.
- **Apollinarianism** presented another alternative: the belief that the incarnate Christ lacked a human soul, because the logos had taken its place. Chalcedon disallows this view because it diminishes the full humanity of Jesus and therefore the fullness of the salvation he accomplished.

The Definition of Chalcedon has set the standard over the centuries for an orthodox understanding of biblical Christology by insisting on the unity of the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity.

Key Verses

- John 1:14
- Col. 1:15-23
- Phil. 2:5-11
- 1 Tim. 2:5
- Heb. 1

The Person and Work of Christ



This doctrine affirms that Jesus Christ was not merely an extraordinary human being but the incarnate Son of God, who by nature is coequal and coeternal with God the Father.

The divinity of Jesus lies at the very heart of Christianity, and the origin of this doctrine goes back to what Jesus affirmed about himself. While Jesus rarely made explicit claims to be the Son of God, or Lord, or used such christological titles found in the Gospels, Jesus made implicit claims about himself that amount to strongly implying virtually the same thing. Jesus used the Aramaic word *abba* ("father") to address God in prayer (Mark 14:36), imparted forgiveness to sinners (Mark 2:5), displayed an independent authority toward the law of Moses (Mark 2:27; 7:15; 10:2-12), and professed to be the Danielic "Son of Man" whom God would enthrone, glorify, and make kingly ruler over Israel and the nations (Mark 14:63). These and many other examples recorded in the Synoptic Gospels reveal Jesus' sense of intimacy with the Father and his claim to being the unique Son of God.

Spurred by Jesus' resurrection as a decisive and undeniable validation of Jesus' claims regarding his ministry and unique identity (Rom 1:4), the belief that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19) and that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9) arose quite early after Jesus' death. Already in the pre-Pauline fragments of hymns and confessions, the earliest Jewish Christians exalted Jesus as "Lord," a term that signified divinity due to its association with the Hebrew names of God, *Adonai* and *YHWH*, through the Septuagint.

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Applying characteristics of preexistent Wisdom, the apostle Paul greatly advanced the church's understanding of Christ's divine preexistence, mediatorship in creation, and the sending and giving of the Son of God into the world (Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20). It is in the Gospel of John, however, where the most developed affirmations of Christ's divinity are found in Scripture, including explicit references to Jesus as God (John 1:1; 20:28).

Historically, the two significant heresies that denied the divinity of Jesus were **Ebionism** and **Arianism**.

As an early heresy that derived from the Christian Jewish sect embodying strong monotheism, Ebionism viewed Jesus as spirit-filled but still a mere human being who was justified, adopted, and elevated by God to divine messianic sonship through scrupulous obedience to the law.

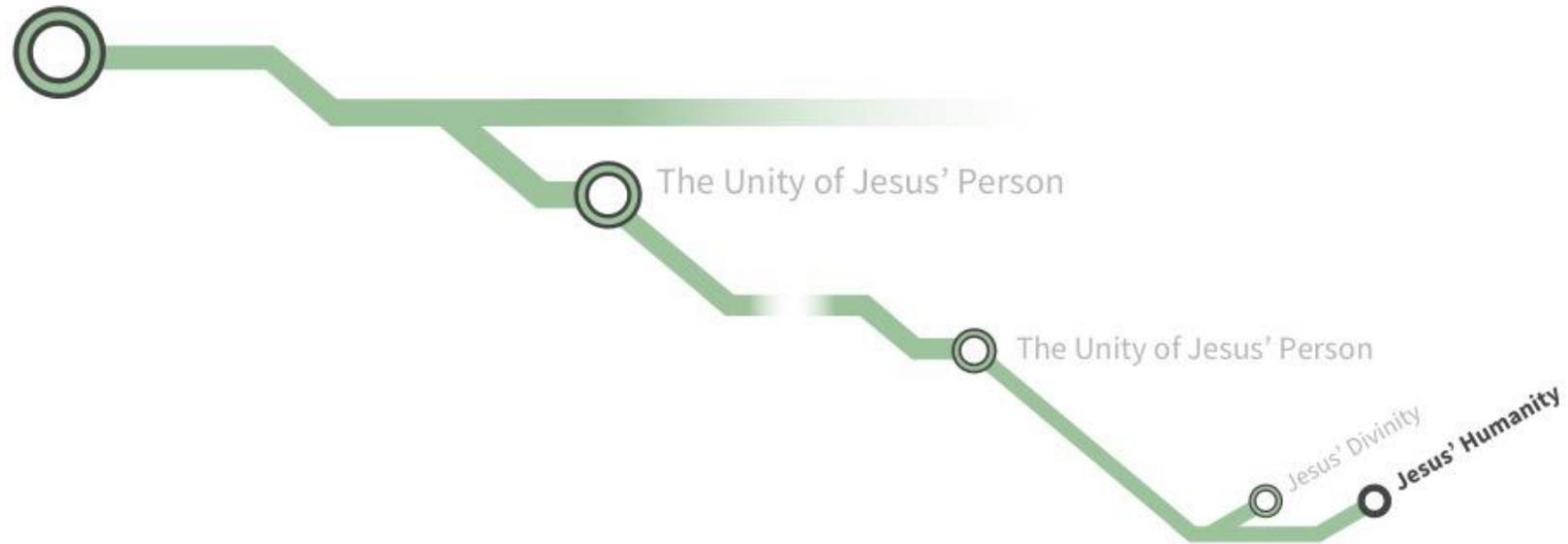
Arianism, a more ontologically sophisticated heresy, viewed Jesus as the semidivine Logos who did not share the same nature as the one true God but was preeminent among created beings.

