

How are Christians Saved?

Introduction

I have been having a debate with a brother regarding understanding the natures of Christ with effect to his incarnation. In the process of this, I made some statements that the brother seemed to fail to understand and it seemed to me that many Christians do not understand the points I was making.

Now these points are quite important; therefore, I have decided to write a simple and concise explanation of how we are saved and how it is connected to the specifics of the work of Christ.

What is God's basic desire in the decree?

God's eternal plan of salvation is meant to achieve a single thing: that is, to create a people that God can dwell with who will be a perfect testimony to his divine glory.

Of course there are multiple subsidiary strategies in this one decree, which is why many theologians talk about the decrees of God; but really there is only one decree (eternal counsel) with many secondary acts of divine will.

The Fall of man (foreseen, decreed and allowed by God from eternity) meant that the decree had to be effected by a plan of salvation.

What are the basic problems that salvation fixes?

There are two essential problems facing man that have to be overcome in order to be saved.

Forgiveness of sins that lead to death

The first is the remission of sins. This is not just past sins but all sins that will be committed in a lifetime and getting rid of the nature that commits those sins.

Now the only answer to this is death; the soul that sins must die (Ezek 18:4, 20).

To be saved from dying for our sins, someone else has to die in our place, just as under the Old Covenant an animal had to be offered up for particular sins. Jesus is the Saviour who dies in our place. This is substitutionary penal atonement, or penal substitution or vicarious satisfaction. Jesus, as our substitute, dies in our place, taking the weight and judicial punishment of all our sins and suffering for them.

The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isa 53:6

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rm 5:8

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. 1 Thess 5:9-10

Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. 1 Pt 3:18

He laid down His life for us. 1 Jn 3:16

He is able to be a substitute for millions of people because his Person is infinite. The value of his human life is based upon his Person, and his Person is divine and thus infinite. The value of his life is infinite. Thus his blood (the value of his life¹ given in sacrifice) is said to be most precious (1 Pt 1:19). The quality of Jesus' sacrifice atones for all the elect.

Those Christ died for, the elect, are able to be forgiven of their sins because Christ paid the price for them alone.

Standing in heaven in righteousness and eternal life

Getting rid of our sins and our inner iniquitous nature is only half of the problem. This would leave us morally neutral.

God requires perfection in those he communes with; absolute moral perfection (1 Pt 1:16). Getting rid of sin is not enough for salvation and fellowship with God in heaven. Man has to have perfect righteousness. He also needs eternal life, which Adam forfeited, which had been conditioned on obedience to God's will.

Again Christ is the perfect Saviour in that he gives us his moral perfection in sharing his eternal life and his inheritance gained through obedience to the law of God. Part of salvation is giving the believer absolute perfect righteousness – the moral virtue of Christ.

Now this is not Christ's own personal divine perfection; being infinite no human being could handle that – it would kill him instantly since it is full of glory. It is the moral perfection that Christ gained through fulfilling the moral law as a man.

By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Rm 5:19

The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rm 8:4

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Rm 10:4

Of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. 1 Cor 1:30

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor 5:21

The fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ. Phil 1:11

Not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. Phil 3:9

By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Heb 10:14

Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. 1 Jn 2:29

Christ had to live under the law **as a real human being** and perfectly obey that law in order to obtain its promises and achieve moral human perfection – full obedience to God.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.

Matt 5:17

¹ The life is in the blood.

For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Rm 5:17

Therefore, as through one man's offence *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. Rm 5:18

As sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rm 5:21

The key promise of the law of God is eternal life (Deut 30:15-20), which includes the idea of sonship – but the law cannot deliver that unless men obey the law fully. Thus the law condemns all men because they sin (2 Cor 3:6-9; Gal 3:10) but Christ fulfilled the law for us (as a federal representative) and enables us to gain its promises. We see the promise of eternal life, an eternal inheritance and adoption here:

Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Jn 3:15-16

Grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rm 5:21

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rm 6:23

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Gal 4:4-5

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance. Eph 1:11

Having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7

The means of obtaining this righteousness is by faith. This is not human faith but the gift of divine faith given only to the elect.

The righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. Rm 3:22

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Rm 4:3

Faith is accounted for righteousness. Rm 4:5

The righteousness of faith. Rm 4:13

The righteousness of faith. Rm 9:30

The righteousness of faith. Rm 10:6

One believes unto righteousness. Rm 10:10

The Biblical doctrine that comprehends this eradication of sin and giving of a legal righteous standing before God is called Justification; and Justification is by faith. The righteousness of faith is substituted for the righteousness of the law. Through Christ, the law is fulfilled in us. We are righteous in Christ.

