

CHAPTER 9

PERSON AND OFFICES OF CHRIST

The existence of the Second Person of the Godhead, the eternal Son of God, is assumed (cf. course The Doctrine of God). Likewise, the full deity of Jesus Christ is assumed as proved from Scripture. In this section we will study those characteristics and acts of Jesus Christ which contribute specifically to our salvation—i.e., the outworking of the covenant of redemption.

Christ's Place in the Covenant of Grace: Mediator

1. The concept of “mediator” is found in Job 9:33. Job desired such a one.

“Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.” (KJV)

“If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both.”
(NIV)

The Hebrew term is מוֹכֵיחַ *mōkēah*, the Hiphil participle of יָכַח *yākah*, and is translated in the LXX as μεσίτης *mesites*. The Hebrew word is translated “referee, judge”; the ASV uses “umpire,” and the NIV “someone to arbitrate.”

2. In the NT Christ is given the title *mesites* (“mediator”) between God and man in 1 Tim 2:5.

1 Tim 2:5, For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

The term *mesites* was a Hellenistic technical term. According to Moulton and Milligan, p. 399, it carries these meanings:

- “Arbiter” in legal transactions
- “Surety” for debt in business transactions
- “Intermediary”
- “Trustee”

A. Oepke in *TDNT* 4:598-624, carefully analyzes this term. At the end of his article he states:

“If the infrequent occurrence of the term in the NT is surprising, even more so is its almost complete absence from the earliest Christian writings. . . . It did not for a while become a central concept in dogmatics. Other designations for Christ, e.g., Lord, or the Son of God and Savior comprised in the fish symbol, were at first much more influential. Perhaps the mediator concept suffered from its strong secular and Jewish associations. In Roman Catholicism the Church and its agents largely took over the mediatorial function. In contrast, Reformation theology looked to the one Mediator, Christ.”

3. Other NT references using this word:

Use term μεσίτης *mesites*, “mediator”

Intermediary—Moses in Gal 3:19-20

Calvin in his commentary on Galatians takes this to be a reference to Christ, not Moses.

Dispenser—Christ dispensing the new covenant

Heb 8:6, mediator of a better covenant

Heb 9:15, mediator of a new (καινῆς *kaines*) covenant

Heb 12:24, mediator of a new (νέας *neas*) covenant

4. This central position Christ occupies in the covenant of grace is well expressed by the term *mesites*; and therefore, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch. 8, entitles this chapter, which is concerned with the person and work of Christ, “Of Christ the Mediator.”

Why Christ Is the Mediator

This question must involve some speculation, but certain basic points are clear from the biblical doctrine of the atonement. This question was the essence of Anselm’s famous little book *Cur Deus Homo?* [*Why the God-Man?*].

The Mediator must be man.

—WLC 39

Q. 39. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be man?

A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.

In God's justice, the punishment must be inflicted on those who commit the crime—at least, on the same order of creation. Likewise, in order for us to receive Christ's righteousness, his righteousness must be within the same sphere and order as ours, i.e., human righteousness. Also, no one but a human can suffer as we do—such sufferings resulting from and due for our sins.

The Mediator must be God.

—WLC 38, 40

Q. 38. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God?

A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice, procure his favour, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.

Q. 40. Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God and man in one person?

A. It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should himself be both God and man, and this in one person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole person.

The following purposes would require the mediator to be God Himself:

- That God may receive all the glory for our salvation
- That God may reserve the supreme sacrifice to himself
- That Adam's race may be saved—no other order of being could become man, and still be born in Adam's race

- That God’s justice would be satisfied—no one else could bear infinite punishment in limited time

Definition of Christ as the God-man

Primary elements

WCF 8:2, WLC 36-37, WSC 21-22

- 1) Two distinct and complete natures: the full divine nature and the full human nature
- 2) One inseparable person

Strong, “In brief, to use the antiquated dictum, orthodox doctrine forbids us either to divide the person or to confound the natures” (673).

