

Jesus Christ

Cedar Springs Baptist Church

What We Teach

We worship the triune God who most clearly reveals himself in Jesus. Jesus said, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me,” so that “anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9-11).

We believe that Jesus is the only Savior for us and for our world. “I am the way and the truth and the life,” Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Peter agreed: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

We are not saved by a principle but by a person, not by a concept but by the Christ, not by giving our best effort but by resting in the finished work of Jesus. Since Jesus is a historical person, there are certain facts about him that can be known and cherished. We state them here so that all who read them might come to trust and love our Lord.

The Person of Jesus Christ

Jesus is the divine Son of God. He is ontologically God, equal in every way to the Father and Spirit. Jesus “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb 1:3). He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev 22:13). “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,” so that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 1:19; 2:9).

When John saw the glorified Son he “fell at his feet as though dead,” for “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance” (Rev 2:12-17).

During his earthly life Jesus claimed to possess the rights of God. He had the authority to send angels (Matt 13:41), forgive sins (Mark 2:5), and judge the world (Matt 25:31-46). He said that he was one with the Father (John 10:30) and that he existed before Abraham (John 8:58). At his trial Jesus confessed that he was “the Christ, the Son of God” (Matt 26:63-64), which is the reason his enemies gave for crucifying him (John 19:7).

Because he is God, Jesus embodies the loving, relational nature of God. Jesus reveals that the true God is humble, secure enough in his deity to make himself nothing and become “obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:5-8). Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb, revealing that “the LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love” (Ps 145:8; John 11:35). Jesus gave his disciples space to slip up and learn from their mistakes, demonstrating that

God “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

We should never fear that God is anything other than what we see in Jesus. Jesus fully reveals God, for Jesus is God. His words and deeds are not merely his own, but “it is the Father, living in [him], who is doing the work” (John 14:10; 1:1-5). Jesus reveals that the Father himself is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus is fully human. He is “The Word” who “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14), and his human nature displays the limitations of finitude. Jesus possesses a physical, human body (Luke 24:37-43; 1 John 1:1). He “grew and became strong;” he “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:40, 52). He said there were some things he did not know (Mark 13:32; cf. 9:21).

The fully human Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. He understands what it is like to be hungry (Matt 4:2) and thirsty (John 19:28). He knows how it feels to be tempted, for he overcame three rounds from Satan himself (Luke 4:1-13). He understands fear and agony, sweating blood in Gethsemane and crying out in despair, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Luke 22:44; Mark 15:34). He appreciates the challenge of forgiving those who have sinned against us (Luke 23:34). When we pour out our troubles to Jesus, we bare our souls to a God who understands. Since we have such a compassionate Savior, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb 4:15-16; 2:17-18).

Jesus is one divine Person with two full natures. The divine Son added a full human nature to his Person without compromising his deity. Scripture explains this mysterious union was accomplished by his virgin birth. Before Mary and Joseph “came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit” (Matt 1:18; cf. Luke 1:35). We cannot comprehend the mysteries of the virgin birth or how the two natures of Christ co-exist in his one person, but we join the Council of Chalcedon in bowing before the mystery of the incarnation. We affirm with Chalcedon that the two natures of Jesus are joined “without confusion” and “without change”, “without division” and “without separation.”

We honor our Lord and his salvation by rejecting these false views:

1. Errors that deny the full deity of the Son:

- a. Arianism praises the Son but denies he is equal in his divine essence to the Father (e.g., Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses). We affirm with the Nicene Creed that the Father and Son are of the same substance (consubstantial). Jesus must be fully God or he cannot save us.