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rm 3:24-26

Who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification. Rm 4:25

The judgment which came from one offence resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offences resulted in justification. Rm 5:16

Man is justified by faith. Rm 3:28

Having been justified by faith. Rm 5:1

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rm 8:3-4

For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor 5:21

The work of Christ in salvation

There are two parts in the work of Christ corresponding to fixing the problems mentioned above. These correspond to Christ's active and passive obedience in the work of salvation.² *'With reference to the obedience he showed, one can distinguish a passive and an active side'*.³ However, it must be understood that these are inextricably linked together; for example: Christ's sufferings are part of his passive obedience yet he actively and voluntarily submitted to these sufferings (Jn 10:18). These two aspects concern Christ fulfilling the law perfectly. *'His activity was suffering and his suffering an act.'*⁴

Christ, although a man, was a divine Person. As such he voluntarily 'was made under the law', and all his earthly obedience to the law under human conditions was as vicarious as his sufferings. His 'active' obedience embraces his entire life and death viewed as vicarious obedience. His 'passive' obedience embraces his entire life, and especially his sacrificial death, viewed as vicarious suffering.⁵

Christ's relation to the law involved: the natural, federal and penal relationships – all of which man failed. In the incarnation Christ entered a natural relationship to the law as a man under law who committed no sin (like Adam in the Garden of Eden). Christ was vicariously related to the law in terms of federal (fulfilling the law to inherit eternal life) and penal aspects.⁶

Christ's passive obedience

Christ passive obedience is his judicial penal sufferings and death upon the cross. Christ was passive in that he allowed men to torture him and kill him.

His death on the cross took all our sins to the grave because we were spiritually in Christ when he died (Rm 6:3-7; Col 2:11-13).

² Modern theologians have tended to obscure this doctrine as a result of the influences of Socinianism, Hegel and Liberalism. In particular, Christ's active obedience to the law is downplayed. Many Christians have no understanding about this at all.

³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol 3:394.

⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol 3:326.

⁵ A A Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p405.

⁶ As a divine Person, Christ had eternal life. He did not need to keep the federal aspect of the law to obtain it. He put himself under this federal aspect in a redemptive way to secure eternal life for the elect.

Christ's passive obedience unto death was made acceptable to God by his active obedience. Christ's sufferings differ under God from human sufferings because of the value of his active obedience; the value of a righteous man. Christ's active obedience **as a man** secures God's pleasure and favour. Without his active obedience Christ would have been like untested Adam; his human nature would have fallen short of fulfilling all righteousness. Also without active obedience those who benefited from the atonement would have only been restored to the position of Adam before the Fall, without an inheritance. The atonement merits more than just forgiveness of sins; it sets us free from the law and gives us adoption (sonship with inheritance) and eternal life.

This is Christ's substitutionary and representative⁷ work.

The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isa 53:6

[Jesus] who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification. Rm 4:25

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. 1 Pt 2:24

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust. 1 Pt 3:18

He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. 1 Jn 2:2

Christ's active obedience

Christ's active obedience is his perfectly fulfilling the law as a man.

Then I said, 'Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law *is* within my heart'. Ps 40:7-8

The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make *it* honourable. Isa 42:21

It is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness. Matt 3:15

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. Matt 5:17

I have kept My Father's commandments. Jn 15:10

When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law. Gal 4:4-5

This was Christ's active work, to daily perfectly obey all God's will and thus secure the promises of the Mosaic (and Moral) Law for the perfect obedient servant. The law of God demands absolute moral perfection. This perfect righteousness was worked for (his perfect, personal divine righteousness is his possession as a divine person and is separate). It is this righteousness which is shared with believers who are united in him.

That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rm 8:4

It is important to stress that Christ's active obedience was achieved **as a human being**. Christ did not operate in his divine nature or that would ruin salvation. The law is for men not God.⁸ Christ obeyed the law as a man. If Christ had used his advantage of having a

⁷ The elect died and were raised in Christ.

⁸ 1 Tim 1:9, 'The law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners'.

divine nature he would have been out of the scope of the law; the law is not for God. Thus Christ is portrayed in Isaiah as a suffering servant. Christ could not escape by using his divine nature even once or salvation would be ruined. Thus Christ outwardly hid his glorious attributes to suffer the humiliation of the incarnation (Phil 2:7).⁹ The 'self-emptying' of Christ (*kenosis*, Phil 2:7-8) was an '*exchanging the divine mode of existence for the human*',¹⁰ assuming the form of a servant. At that moment his humiliation began. '*Christ's whole life from his conception to his death, accordingly, was a humiliation resulting from his obedience.*'¹¹

This is Christ's representative work. He fulfilled the law as our representative.