Some “heretical” schemes

For helpful information: the standard theologies; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* 3:ch. 9, parts 1 and 3, “The Trinitarian Controversies” and “The Christological Controversies,” pp. 616-98, 705-83; Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* 1:ch. 2, “Doctrine of the One Person and Two Natures in Christ,” 243-88; helpful clarification of heresies in A. A. Hodge *Outlines*, 386-89

A. A. Hodge divides these heresies into three groups as follows:

<u>Deny full deity</u>	<u>Deny full humanity</u>	<u>Deny unity of person</u>
Ebionites	Gnostics	Nestorians
Arians	Docetists	(against θεότοκος <i>theotokos</i>)
	Apollinarians	
(We could add	Eutychians	
Rationalists and	(Monophysites)	
Modernists)	Monothelites (Pope Honorius	
	[625-638] and Emperor Zeno)	

Biblical Support for the Two Natures of Christ

Full deity of Christ

This area has been covered already in the theology course. For added information in addition to the standard theologies and the works cited above, see B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*; also his “The Deity of Jesus Christ,” in *The Fundamentals* 1:21-28, also in *Selected Shorter Writings* 1:151-57; *The Person and Work of Christ*, ch. 2-3; Edward Henry Bickersteth, *The Trinity*, 24-118 (helpful and interesting charts on pp. 40-50, 56, 103-06); also H. P. Liddon’s 1886 lectures *The Divinity of Our Lord*.

Full humanity of Christ

At this point we will follow the major points of the outline in Strong’s theology.

1. Jesus is expressly called a man

John 8:40, As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.

1 Cor 15:21, For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

1 Tim 2:5, For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Genealogy in Luke 3—traces his ancestry to Adam

He was “flesh”—John 1:14; 1 John 4:2

2. Jesus possesses elements essential to humanity: a human body and a human soul

Human body—

Luke 24:39, Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.

Heb 2:14, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.

Human soul—

John 11:33, When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

3. Jesus experienced normal human needs and emotions

Needs: Matt 4:2 (hunger)

John 19:28 (thirst)

John 4:6 (weariness)

Emotions: Mark 1:41 (filled with compassion—leper)

Mark 10:21; John 11:5 (love—rich young ruler, Martha, Mary, Lazarus)

Matt 9:36 (compassion—crowds)

Mark 3:5 (anger and grief—man with shriveled hand)

Heb 5:7 (godly fear and dread—Gethsemane: loud cries and tears)

John 11:33, 35 (sympathy)

Cf. Warfield, “The Emotional Life of Our Lord,” in *Person and Work of Christ*, ch. 4 (not in his *Works*).

4. Jesus experienced bodily, mental, and spiritual development

Bodily: Born as a baby

Luke 2:40, 52 (growth)

Mental: Luke 2:46, 52

Mark 6:3; cf. Matt 13:55 (learned a trade)

Luke 22:64 (did not know)

Spiritual: Heb 2:10, 18; 5:8-9

His faith produced miracles (cf. the apostles; cf. Warfield *Bib. & Theol. Studies* 174-182; *Pers. & Work of Christ* 40ff)

“3. The Lord Jesus, in his human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; to the end that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of Mediator and Surety. Which office he took not unto himself, but was thereunto called by his Father; who put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.” (WCF 8:3)

Relied on Word of God (temptation accounts)

5. Jesus suffered and died

Jesus suffered

[Note his suffering in the Garden in ancient testimony in Luke 22:42-44; this is probably an early addition to Luke; see B. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 177; UBS uses double brackets with {A} rating; but cf. Matt 26:37-38 = Mark 14:33-34]

Jesus died

John 19:30; 1 Cor 15:3 – heart of gospel

Biblical Support for the One Person of Christ

1. Jesus Christ always is referred to as a single person, with singular pronouns (I, you, he) and singular verbs.
2. This unity is so complete that the Scriptures sometimes attribute the properties of one nature to the name normally designating the other nature.

