

The Identity of Jesus Christ

- The “historical Jesus”
- Titles for Christ
- Christological controversies
- Divine and human in one person
- Incarnation and preexistence
- Virgin birth

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The “Historical Jesus”

- 19th century skepticism about the Gospels
 - Jesus of history (Jesus as he really was).
 - Christ of faith (the Christ proclaimed by the church).
- Led to the Quests for the Historical Jesus.
 - Today: John Dominic Crossan, N. T. Wright
 - When we try to reconstruct Jesus apart from the Gospels, we make him in our own image.
 - But historical context helps us to understand.

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Titles for Christ

- A traditional way of doing Christology.
- Son of God - specially chosen by God (special commission, special relationship).
- Son of Man - present ministry, suffering and resurrection, coming in judgment.
- Word (*Logos*) - revealer, preexistence.
- Christ/Messiah - anointed one (title).
- Lord (*Kyrios*) - exalted and reigning.

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Titles for Christ

- Savior (*Soter*) - rare; rescuer of the world.
- God (*Theos*) - also rare.
- NT writers are willing to apply to Jesus titles formerly reserved for Yahweh.
- They imply both divinity and humanity.
- Jesus filled “Messiah” with his own meaning: suffering servant.
- “Lord” shows we owe him our allegiance.

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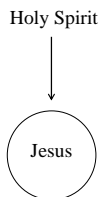
Christological Controversies

- Outgrowth of Trinitarian debates.
- Settled early in West (Tertullian - “two natures, one person”).
- Ongoing controversy in East.
- See handout on controversies.
- Swung between overemphasis on divinity and overemphasis on humanity.

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Christological Controversies

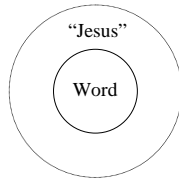
- Ebionism - Jesus is a God-inspired man.



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Christological Controversies

- Ebionism - Jesus is a God-inspired man.
- Docetism - Jesus only appeared to be human (from *dokeo*, to seem or appear).



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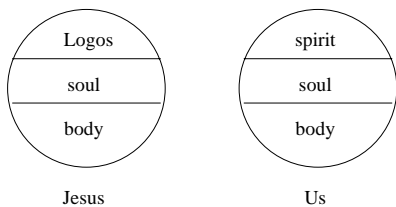
Christological Controversies

- Challenge of Arianism
 - Maintain absolute monotheism.
 - *Logos* is a creature, not divine.
 - “There was [a time] when he was not.”
 - But *Logos* wasn’t human, above rest of creation.
 - Condemned at Nicea (325).
 - *Logos* was same substance as the Father.
 - Nicea affirmed divinity of the *Logos*/Son.

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Christological Controversies

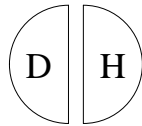
- Apollinaris - *Logos* replaced human spirit.



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Christological Controversies

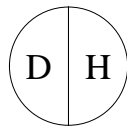
- Apollinaris - *Logos* replaced human spirit.
- Nestorius - conjunction, not union.



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Christological Controversies

- Chalcedon - two natures in union.



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Divine and Human in One Person

- Biblical evidence for Jesus' divinity:
 - Claimed divine prerogatives.
 - Claimed unique relationship with God.
 - Claims of preexistence.
 - Accepted worship.
 - Other NT writers describe him as divine.
 - Resurrection affirmed Jesus' claims.
 - Implications for counseling?

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Divine and Human in One Person

- Biblical evidence for Jesus' humanity:
 - Had physical human nature and needs.
 - Had human emotions.
 - Experienced human limitations.
 - Had spiritual needs.
 - Called himself a man.
 - Other NT writers testified to his humanity.
- Is sinlessness compatible with humanity?
- Could Jesus have sinned?

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Divine and Human in One Person

- Evidence for Jesus as one person:
 - NT treats him as a single subject.
 - This question arises because of Chalcedonian "two natures" formula.

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Divine and Human in One Person

- Implications of Jesus' divinity?

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Divine and Human in One Person

- Implications of Jesus' humanity?

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Divine and Human in One Person

- Implications of Jesus as one person?
 - The incarnation is a reality.
 - Jesus brings together the divine and human dimensions of community.

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Divine and Human in One Person

- What does it mean that Jesus is the true human?

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Divine and Human in One Person

- What does it mean that Jesus is the new human?

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Incarnation and Preexistence

- Incarnation = God becoming flesh (John 1:14).
- Preexistence = Word or Son existed in eternity apart from the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth.
- Grenz doesn't want us to emphasize these so much that we lose Jesus' full humanity.
- Don't speculate about the *Logos*.

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Incarnation and Preexistence

- What is kenotic Christology?
 - Based on Philippians 2:6-11.
 - “Kenosis” = “emptied himself.”
 - The Son emptied himself of some divine attributes to become human.
 - Or the Son gave up independent exercise of his divine powers.
 - What difference do these views make?
 - Phil. 2 says he humbled himself – model for us.

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Incarnation and Preexistence

- Implications of the incarnation?
 - We can't uphold classical immutability of God.
 - Jesus is Immanuel - God with us.
 - God was the initiator: he came to us.
 - We should get our concepts of deity and humanity from Jesus.

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Virgin Birth

- The virgin birth:
 - Jesus was conceived without a human father.
 - Really a virginal conception.
 - Conceived through the influence of the Spirit.
 - No sexual relations until after Jesus was born.
 - Protestants: Mary had other children.
 - Catholics: perpetual virginity of Mary.
 - Not the Immaculate Conception (Mary was conceived without sin - Catholicism).

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Virgin Birth

- Biblical data on the virgin birth:
 - Taught in Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38.
 - Hinted at in Mark 6:3 – Jesus the son of Mary.
 - Also John 8:41 – Jews say they aren't illegitimate.

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Jeremy was recently laid off from his job as a computer programmer because of company downsizing. This is the third time he has been unemployed in five years. His mood has been swinging between anger and depression. He confesses that he feels like a failure. His late mother had told him that he would never amount to anything, and he's afraid she was right. One of his friends has been urging him to turn his life over to Jesus. Jeremy thinks that Jesus was an admirable historical figure, like Gandhi or Buddha. But how could Jesus be of any use to him today? If Jesus was a human being, he was long dead. If he was God, as his friend said, he wouldn't be able to understand the life of an ordinary mortal. Besides, regardless of whether Jesus was God or a great man, he would probably think Jeremy was a failure, too. What theological framework will you need in order to address his situation?

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Case Study

- Theological issues?
- What does Jeremy need to understand about human nature?
- What does he need to understand about Jesus?
- What does he need to understand about salvation?

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