Therefore, all Christ's miracles were achieved by faith in God and the performance of the Holy Spirit; not by direct power from his divine nature.

I will put My Spirit upon Him. Matt 12:18

I cast out demons by the Spirit of God. Matt 12:28

I cast out demons with the finger of God. Lk 11:20

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. Acts 10:38

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? Heb 2:3-4

In all this Christ is also a representative for us who are commanded to follow the way Christ lived.

He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Matt 10:38

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Matt 16:24

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 Jn 2:6

How did the patriarchs and OT prophets work miracles? By faith and the work of the Spirit. Why did the apostles work miracles? Because they followed Christ and were spiritually united in Christ, sharing his eternal life and were filled with the Spirit. They could exercise faith to fulfil God's will by the Spirit, which for a time included miracles.¹² In God's will this period ended and miracles are now rare.¹³ The incarnation was mostly

⁹ He did not empty himself in getting rid of his divine nature (modern Kenosis theory) because it is always a part of his Person. He made himself of no reputation – he hid his glory and did not rely upon his divine power. The Transfiguration was not a full expression of Christ's divine nature. If it had been, the glory would have killed the disciples instantly. God allowed his Son to be glorified in a certain measure to clarify his Lordship and Messiahship. Moses was allowed a similar glorification when his face shone.

¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol 3:408.

¹¹ Bavinck, *ibid*. See his whole argument on the two states from p406ff.

¹² Note 'at the first' (or 'at the beginning') in Heb 2:3-4.

¹³ The initial period of miracles / healing in the early church was to authenticate the Gospel, which was a new movement amongst many religious movements appearing at the time. Everyone agrees that this period ended but Charismatics and Pentecostals think that it started up again in 1906. Although miracles have generally ceased because Christianity is established, there are rare times when God, in his mercy, grants miracles / healing to people in dire need. There are a few examples in church history.

centred in humiliation;¹⁴ following Christ we now fulfil what is lacking in Christ's afflictions (Col 1:24). Today Christians are not called to be wonder-workers but sufferers.

We also glory in tribulations. Rm 5:3

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:10

Do not lose heart at my tribulations for you. Eph 3:13

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Phil 1:29

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Jm 1:2

The testing of your faith produces patience. Jm 1:3

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Jm 1:12

The time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Pt 4:17

The effect on the believer

The believer dies with Christ in order to destroy sin but the believer is also raised with Christ to share in his inheritance and life. The work of Christ in achieving salvation is transferred to the believer in the process of death and resurrection and unification with Christ.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rm 6:11

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:4-6

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Gal 2:20

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:3

Thus the believer is a new creation; a new order of humanity.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor 5:17

The believer has died in Christ

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body

¹⁴ The humiliation of Christ was his daily suffering under the law surrounded by sin and wickedness, which affronted his righteousness. The state of humiliation is preparatory to his state of exaltation.

of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Rm 6:3-7

If One died for all, then all died. 2 Cor 5:14

I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. Gal 2:19

You died with Christ. Col 2:20

The believer is raised in Christ

Do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. Rm 6:13

Made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:5-6

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses. Col 2:11-13

You were raised with Christ. Col 3:1

Life is in Christ

The gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rm 6:23

If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Rm 8:10

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:3

Christ *who is* our life. Col 3:4

The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim 1:1

The implementation of salvation

By one Spirit we were all baptised into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 1 Cor 12:13

I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but He who **is** coming after me **is** mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Matt 3:11

As many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death. Rm 6:3

This is how the work of Christ is applied to the church. The Spirit baptises us into the body of Christ and this includes the work of dying with Christ and being raised with Christ.

As a result of this we are made to drink into one Spirit – have spiritual life. This means that we are able to live in the way that Jesus lived on Earth, by faith in God and being led by the Spirit. Thus the Spirit now does the works of God in the believer.

So that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit. Rm 7:6

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Rm 8:14

In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God. Rm 15:19

Speaking by the Spirit. 1 Cor 12:3

He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles. Gal 3:5

It has now been revealed by the Spirit. Eph 3:5 [I.e. revelation by the Spirit.]

There is only one baptism – the baptism into Christ (into his death, resurrection and unification). Water baptism is a reflection and illustration of that not another baptism.