Rejecting both of these views, the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea (AD 325) affirmed that the Son of God incarnate, Jesus, is "very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance [Greek: *homoousion*] with the Father." The Nicene Creed became the orthodox statement of the church regarding the full divinity of Jesus Christ.

Key Verses

- John 1:1-5
- John 8:52-59
- John 10:30
- John 14:8-10
- John 20:28
- Phil 2:6-11
- Col 1:15-20
- Heb 1:8-9
- 2 Pet 1:1
- John 1:18
- Mark 14:61-62

The Person and Work of Christ



The humanity of Christ is his nature as a man, which is, of course, distinct from his divine nature.

Both the Old and New Testaments speak of the humanity of Christ. Messianic prophecies such as those in Isaiah 7, 11, 42, and 53 speak of the humanity of Christ—his birth, his life, and his suffering.

The New Testament is, of course, more explicit about Christ's humanity and what it entails. Several passages speak of Christ eating and drinking and needing to sleep—helpful indications of his genuine humanity in the Gospel tradition (Matt 4:1-11; John 19:28; Mark 4:35-41).

However, the interpretation of texts that speak of the humanity of Christ has not been without controversy. Second-century Christians faced the challenge of docetism, the teaching that Christ only seemed (*dokeo* means "appears") to be human but was in fact not a material being.

Later, one possible reading of John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," resulted in the fourth-century heresy of Apollinarianism, which denied that Christ had a human soul and argued instead that the logos took its place.

Old Testament passages were not exempt from controversy either. The Septuagint rendering of Proverbs 8:22 speaks of God creating Wisdom. The reading of this verse was central to the controversy between the fourth-century bishop Athanasius and his opponents, who attempted to use this passage to show that Jesus was a created being and thus could not be divine. Similarly, Philippians 2:5-11, which speaks of the Father "exalting" the Son and of the Son "emptying himself" and dying on a cross, was used to show that because Christ could not be divine in the same way that the Father is because the Father neither suffers nor dies.

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Athanasius wrote *On the Incarnation* as a response to such claims, arguing that the divinity of the Son and the humanity of the Son are both central to the eternal plan of God to save sinners.

Later, with the emergence of kenotic theology in the nineteenth century, Philippians 2 was used to argue that in the incarnation, Christ surrendered all or most of his divine attributes.

For many Christians, even today, the fifth century Definition of Chalcedon, which speaks of Christ being one in substance with God and with humans, remains the defining creedal statement of christological orthodoxy, affirming as it does the full deity and full humanity of the one Christ.

Key Verses

- Is. 7:14
- Luke 2
- John 1:14
- Phil. 2:5-11
- 1 Tim. 2:5
- Heb 1

The Person and Work of Christ



The virgin birth is the doctrine that Christ did not have a biological father but rather was conceived by the Holy Spirit miraculously in the womb of Mary. Historically, this doctrine has further entailed the complete integrity of Mary's body after the birth and delivery of Christ, as well as her ever-virginity.