“7. Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.” (WCF 8:7)

John 1:18 (Gk.)—"only begotten God . . . declared him"

John 3:13—"son of man . . . came down from heaven"

Acts 20:28 (Gk.)—"God . . . his own blood"

UBS — "God" preferred over "Lord" with {C} rating

3. The early church title of Mary as "mother of God" (θεότοκος *theotokos*, more literally "bearer of God") was not primarily intended to elevate Mary, but rather to affirm the single personhood of Christ. Only later did the term become an avenue for worshiping Mary. [see Allan A. MacRae, *Biblical Christianity*, Letter #51: "Is Mary the Mother of God?" pp. 121-23]
4. The full sacrifice for atonement requires the joining of both natures in one person—the object of judgment and the victor over death; cf. WLC 40.

Christ's Estates

Although Christ as the Son of God is immutable in his attributes, as he has taken to himself a human nature he has changed in time.

Christ's estate before his incarnation

God the Son shared in glory and love with the other persons of the Godhead.

John 17:5, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

John 17:24, "you loved me before the creation of the world"

God the Son is the eternal expression and image of the Godhead

Col 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God"

Heb 1:3, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being"

God the Son was the agent of creation

John 1:10-11, “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him . . . He came to that which was his own”

Col 1:15-17, “He is . . . the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Heb 1:2, “his Son, . . . through whom he made the universe (Gk. ages)”

God the Son was the agent of appearance and communication with man throughout the OT period (“theophany”)

Called Yahweh, Gen 3:8; 18:1ff

Called the angel of Yahweh, Gen 16:7

Called the prince of Yahweh’s host, Josh 5:14

Christ’s estate of humiliation

Christ’s voluntary humiliation was a part of his active and passive obedience to the will of the Father.

The classic passage in the NT for Christ’s humiliation and subsequent exaltation is Phil 2:5-11.

Cf. WCF 8:4, WLC 46-50, WSC 27

Here we will follow the outline of WSC 27.

27. Wherein did Christ’s humiliation consist?

A. Christ’s humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

1. Being born as a man

Being limited to a physical body, 2 John 7

Having his mind and emotion tied to his body, Luke 22:44 (some MSS; UBS omits with {A})

Depending on senses for knowledge, Luke 22:64

Being required to learn in order to know, Luke 2:51-52

Limited to one place at a time, Luke 13:31-33, cf. John 11:17, 21

Limited to one sex, Luke 2:7

Limited to one nationality and family, John 4:9; Matt 13:55

Limited to one social status, Luke 2:24; cf. Lev 12:8

Experiencing dependency and indignities of babyhood and childhood, Luke 2:6-7

2. Being born in a low condition (WLC 47)

Poor family (see above, Luke 2:24)

Captive nation

3. Submitting to obey the law (WLC 48)

Biblical law, Matt 5:17; Gal 4:4

John's baptism, Matt 3:15

Taxes, Matt 17:24-27

4. Experiencing the miseries of this life (WLC 48)

Those normal to humans: sickness, worry, injustice, temptation, etc.

Being poor

Being disrespected, Mark 3:21

Being rejected by his people

5. Experiencing the wrath of God and the death of the cross (WLC 49)

Physical suffering

Terrible scourging, Matt 27:26 (Isa 53:5)

Crown of thorns, Matt 27:29

Beard pulled out, back smitten, spitting, Matt 27:30; Isa 50:6

Beatings with rods and fists, Matt 27:30; Luke 22:64 (Gk)

Agonizing crucifixion, John 19:18; cf. 20:25; Ps 22:14-18

Death, “the last enemy”

Spiritual suffering

Rejection by his people

Dread of anticipation, Luke 12:50; John 12:27; Matt 26:37-38 = Luke 22:44

Pollution and guilt of sin, 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24

Estrangement from the Father, Matt 27:46

Wrath and judgment of God, Isa 53:4, 10-11

6. Being buried (WLC 50)

Jesus’ body was buried (1 Cor 15:4) and continued under the power of death for a time.

This concept is the original meaning of the phrase in the Apostles’ Creed, “he descended into hell.” See C. Hodge 2:616-25.

