

*Who is Jesus?* Our understanding and belief in “who” the child in the manger is, greatly influences our worship. Meditating on the doctrines of Christ will energize true worship and keep you from a mindless, mechanical, or even false worship.

We should not dismiss biblical Christology as unimportant. If you get Christ wrong, you get the gospel wrong- which has eternal ramifications, John 8:24.

Recall: We have been warned that there are those who preach “**another**” Jesus, 2 Corinthians 11:4, and pervert the **gospel** of Christ, Galatians 1:6-9. False **teachers** needed to be tested by their doctrine, including Christology, 1 John 4:1-3; 2:22-23; 2 John 9.

**It is vitally important that we know the Jesus we are worshipping and that He be the biblical Jesus.**

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The Bible does not present Christ in the format of a Theology text, it gives us truth about Christ through historical accounts of His actions and words, along with Spirit-driven, inspired commentary. We must take that biblical data and organize it and harmonize it (truth cannot be contradictory). For this task, we do not have to “start from scratch.” Through church history heretics (false teachers) have pushed the church to recognize the **boundaries** of the truth about Christ. Councils would be gathered to study the issues and statements written to precisely define **biblical Christology**. These Councils did not make theology, they **recognized biblical theology** and gave us **statements** which enabled us to discern true from false. Consider the following summary of the heresies about Christ and the answer of the church:

*Very early, within the lifetime of the apostle John, the **Docetists** claimed that the Christ simply appeared to have a human form, but did not have one in reality, that Jesus was not a true man in the flesh. Around the same time, the **Cerinthians** taught that the human Jesus was distinct from the Christ spirit. The Christ spirit came upon the fully (and merely) human Jesus at his baptism. One of the first Hebrew heresies was **Ebionism**: the Jesus was a man who had kept the Law perfectly, and God rewarded him by calling him ‘anointed’.*

*By the third century, another two heresies appeared. One was **Adoptionism** – that Jesus was only a man, but He was adopted by God at His baptism. A second was **Sabellianism** – the idea that God manifested Himself in three modes, but not in three persons.*

*The heresies came to full bloom in the fourth and fifth centuries. **Arianism** taught that Jesus was the first creation of God. **Apollinarianism** taught that Jesus was a mixture of divine and human, with the Logos replacing the human soul of Jesus.*

*In the fifth century, **Nestorianism** split the natures into virtually two persons, denying that Mary bore the Person who is God. **Eutychnianism** taught that the human nature of Jesus was virtually absorbed and overwhelmed by the divine nature. Later, in the sixth century, **Monophysites** would teach that Jesus had only one nature, a divine one. **Monothelites** would deny that Jesus had a human will alongside the one will He has within the Trinity.*

*As these heresies developed, the church needed to respond... the church’s statements about Christ developed from the “faithful saying” of 1 Timothy 3:16, to the **Apostles’ Creed** (A. D. 250), to the more developed **Nicene Creed** (A. D. 325 and 381). By the fifth century, we have the very precise statements of the **Formula of Chalcedon** (A. D. 451) and the **Athanasian Creed** (c. A. D. 500).*

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### **The Statement of the Doctrine of the Trinity** (The Tri-unity, Three-in-oneness)

*God eternally exists as three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God. We can summarize the doctrine with three statements:*

- 1. There is only one God.**
  - 2. God is three distinct persons.**
  - 3. Each person is fully God.**
- We hold to this truth, not because of its logic but because **this is how God has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures**. It is a doctrine that is not **explicitly** stated in the Scriptures, yet **it is a Scriptural doctrine**. It is a

**“systematic” doctrine which fits together all the data** (diverse and many Scripture references) under one heading. For the doctrine to be true it must encompass all the references, “doing justice” to the witness God gives to Himself in His Word. The doctrine must fit or make sense in all the references where it can be seen.

- The doctrine of the Trinity may seem self-contradictory (illogical), and incomprehensible, yet it perfectly describes the True God. It has been called a “mystery”, and “hard to understand.” Keep in mind that “hard to understand” does not make something **“untrue.”**
- God is **Eternally** a Triune God; Jesus did not “become” God, and at **every** moment in time, the One God exists in three **distinct** persons.  
*“The fact that God is three persons means that the Father is not the Son; they are distinct persons. It also means that the Father is not the Holy Spirit, but that they are distinct persons. And it means that the Son is not the Holy Spirit.”*
- Common analogies drawn from human experience or nature **fall short** in some aspect of the doctrine. One person can have three **roles** (For example I am at once pastor, father, husband), but they are not three distinct persons. Water molecules can be steam or vapor(gas), water (liquid), ice (solid), but not at the same **time**. God does use analogies in the Scripture to reveal and instruct us regarding His character, for example: He is the Shepherd, but the Scriptures offer no analogies to the doctrine of the Trinity.

### Denials of the Trinity can be grouped into two categories:

1. Those who deny the Trinity by demoting Jesus to mere man: denials of Jesus’ **deity**.
2. Those who deny the Trinity by claiming that there is only “one God”: denials that Jesus is a **distinct person** from the Father and the Holy Spirit. (cp. 1 John 2:22-24)
  - This false teaching states that “Father” and “Holy Spirit” are just names or titles for the same person. It is called **“oneness”** theology or **“modalism”** (*One person who appears to us in three different forms (modes), at different times.*)
  - Oneness theology simply **cannot reasonably** explain passages where the three persons of the Trinity appear simultaneously, for example: Matthew 3:16-17, nor can it explain the passages which speak of some sort of “interaction” between persons of the Trinity, for examples; The Father sending Jesus, Jesus obeying the Father, Jesus praying to the Father, the Holy Spirit interceding between us and the Father...
  - Oneness theology has profound implications in our understanding of the “atonement”: The Father sent the Son as a substitutionary sacrifice and the Son bore the Father’s wrath in our place resulting in the Father being satisfied (appeased/propitiated).

**Christmas and the Trinity.** The Trinity can be seen in many of the Scripture passages relating to the birth of Jesus. Indeed, for us to **“make sense”** of those Christmas accounts, the doctrine of the Tri-unity of God must be in view.

- Galatians 4:4 (cp. Galatians 4:6)  
Jesus’ birth is presented as a **“sending”**, not just a “coming.” Who sent who?
- Luke 1:35  
**Who** comes upon Mary? What is the result? In whose power does it happen?
- Luke 2:14  
If the infant in the manger is the present mode of “God” (Oneness theology), then to whom are the angels singing “...glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace...”?
- Philippians 2:5-11  
To whom is Christ Jesus **“equal”**? v.6 To whom was Christ Jesus “obedient”? v. 8  
Who exalted Christ Jesus? v. 9, 10
- John 1: 1-14, 18  
The Word **was** God, but is also **“with”** God, v. 1, 2  
The Son is said to be in the bosom of the Father, v.18