Miraculous births in Scripture. As the Israelites prepare to enter into the promised land, Moses announces to them the blessings associated with covenant obedience and the curses associated with disobedience (Deut 28). For covenant obedience "the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your ground, within the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give you" (Deut 28:11). This covenant blessing is the fulfillment of God's mighty works to gather a people for himself and to deliver that people from their enemies, which causes his people to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 8:17; 15:5; Exod 1:7-10; Deut 1:10).

Barrenness was thus a sign of being cursed for the Israelites. Whenever God opens a barren womb in the Old Testament, it is a sign that he has begun to work powerfully again among his people. The fecundity of the womb is, in other words, understood as a sign of the new spiritual life which God is giving to his people. The proclamations to Sarah, Manoa's wife, Hannah, and the Shunnamite woman that their wombs have been opened is a sign of the greater work that God is about to do to renew his people (Gen 18:10-14; Judg 13:2-3; 1 Sam 1; 2 Kgs 4).

The miraculous birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus in the New Testament should be understood within this framework (Luke 1:7, 11-38). Both the Song of Mary and the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:46-56, 67-79) are victory songs, proclaiming the triumph of God over his enemies. Mary's song, the Magnificat, is patterned on the Songs of Moses and Miriam (Exod 15:1-21), and the Song of Zechariah, the Nunc Dimittis, references Psalm 138, which promises a descendent of David who will deliver Israel. Both of these songs see the annunciation of Jesus as evidence that God is at last going to deliver the Israelites in a second and greater exodus.

The virgin birth. As important as the continuities between Jesus' miraculous birth and the other miraculous births recorded in Scripture are the discontinuities. Scripture offers no indication that the other miraculous births in Scripture result from virginal conceptions as does Jesus' birth. Secondly, Jesus' birth is expressly understood in Matthew's and Luke's accounts not only to be miraculous but to be the fulfillment of the prophecy announced in Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." This prophecy was essential to the Christian understanding of the place of Jesus in the economy of salvation from the New Testament onward.

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That Jesus' birth fulfills the Isaianic prophecy has been cast into doubt from the Reformation onward but especially with the advent of higher criticism in the nineteenth century. Both Matthew and Luke use the Greek translation of the Scriptures, the Septuagint, in their understanding of the prophecy. Whereas the Greek word in Isaiah 7:14 definitely means "virgin," the Hebrew word may mean either "virgin" or "young woman." Modernist scholars used this point to discredit the virginal conception and birth of Jesus, arguing that Matthew and Luke simply misunderstood the prophecy and either invented the virgin birth or misinterpreted Christ's advent in terms of their understanding of this prophecy.

However, this objection was addressed early on by the fathers of the church. As early as AD 155-160, Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho anticipated this objection, arguing that when interpreted simply as "young woman," the Isaianic passage made no sense: " 'Behold, the young woman shall conceive,' as if great events were to be inferred if a woman should beget from sexual intercourse: which indeed all young women, with the exception of the barren, do."

Justin goes on to say that since God has indeed opened the wombs of the barren miraculously, it is no major feat for him to grant a virginal conception: "But even these, God, if He wills, is able to cause [to bear]. For Samuel's mother, who was barren, brought forth by the will of God; and so also the wife of the holy patriarch Abraham; and Elisabeth, who bore John the Baptist, and other such. So that you must not suppose that it is impossible for God to do anything He wills."

For the Fathers, the virgin birth was essential because it safeguarded the doctrine that Christ was the new Adam. In the third century, Irenaeus argued that because Adam "had his substance from untilled and as yet virgin soil," so did "He who is the Word, recapitulating Adam in Himself, rightly receive a birth, enabling Him to gather up Adam [into Himself], from Mary, who was as yet a virgin."

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The virginal conception, the virgin birth, and the ever-virginity of Mary. A curious feature of the fundamentalist-modernist debates of the early twentieth century was that what the fundamentalists defended as the "virgin birth" was actually the virginal conception of Jesus. By and large they did not defend either the virgin birth or the ever-virginity of Mary. Historically, by contrast, the virgin birth means that the integrity of Mary's hymen was preserved not only in the miraculous conception of Jesus but also in his miraculous birth. The virgin birth also entailed the perpetual virginity of Mary, a doctrine which was taught not only by the patristic and medieval church but also by all the central magisterial Reformers. Thomas Cranmer, for instance, argued in A Confutation of Unwritten Verities that the doctrine was to be believed not only from the united testimony of the fathers, but on the basis of Ezekiel 44:2-3.

Key Verses

- Is 7:14
- Lk 1:26-38
- Mt 1:18-25

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