



**WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ?**  
Introduction to Reformed Theology

**Class 7**

**THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST**

Education Year 2024-2025

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**Review – Doctrine of God**

- God's Transcendence
  - Creator / creature distinction
  - Not the pagan Oneism
- Epistemology – how do we know and what do we know?
  - Archetypal vs. Ectypal Knowledge
- God's Attributes
  - Incommunicable vs. Communicable
- Trinity – three persons, one in essence



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## Loci of Theology

- *Prolegomena*
- Theology Proper (Doctrine of God)
- Christology (Doctrine of Christ)
- Anthropology (Doctrine of Man)
- Pneumatology (Doctrine of the Spirit)
- Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation)
- Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church)
- Eschatology (Doctrine of the End Times)



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## OT Names of God

- Yahweh / Jehovah (LORD) - יהוה
- Adonai (Lord) - אֲדֹנָי
- El or Elohim (God) – אֱלֹהִים
- El-Shaddai (God Almighty) - אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי
- Lord/God of Hosts - יהוה צְבָאוֹת
  - “Lord Sabatoth his name”



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## NT Names of God

- God – Θεος
- Lord – Κυριος
- Father - Πατερ



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## Names of Christ

- Jesus
  - Hebrew “Joshua” - יהושוע
  - Greek “Jesus” - Ἰησοῦς
  - Matt 1:21 – “You shall call his name ‘Jesus’ for he will save his people from their sins.”
- Christ
  - Hebrew “Anointed One / Messiah” – מָשִׁיחַ
  - Greek “Christ” - Χριστός
  - John 4:25 – “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ).”
    - Shorthand Χρ
    - Ancient Church:  $X+P=\Psi$



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## Names of Christ

- “Son of Man” – from Ezekiel and Daniel 7:13
  - Most common self-designation of Jesus
  - Expressive of the humanity of Christ
- “Son of God”
  - Even Satan and the demons call him this!
  - “Nativistic Sense” – “designates that the human nature of Christ owes its origin to the direct supernatural activity of God (of the Holy Spirit).”<sup>1</sup>
  - “Messianic Sense” – a description of the office
  - “Trinitarian Sense” – description of Christ as the second person of the Trinity.
    - Probably what Jesus meant when he called himself the “Son of God”
- “Lord” – Polite address, but also his exalted character.

1. All three of these senses come from Berkhof, *Manual*, 178.



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## Natures of Christ

- I Timothy 3:16
 

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:  
   He was manifested in the flesh,  
   vindicated by the Spirit,  
   seen by angels,  
   proclaimed among the nations,  
   believed on in the world,  
   taken up in glory.
- Christ has two natures, fully and completely God and man.



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## Two Natures of Christ

- BC 19

We believe that by being thus conceived the person of the Son has been inseparably united and joined together with human nature, in such a way that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in a single person, with each nature retaining its own distinct properties.

Thus his divine nature has always remained uncreated, “without beginning of days or end of life,” (Heb 7:3) filling heaven and earth.

His human nature has not lost its properties but continues to have those of a creature— it has a beginning of days; it is of a finite nature and retains all that belongs to a real body. And even though he, by his resurrection, gave it immortality, that nonetheless did not change the reality of his human nature; for our salvation and resurrection depend also on the reality of his body.

But these two natures are so united together in one person that they are not even separated by his death.

So then, what he committed to his Father when he died was a real human spirit which left his body. But meanwhile his divine nature remained united with his human nature even when he was lying in the grave; and his deity never ceased to be in him, just as it was in him when he was a little child, though for a while it did not show itself as such.

These are the reasons why we confess him to be true God and true man— true God in order to conquer death by his power, and true man that he might die for us in the weakness of his flesh.



## Deity / Divinity of Christ

- Denied by Arius in the fourth century.

- Unitarians and Liberals today

- Scripture proofs

- Isaiah 9:6 – “his name shall be called, Mighty God..”
- Jeremiah 23:6 – “...and this is his name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD (Yahweh) our righteousness.’”
- John 5:18 – “This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”
- Col 2:9 – “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily..”