One baptism. Eph 4:5

Objection

The Gospels and Acts speak about Jesus baptising us with the Holy Spirit (Jesus is baptiser) but Corinthians talks about the Spirit baptising us into the body of Christ (the Spirit is baptiser).

These are not two different things because there is only one salvific baptism. Neither are there two stages to conversion.

In the Gospels /Acts the baptism is WITH the Holy Spirit:

He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Matt 3:11, Lk 3:16

He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. Mk 1:8

He who baptises with the Holy Spirit. Jn 1:33

You shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5

You shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:16

The Spirit only acts upon the directions of Jesus (Jn 16:14-15) and only glorifies Jesus. The Spirit implements the effects of the salvific work that Jesus achieves. What the Spirit does, Jesus has directed. We are not baptised into the Spirit but into the body of Christ.¹⁵ Jesus directs the Spirit to baptise us into union with himself.

Jesus baptising us with the Spirit is a catchall term that includes the Spirit baptising us into Christ and giving us spiritual life – and many other things.

Jesus baptises us with the Spirit; that is he cleanses, washes, immerses, by the action of the Spirit to obtain salvation. The work of the Spirit brings salvation to us. But it is the work of Christ that achieves salvation for us and the work of the Spirit is applying the work of Christ. So, under the direction of Christ, the Spirit baptises us into the body of Christ to effect union. This is being baptised with the Spirit.

The work of the Christian being crucified with Christ and raised with Christ is done by the Spirit and is sometimes called a baptism (Rm 6:4). The baptism of the Spirit is baptising the elect into the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus the Spirit baptises the elect into the body of Christ. The first impact of this was at Pentecost when the disciples were baptised in the Spirit and were changed people (Acts 1:5, 2:4). The delay in this after the cross was due to the coronation of Christ in heaven; his ascension to power and glory. It was the change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. With the elect after this time there is no delay. Regeneration and being placed into Christ occur simultaneously.

The initial action of conversion is being regenerated by the Spirit; being born again. Then the believer is sealed and filled with the Spirit and able to function as a Christian with an

¹⁵ The word *en* can mean with and in, but the theological context determines which it is in each case.

inheritance. The work of Christ and the work of the Spirit in this cannot be separated easily; Christ achieves salvation and the Spirit implements it. From one perspective the union of the believer with Christ is a sealing of the Spirit (the Spirit identifies who are of God) and an indwelling of the Spirit (God abides in us). From another it is a baptism into the body of Christ (including justification and adoption; us abiding in God).

The work of the Spirit in salvation is, therefore, manifold: It involves:

- Calling (applying the word of the Gospel to call out an elect person from the world).
- Convicting (conviction of sin and establishing the need of salvation).
- Enlightening (showing the elect the law of God and the virtues of Christ; this works in tandem with the Word of God).
- Regenerating (giving the elect new life).
- Sealing (to spiritually identify who is Christ's and guaranteeing this ownership).
- Indwelling (union with God).
- Baptising (uniting the elect with Christ in his death and resurrection).
- Adopting (giving the elect inheritance rights as a son of God).
- Justifying (legally remitting sins and giving the righteousness of Christ; giving the believer a legal standing before God in heaven).
- Sanctifying (separating the believer to God in holiness).
- Filling (continually giving the believer grace and power as he grows and is renewed).
- Leading (guiding the believer in the knowledge of Christ).

The directing of the Spirit in all of these is by Jesus and the Father ('Procession' is from the Father and the Son).¹⁶ For example, the Father identifies who are chosen as elect people and sends the Spirit to effectually call only those.

The Charismatic version of the baptism in the Spirit has no basis in Scripture; there is nothing to support it whatsoever. In fact, since there is only one baptism, there cannot be two. Nowhere are believers told to seek a second blessing after salvation to receive a mystical experience that is a second baptism. In Christ we have every spiritual blessing; we need no mystical experience to get more.

It is vital to emphasise that there is no two-stage process in conversion. Once a person believes into Christ he has all that salvation is. He has every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3-5) because he has Christ. Therefore the errors of the Charismatic teaching are:

- There is a necessary second stage to conversion – being baptised in the Holy Spirit. False.
- There are two baptisms. False.
- This is a baptism into the 'realm' of the Spirit. False.
- The baptism is a mystical experience. False.
- It is something initiated by the human will. False.
- It is always followed by speaking in tongues. False.
- This baptism gives the believer power to operate. False. [The believer upon conversion has the Father, Son and Spirit indwelling them. They have every blessing in Christ. They have been transferred into the kingdom of God. They are specifically stated to

¹⁶ Jn 14:26, 'The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name'. Jn 15:26, 'when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father'. Jn 16:7, 'I will send Him to you'.

have power from God to walk in grace. They have access to God's grace. They are filled with the Spirit. They have the armour of Christ. etc. It is union with Christ that gives you power; Eph 1:15-23, NB v19 'the exceeding greatness of His power toward us'.]

