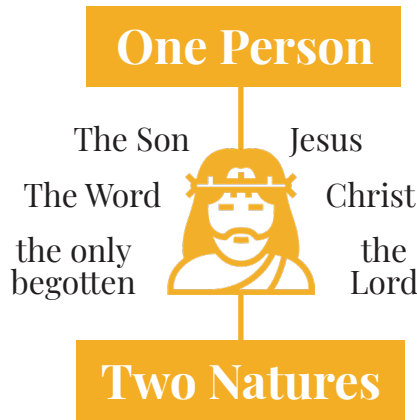


THE INCARNATION

A Primer on Chalcedonian Christology



The Son of God has always had the divine nature. He is eternally begotten of the Father and thus of the same divine substance that the Father is.



The Son of God assumed human nature. He was born of the Virgin Mary in time and is now of the same human substance that we are—body and soul.

THE DIVINE NATURE

aka "the Godhead" or "deity"

- a spirit, without body
- infinite (without limitations)
- eternal (has always existed)
- immortal (unable to die)
- impassable (unable to suffer)
- omnipresent (present everywhere)
- omnipotent (almighty)
- omniscient (all-knowing)
- *Jesus is truly God!*
- *He is what-ever it means to be divine.*

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION — the union of two natures in one person (*hypostasis*)

The two natures are:

- NOT confused
- NOT changed
- NOT divided
- NOT separated
- *The property of each nature is preserved!*

HUMAN NATURE

aka "the manhood" or "humanity"

- a body and soul
- finite (limited)
- temporal (has a beginning)
- mortal (able to die)
- passable (able to suffer)
- limited to one location
- limited in power
- limited in knowledge
- *Jesus is truly human!*
- *He is what-ever it means to be human.*

Who is Jesus? This question asks about the one person.

Jesus is the Son of God, the Word of God, the only begotten, the Christ, the Lord. *All these names and titles refer to one and the same person!*

What is Jesus? This question asks about the two natures.

Jesus is truly God (divine) and truly man (human) at the same time. *He did not stop being God in any way when he became completely human for us and for our salvation!*



Mary is called the Theotokos ("Mother of God" or "God-bearer") because the *one* whom she mothered is God. The confession that Mary is Theotokos is fundamentally a Christological statement. It is about preserving the unity of Christ's person.

Implications include:

1. **Jesus Christ has always existed.** He was with God the Father in the beginning at creation. He was at work in the Old Testament. Jude 1:5 says that Jesus delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt in the exodus, and Jesus destroyed those who did not believe in the wilderness.
2. **When Jesus became incarnate, he did not literally “empty himself of all but love” or set aside any divine attributes.** He continued to be the all-powerful sustainer of the universe even as he lay in the manger! He upheld the star that the wise men used to seek him! Charles Wesley understood this and also wrote, “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail th’incarnate Deity.”
3. **Jesus did not literally “leave his Father’s throne above.”** he continued to be omnipresent (present everywhere—including heaven) even while he was born in Bethlehem! Charles Wesley also understood this, and wrote in another hymn, “See th’ eternal Son of God / A mortal Son of man, / Dwelling in an earthy clod / *Whom heaven cannot contain!*”
4. **Jesus did plenty of crying as a baby.** The hymn “Away in a Manger” poetically imagines that “the poor baby wakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.” Of course, Jesus cried as a baby and at the tomb of Lazarus—something that God had never literally done before the incarnation. Jesus also ate, slept, got hungry, and felt (righteous) anger.
5. **The divine nature did not die on the cross.** When we say that “God died on the cross” we mean that “*the one person who is God died on the cross according to the human nature which he assumed for us and for our salvation.*” The unchanging divine nature can never die.
6. **The Son knows the day and hour of his return according to his divine nature.** When Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 say that the Son does not know the day nor the hour of his return, we must attribute this to the Son *according to the human nature which he assumed, which is limited in knowledge*, while recognizing that in his Godhead, Jesus knows everything (otherwise he wouldn’t be truly God!).

“He remained what he was; what he was not, he assumed.” —Gregory of Nazianzus

“He did not lose what He was, but began to be what He was not. He did not cease to possess His own nature, but received what was ours.” —Hilary of Poitiers

“He was not bound to the body, but rather was himself wielding it, so that he was both in it and in everything, and was outside everything, and at rest in the Father alone.” —Athanasius

“Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, the true Sun of Justice, so shone upon the earth as not to leave the heavens, remaining there eternally, but coming hither for a time. ... There sitting at the right hand of the Father, here lying in a manger; there feeding the angels, here on earth a hungry Child; there unfailing Bread with perfect powers, here, along with speechless children, needing the nourishment of milk; there doing good, here suffering evil; there never dying, here rising after death and bestowing eternal life on mortals.” —Augustine