Christ’s estate of exaltation

WSC 28. Wherein consisteth Christ’s exaltation?

A. Christ’s exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

First phase: preparation for the kingdom

1) Jesus' bodily resurrection (WLC 52)

The risen Jesus emphasized the bodily nature of his resurrection, Luke 24:36-43.

His body is now glorious, as ours shall be (cf. course The Church and Eschatology). The various theories concerning Jesus' resurrection advanced by critics are considered in other courses (NT Introduction, Christ and the Gospels).

2) Jesus' ascension into heaven (WLC 53-55)

Jesus' glory in his ascension is emphasized in Eph 1-2.

3) Jesus' currently sitting at the right hand of the Father

In heaven he is now:

- Interceding for the church
- Governing the church
- Dispensing the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 4:8; Ps 68:18)
- Preparing to establish his kingdom on earth

- It is noteworthy to compare the Scriptural emphasis on the exaltation of Christ after his death with the famous statement by critical NT scholar Albert Schweitzer:

There is silence all around. The Baptist appears, and cries: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign. (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 370-371)

Second phase: the Messianic kingdom

1) Bodily return to the earth (WLC 56)

2) Millennial kingdom

3) Continuing eternal kingdom

Cf. below, section on “The Messianic Kingdom”

Christ’s Offices

Three offices

Christ’s offices or functions in the covenant of grace are defined as prophet, priest, and king (WLC 42, WSC 23). The duties of these three offices, taken together, include all that Christ has done and will do as our Mediator.

Three offices predicted of the Messiah in the OT

Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:15-19, ¹⁵The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ¹⁶For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.”

¹⁷The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”

Priest

Psalm 110:4, ⁴The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind:
“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”

Heb. 7—fulfilled by Christ

King

Isaiah 9:6-7, ⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

Jeremiah 23:5-6, "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

Times of offices' functions

While Jesus Christ always performs certain duties related to each office, at particular times the duties of one or another office predominate.

Prophet (WLC 43, WSC 24)

Earthly teaching ministry

Superintending writing of Scripture (OT & NT)

Enlightening minds of the elect

Priest (WCF 8:5, WLC 44, WSC 25)

Offering himself on Calvary

Appearing to God with his blood

Interceding for us

King (WLC 45, WSC 26)

Directing the lives of the elect (applying salvation, distributing gifts, etc.)

Governing the church

Ruling in the Messianic (mediatorial) kingdom

The Messianic kingdom

1. The Messianic or mediatorial kingdom promised to Christ should be kept distinct from God's general sovereignty over the universe, which can thus also be called God's kingdom (sometimes his universal kingdom), as in Dan 4:34-35.
2. Most early Reformed systems, including the Westminster standards (cf. WCF 25:2) followed the tradition from Augustine and the medieval church and limited this kingdom to the church age. Some added "the kingdom of glory" as the eternal state.
3. Increased study in the areas of eschatology and NT theology and backgrounds during the last two centuries in both the conservative and the critical camps has confirmed the importance of eschatology in the theology of Jesus and the apostles. With a few exceptions (e.g., C. H. Dodd), scholars recognize the importance in the NT of the future kingdom, brought about by the return of the Messiah to earth, and accompanied by the resurrection of the dead.
4. Premillennialists (and many amillennialists) place many kingdom passages therefore in the future earthly kingdom of Christ. Most admit that such is the most natural understanding of the covenants and prophecies, and such is the way the Jews of NT times understood them.
5. Descriptive terms. The following terms have been used to describe the Messianic kingdom:
 - Future (after the resurrection)
 - Physical (not "carnal")
 - Spiritual (not "mystical")
 - Jewish (with Gentiles grafted in)
 - Forceful (Christ to rule "with a rod of iron")
 - Everlasting (not just 1000 years)

6. These works approach the view of this course concerning the biblical theology of the Messianic kingdom:

E. R. Craven, "Excursus on the Basileia," in John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 93-100; George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ*, 3 vols. (Vol. 1 most helpful); Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (dispensational, but moderate; well organized presentation of biblical theology on this subject)