## Polemics concerning the Deity of Christ

- Disciples had no problem calling Jesus of Nazareth “God” and “Lord”
  - John 20:28, “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”
- John 17:4-5 & Isaiah 42:8
  - John 17:4-5 – “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, *glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*”
  - Isaiah 42:8 – “I am the LORD; that is my name; *my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.*”



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## John 1:1

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
  - **Anarthrous “ΘΕΟΣ”** - Is it “a God” or is referring to “the one true God”? A construction in Greek grammar called “Colwell’s Construction” would say that the second use of **ΘΕΟΣ** is speaking qualitatively about “ὁ λόγος (the Word), that is, his nature was that of God.
  - Rather, it [this construction] stresses that, although the person of Christ is not the person of the Father, their essence is identical. . . . The idea of a qualitative **ΘΕΟΣ** here is that the Word had all the attributes and qualities that “the God” (of 1:1b) had. In other words he shared the essence of the Father, though they differed in person. The construction the evangelist chose to express this idea was the most concise way he could have stated that the Word was God and yet was distinct from the Father.<sup>1</sup>

1. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 269.



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## John 1:1 – Jehovah Witnesses

- *New World Translation* – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.”
  - Because the last use of **ΘΕΟΣ** doesn't have the definite article, the NWT translates it as “a god.”
  - However, they are not consistent, and this would be the only time in the NT this construction would be translated this way.<sup>1</sup>
  - It is interesting that the *New World Translation* renders **ΘΕΟΣ** as "a god" on the simplistic grounds that it lacks the article. This is surely an insufficient basis. Following the "anarthrous indefinite" principle would mean that *ἀρχὴ* should be "a beginning" (1:1, 2), *ζωή* should be "a life" (1:4), *παρὰ θεοῦ* should be "from a god" (1:6), *Ἰωάννης* should be "a John" (1:6), *Θεὸν* should be "a god" (1:18), etc. Yet none of these other anarthrous nouns is rendered with an indefinite article. One can only suspect strong theological bias in such a translation.<sup>2</sup>

1. Wallace, *Grammar*, 267.  
2. Ibid.



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## Mormons on Christ<sup>1</sup>

Mormon	Christian
A created being, the brother of Lucifer	Uncreated God
Common (one of many gods)	Unique (second person of the only Godhead)
Conceived by a physical sex act between God (Elohim) and Mary	Conceived by the Holy Spirit – a true virgin birth
Once sinful and imperfect (they would say that he was sinless as a human)	Eternally sinless and perfect.
Earned his own salvation	As God, never required salvation
A married polygamist?	An unmarried monogamist

1. John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *Fast Facts on Mormonism*, 61.



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## Humanity of Christ

- Denied by Apollonaris in the fourth century.
- "...while Christ was a real man, he was without sin. He not only did no sin, but could not sin, because of the essential bond between the human and divine natures in him."<sup>1</sup>
- Scripture Proofs
  - Isaiah 11:1 – "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse..."
  - John 1:14 – "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."
  - Romans 1:3 – "...concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh..."
  - I Timothy 2:4, "...and there is one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus..."
  - I Timothy 3:16 - "...He was manifested in the flesh..."

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 183.



## Unity of the Two Natures of Christ

- The God-man. The divine second person of the Trinity assumed a real human nature (body and soul), and now has both a divine and human nature.
  - "He is a single individual, but possesses all the essential qualities of both the human and the divine nature. While he has but a single self-consciousness, he has both a divine and a human consciousness, as well as a human and divine will."<sup>1</sup>
  - Acts 20:28 – "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for *the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*"
  - Romans 9:5 – "To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, *according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*"
  - I Corinthians 2:8 – "None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have *crucified the Lord of glory.*"

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 184.





## Communication of Properties

- *Communicatio idiomatum*
  - Reformed – What can be said of the nature can be said of the person.
    - The divine nature of Christ is omnipresent, therefore the person of Christ is omnipresent.
  - Lutheran – What can be said of the person can be said of the nature.
    - The person of Christ is omnipresent, so the *divine and human natures* are omnipresent.



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## States of Christ

- Humiliation
  - Christ assumed a human nature in the form of a servant. Didn't change the essence of his divinity.
  - Incarnation and Birth
    - Derived his human nature through being born of his mother Mary.
    - The Holy Spirit kept the human nature of Christ from the pollution of sin.
  - Suffering
    - Not limited to just his "Passion Week", but "during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race" (HC Q&A 37).
    - "...Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross by also earlier... (HC Q&A 44).



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## States of Christ

- Humiliation

- Death

- Judged by an earthly judge: Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed – “under Pontius Pilate”
      - Cf. HC Q&A 38
    - Crucified – Galatians 3:3 – “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...’” (Deut 21:23).
    - Christ really did die!