- b. Adoptionism denies Jesus' deity by asserting he was a human person who was empowered by God to receive the title "Son of God." We affirm that Jesus is a divine person who received a human nature rather than the other way around.
2. Errors that deny the full humanity of the Son:
- a. Docetism denies Jesus' humanity by asserting he was a divine spirit who merely seemed to be human. We affirm John's assertion that "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Jesus must be fully human or he cannot save us.
 - b. Apollinarianism denies the full humanity of Jesus by claiming the divine Son acquired a human body but not a human soul. We affirm that our salvation depends on the Son acquiring a full human nature, for "what he has not assumed he has not healed" (Gregory of Nazianzus, "Epistle 51").
3. Errors that mistake how Jesus' two natures co-exist:
- a. Nestorianism so emphasizes the distinction between the two natures of Jesus that it denies the unity of his person. We affirm the Council of Chalcedon's conclusion that the two natures of Jesus are "without division" and "without separation."
 - b. Eutychianism so emphasizes the unity of Jesus' person that it denies the integrity of his two natures. We affirm the Council of Chalcedon's conclusion that the two natures of Jesus are "without confusion" and "without change."

The Work of Jesus Christ

Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel. God promised Abraham, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:1-3). But rather than bless the world, Abraham's descendants rejected God and were carried into captivity. God never forgot his pledge to Abraham, and despite the continued failings of Israel, God assured his people that one day a true Israelite would arise to gather them from exile and bring salvation to the world (Isa 9:2-7; 11:1-16; 42:1-17; 49:1-26; 50:1-11; 52:13-53:12).

Jesus brought the kingdom of God to earth by who he was, what he said, and what he did. Jesus told his followers to turn from their bondage of sin and rejoice in the freedom of God. "'The time has come,' he said, 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:15). He demonstrated that the kingdom had arrived by casting out demons,

healing the sick, raising the dead, and extending grace to the poor and those scorned by society (Matt 11:4-6; Mark 5:35-43; Luke 4:31-44; 11:14-20; John 10:37-38).

Jesus established his kingdom and provided for our salvation by his sinless life, substitutionary death, triumphant resurrection, and regal ascension. Jesus “appeared so that he might take away our sins,” and so it was necessary that “in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). He was “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Heb 4:15). Because he obeyed his Father perfectly (John 15:10) and “committed no sin” (1 Pet 2:22), Jesus was able “to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21).

Jesus died in our place and on our behalf “as a sacrifice of atonement” (Rom 3:25). Israel had sacrificed spotless lambs to cover their sins and restore fellowship with God. These repeated acts of atonement anticipated the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Heb 10:1-14; John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:12-13), whose death on the cross forever appeased God’s wrath and removes the sin and guilt from penitent believers (Rom 5:9-11; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:22-28; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Since “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them,” Paul writes, “We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:19-20; cf. Eph 2:14-17; Col 1:19-22).

Salvation from sin means salvation from death—which is the consequence of sin, and Satan—who held the power of death. Jesus died not only to reconcile us to God, but also to “destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb 2:14-15). Jesus “has rescued us from the dominion of darkness” (Col 1:13), for “the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8; cf. John 12:31).

Jesus’ death also supplies a model for Christian living. Jesus said that anyone who desires to follow him “must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow him” (Luke 9:23), and Peter declared that “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21).

The Jews believed the crucifixion proved that Jesus had been forsaken by God, for Scripture taught that “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deut 21:23). Paul agreed, declaring that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). But Jesus did not remain cursed by God. The Father reversed his verdict and vindicated his Son when he raised him bodily from the dead. The Father “exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:9-11; cf. Acts 2:24, 32; 13:30-37; 17:31). Jesus “was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom 4:25), so that, “just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom 6:4).

The resurrected Christ remained on earth for forty days before he ascended to heaven (Acts 1:3-11). The Father who “raised him from the dead” also “seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that

can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church” (Eph 1:20-23).

The ascended Son sovereignly rules the world, serves as our sympathetic High Priest who intercedes for us before our holy Father (Heb 4:14-16), and sends his Spirit to establish, fill, and lead his church (Acts 2:33; 10:45; John 14:16-18, 25-27; 15:26; 16:12-15). We live in the power of his Spirit as we eagerly await his return. “If anyone does not love the Lord,” declares Paul, “a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!” (1 Cor 16:22).