Heresies resulting from not understanding Christ's Person and work

Heresies based upon an over-emphasis of Christ's humanity

- Arianism.
- Adoptionism.
- Christadelphianism.
- Jehovah's Witnesses.
- Semi-Arianism (Eusebianism).
- Dynamic Monarchianism (Adoptionism).
- Ebionism.
- Nestorianism.
- Socinianism.
- Worldwide Church of God.
- Christian Science.
- Unification Church.
- Mormonism.

If Christ is just a special man, there is no salvation. The Saviour has to be human and divine: human to fulfil the law and suffer death; divine to have infinite scope and value in the blood.

Heresies based upon an over-emphasis of Christ's divinity

- Apollinarianism.
- Docetism.
- Eutychianism.
- Gnosticism.
- Modalism (Modal Monarchianism / Sabellianism / Modalism / Patripassianism).
- Monophysitism.
- Monothelitism.

If Christ has no real human nature derived from Adam then there is no salvation. In his human nature he fulfils the law perfectly and gains the inheritance of eternal life and righteousness.

Denying the eternal generation of the Son

Various teachings that deny the Son was eternally generated but equal with the Father. The First Person of the Trinity was always the Father; the Second Person was always the Son. These are the eternal characteristics they have in the Godhead.

Denial of this denies that Christ is truly God and truly equal with the Father. In fact some heretics teach that Christ was created as the Son and is after the Father and unequal with him. If Christ isn't fully God, there is no salvation.

Denying that Jesus had a real human nature but had a special sort of humanity brought down from heaven

- Several of the Anabaptist sects; e.g. Melchior Hoffman.
- Docetism.
- Marcionites.
- Manichaeism (a type of Gnosticism).
- Osiander.
- Anastasius Veluanus.
- Menno Simons.
- Dirk Philips.

Without a real human nature, there is no fulfilling the law and no salvation.

Affirming that Christ acted in his divine nature in the state of humiliation

Such as claiming that Christ performed miracles, healings and exorcisms by the Logos (divine nature). Not only is this theologically impossible (it would ruin salvation). Scripture plainly declares that Jesus worked miracles by the Holy Spirit.

Note that the disciples of Christ were to follow him, act like him and witness to him. The early disciples were able to work miracles like Christ did – but they had no divine nature. Their miracles were achieved by faith and the application of the Holy Spirit – just as Christ had modelled.

If Christ, during his active obedience, acted even once in his divine nature, then the salvific work of active obedience is ruined. There would be no gift of eternal life and perfect moral righteousness – the fulfilment of the law. The active obedience of atonement is in Christ's human nature alone.

The danger of Christological heresies

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. 2 Jn 1:7-11

The doctrine of Christ is a cardinal issue; it cannot be subverted. People that do not hold Biblical Christology are outside salvation, do not know God and are outside the fellowship of the church. This position is said to be 'evil'.

The doctrine of Christ cannot be tampered with.

Conclusion

Salvation is about life. It is eternal life.

Having eternal life includes a number of things:

- The believer has passed from death to life.
- The believer has had sins remitted.

- The believer has been given the righteousness of Christ.
- The believer is justified.¹⁷
- The believer is united to Christ.
- The believer shares in the inheritance of Christ.
- The believer has fellowship with God.
- The believer is filled with the Spirit.

So salvation is not just about having your sins arbitrarily forgiven. It is not about receiving mercy from God in some arbitrary fashion.¹⁸

Salvation involves a number of things but the central point is unification with Christ resulting in eternal life. The work of Christ in salvation brings about a number of processes and thus the work of Christ needs to be understood so that we can understand what our inheritance is and live in the good of it.

The passive work of Christ on the cross secures forgiveness of sins. The active work of Christ in fulfilling the law perfectly secures our inheritance, eternal life and righteousness. Both are necessary to achieve salvation. This needs to be understood.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
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¹⁷ The believer is also adopted and definitively sanctified, which are correlative with justification. But I cannot expand on this in this brief paper focusing on basic salvation.

¹⁸ Which is what many theological systems teach, such as Socinianism or Moral Example theology.