- Buried

- Punishment of sin is returning to the dust (Gen 3:19)
    - In Acts 2:22-36 Peter makes mention a few times of Christ's burial.
    - HC Q&A 41 – his burial testifies that he really died.
    - “The burial of Christ served the purpose of removing the terrors of the grave for the redeemed and of sanctifying the grave for them.”<sup>1</sup>

- Descent into Hell

- HC Q&A 44

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 192.



## States of Christ

- Humiliation - Death

- Judged by an earthly judge: Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed – “under Pontius Pilate”
    - Cf. HC Q&A 38
  - Crucified – Galatians 3:3 – “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...’” (Deut 21:23).
  - Christ really did die! – Edwards, et. al. “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ”

### **Contrary**

- Swoon theory – Jesus fainted on the cross and only appeared dead.

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 192.



## States of Christ

- Exaltation
  - Resurrection
    - Christ really rose from the dead!

### **Contrary Theories**

- *Twin Theory* - Jesus had an identical twin brother that nobody knew about who took Jesus' place on the cross.
  - Weakness – The twin would have had to been in hiding for Jesus' whole life, and then somehow be the one to be crucified.
- *Stolen Body*: Jesus' followers stole his body. A theory that dates from the first century, in fact, Matt 28:11-15 records it.
  - Weakness - Doesn't explain the disciple's actions. Jesus spoke of his resurrection, but they don't have the expectation that he would appear to them again physically. They initially scattered, but 50 days later they are preaching and they all became martyrs. There was a detachment of soldiers tasked to prevent this from happening.



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## States of Christ

- Resurrection - Christ really rose from the dead!

### **Contrary Theories**

- *Hallucination*: The disciples and others experienced hallucinations in which they saw Jesus raised from the dead.
  - Weakness – Hallucinations are private events, so for multiple people and even 500 to have the same hallucination at the same time is very unlikely. Also a problem with the empty tomb.
- *Wrong tomb*: the disciples thought the tomb was empty because they went to the wrong tomb.
  - Weakness – Mary and other women saw Jesus being buried. There were soldiers at the tomb as a landmark. Also, the oldest theory against the resurrection is that the tomb was empty (albeit the body stolen.)



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## States of Christ

- Resurrection - Christ really rose from the dead!

### **Contrary Theories**

- *Legend:* Jesus was never taken from the cross and was left to rot and be eaten by birds or his body was thrown into a common grave and scavenged by dogs. The disciples later realized what they could do with this information and still carry on his teaching. The Gospel accounts of the resurrection are just parables and symbols for an uneducated audience.
  - Weakness: claims that Jesus was indeed buried, and the oldest theory of a stolen body. There were too many historical details that could have been immediately proven true or false if the disciples simply made everything up. Such a made up story would not include suspicious elements in the story (i.e. the discovery by women whose testimonies would have meant nothing).
- *Alien theory:* Jesus was an alien from another planet with advanced knowledge of medicine and science. He had highly developed psychic abilities and what was natural to him looked supernatural to us (i.e. telepathy, healing himself, moving around unnoticed, teleportation, etc.).
  - Weakness: proved too much, anything could just be attributed to his being an alien and is therefore unfalsifiable.



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## States of Christ

- Resurrection - Christ really rose from the dead!
- “Five Es of the Resurrection” – Rev. Michael Brown
  - Empty Tomb
    - The Jews and the Romans didn’t contest the empty tomb
  - Eye Witnesses
  - Enduring transformation of the Apostles
  - Explanation of Old Testament Prophecy
    - Gen 3:15 – a promise of overturning death and entrance to the tree of life. The whole Bible fits together as one message.
  - External witnesses: secular writers claim there was a man named Jesus whose disciples claimed rose from the dead.
    - Josephus (Jewish); Tacitus and Pliny the Younger (Roman).



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## States of Christ

- Ascension
  - “Without the ascension... the biblical story as a whole would lack the outcome it demands.”<sup>1</sup>
  - HC Q&A 46-49
    - Compare with Q&A 45. Why only one on the resurrection and four on the ascension?
  - *Extra calvinisticum* – HC Q&A 48 – “Christ’s divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity that has been taken on...”
    - *Communicatio idiomatum*
- Session
  - Christ’s being seated at the right hand of God (figuratively)
  - HC Q&A 50-51

1. Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 23.



## States of Christ

- Physical Return
  - HC Q&A 52; BC 37
  - Returns in his physical capacity as Judge
  - Vindication of the elect
  - “It will signify the complete victory of his redemptive work.”<sup>1</sup>
  - More on Eschatology later!

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 198.



## Next Week

- More on Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons?
- Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

