SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

SESSION HANDOUT

The Doctrine of Christ

SPEAKER Tom O'Toole

DATE October 2026

GOT A QUESTION?

Submit it for the Q&A

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Jesus Is Truly God

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In His Actions

- Miracles, on his own authority: Luke 7:11–15; Mark 4:41.
- Forgiving sins: Mark 2:1–11.
- Power over evil spirits: Mark 1:24–27.

In His Words

- The I Am statements (Exodus 3:14).
- John 8:48–58.
- Equality with the Father: John 5:18; 10:30; 10:33.

In the Words Others Spoke About Him

- John 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'
- John 20:28 (Thomas): 'My Lord and my God.'
- Romans 9:5: 'The Messiah, who is God over all.'
- Philippians 2:6: 'Being in very nature God.'
- Colossians 2:9: 'For in Christ all the fulness of deity lives in bodily form.'
- Titus 2:13: 'Our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.'
- Hebrews 1:8: 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever…'

In the Role He Plays (OT Fulfilment)

- Good shepherd: Ezekiel 34. Psalm 107:28–29.
- Divine Messiah: Psalm 110 // Matthew 22:41–45.
- Lawgiver: Matthew 5.
- Receiving worship: John 9:38; Matthew 28:9.

Jesus Is Truly Human

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The Incarnation: Key Texts

- John 1:14: ‘And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.’
- Philippians 2:7–8: ‘Taking the very nature of a servant, being found in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man.’
- Hebrews 2:14: ‘Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity…’
- Hebrews 2:17: ‘For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way…’
- 1 John 4:2: ‘…every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.’

Tracking Through Our Humanity

- Birth: conceived in the womb of Mary; an embryo, recognised even then (Luke 1:39–41).
- Physicality: wounded and frail; tired, hungry, thirsty; limited.
- Emotions: sorrow at Lazarus' grave; anger in the temple; joy (Luke 10:21); Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38; Luke 22:44).
- Situated: a particular person, place and time.
- Temptation: the wilderness; Hebrews 4:15.
- Suffering and death: Philippians 2:8.
- Resurrection and ascension: he rose bodily and ascended bodily.

Four Historical Wrong Turns

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(a) Overshadowed by Divinity

- Christ was so dominated by his divinity that his human nature was overshadowed. ‘Cheat code Jesus,’ going through life on easy mode.
- Appeal: makes sense of the miracles; gives a high vision of Jesus, worthy of worship.
- Challenge: harder to identify with. Can he really be said to have shared in our temptation, frailty, suffering?
- History: Apollinarius of Laodicea (360s–70s). Concerned to stress Christ's divinity; argued he couldn't have had a human mind.

(b) A Spirit-Filled Man

- Christ was a great man who did incredible deeds, not primarily because of his identity as God but as a man filled with the Spirit.
- Appeal: fits the pattern of the ongoing work of God; attractive to charismatics.
- Challenge: nothing special about Jesus; doesn't explain forgiving sins or the authority of his miracles; John 14:12 shows he is clearly different (‘because I am going to the Father’).
- History: Paul of Samosata (3rd century). The man Jesus became Christ when the Spirit of God descended on him; his purity was a major factor in letting him become divine (a kind of promotion).

(c) Two Natures, Divided

- Jesus carried both a divine and a human nature; some of his deeds can be attributed to his humanity, others to his divinity (forgiving sins: God; hungry: human).
- Appeal: seems neat, holding both; accessible but transcendent.
- Challenge: not always clear cut which, and the cross creates a separation almost as though it's two persons in there. Has the Word truly become flesh?
- History: Nestorianism (unclear whether Nestorius himself went this far); trained in Antioch, condemned in 431 at Ephesus. Didn't like calling Mary ‘Theotokos,’ God-bearer.

(d) Merged Into a Third Thing

- In Jesus, the divine and human natures were merged indissolubly into something distinct from either (like making squash).
- Appeal: takes seriously the full involvement of both in everything he did (unlike Nestorius's view).
- Challenge: not truly human or divine, but a third thing. You lose the crucial payoff of both natures.
- History: Eutyches, Constantinople (controversy 448–451). Rejected the separation; Christ had only one nature after the incarnation. Loops back close to Apollinarius.

The Chalcedonian Definition

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- Several councils, culminating in Chalcedon (near Constantinople), AD 451.
- 500 to 600 bishops, mainly from the Eastern part of the empire (though the West was represented too, and had a big influence on the final wording). This carried authority over most of the church, though there was still dissent in some parts, and is to this day.

The Chalcedonian Definition (AD 451)

The church's classic statement of how Christ's two natures relate in the one person of the Son.

"Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us."

Hypostatic Union: A Case Study

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Hypostatic Union: not separating or merging the natures, but bringing together the properties of each nature into one person.

Case Study: Did Jesus know the day of his return?

Without confusion:

Without change:

Without division:

Without separation:

Why Does This Matter?

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Salvation	
Ethics: an example in suffering and weakness	
The authority of his words	
The charismatic and miraculous	
The tension of power and weakness	
Worship and wonder	

My Reflections

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What struck me most from this session

Questions I still have / one thing to take away