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# Christology (T03)

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## Christology

### Chapter 1 Introduction to Christology: Is *Christos* the *Māsīah*?

We begin the study by way of defining the term “Christology”. This necessarily delves into whether Christ of the New Testament (NT hereafter) is the Messiah typified and prophesized in the Old Testament (OT hereafter).

#### I. Definition

##### A. The term “Christology”

1. This English word derives from two Greek words, *Christos* and *logos*.

- a. “Christ (Gk. *Christos*) . . . is “the NT designation of OT ‘Messiah’ (Heb. *māsīah* ‘anointed’).” (*Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 207).
- b. *Logos* means, among other things, “intelligence, a word as the expression of that intelligence” (Zodhiates, 932).

Therefore, Christology can be presented as words that intelligently express who the Messiah of the Old Testament is.

2. The names *Jesus* and *Christ* (referring to the Messiah who is foreshadowed as well as prophesized in the OT)

- a. The name *Jesus* signifies savior; it is the Greek form of *Jehoshua* (*Joshua*), which means, “savior, or whose help is Jehovah” (*Nelson’s Bible Dictionary*, 323).

As already mentioned, the name *Christ* signifies “anointed.”

- b. “The name of *Jesus* is the proper name of our Lord, and that of *Christ* is added to identify him with the promised Messiah” (TNQRBD, 307).
- c. So then, what is the significance of pairing up the names *Jesus* and *Christ*?

*Jesus* is the promised Messiah whom God “has anointed” (Is. 61:1a) to save, that is, as Isaiah declares:

“To bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Is. 61:1<sup>b</sup>).

##### B. Specific definition

Christology is the study of the doctrines related to the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, his person (identity, essence and attributes) and his work.

### C. Limitation of the study

Before proceeding, the limitation of this study needs to be stated.

1. There is hardly anything taught in the NT that does not touch upon Christ—his nature, teaching and action—in some ways.
  - a. For instance, it is not possible to discuss eschatology (the study of the end days) without addressing the second coming of Christ.
  - b. This, then, necessarily delves into whether the second advent will consist of two separate comings (i.e., the rapture first and then the second coming) or just one.
  - c. This matter certainly falls within the parameter of Christology; nevertheless, it would be best to deal with this type of issue in courses on eschatology.
2. All this is to say, because Christ's salvific work is covered under Soteriology (i.e., salvation), we will narrow our scope to the person of Christ and his offices.

**Discussion<sup>1</sup>:** Though this is a theology course and we are in a classroom, what we are learning here should be more than to fulfill a requirement to receive a degree later. It should go beyond taking notes and studying to pass an exam. When we study the Bible, at some point, our theological knowledge must be applied to our personal lives.

So, in this instance, we ought to ask, “How have I personally experienced Jesus the savior and Christ the Messiah—the anointed one? Give it a thought and let's share briefly.

### D. Importance of the OT types and prophecies to Christology

As mentioned previously, the NT term “Christ” refers to the “Messiah” who is foreshadowed as well as prophesized in the OT.

Before proceeding, it behooves this study to verify whether the New Testament (NT hereafter) indeed warrants the view that *māsīah* of the OT is *Christos* in the NT.

That is to ask, how can we tell whether this person named Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah foreshadowed and prophesied throughout the OT?

1. First, we examine how the messianic types in the OT point to Jesus Christ in the NT.
  - a. What is “type”?

The Hebrews writer says, “The law is only a shadow of the good

things that are coming—not the realities themselves” (Heb. 10:1).

The apostle Paul, in reference to the OT regulations, including the dietary laws, echoes the Hebrews writer, saying, “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col. 2:17).

- (1) The type is one in which some, but not all, aspects of spiritual truth are encased in a cocoon.

It is pointing to something, much like a shadow indicating an object standing nearby, but the type, in and of itself, is neither the reality nor substance.

- (2) And much like how a butterfly grows in successive stages inside a cocoon, several types, given progressively in the OT, are needed for a more precise understanding of the reality that is foreshadowed in the OT and to be fulfilled in the NT.

- (3) With respect to the coming of *Christos* in the NT (i.e., the reality; the substance), several types are given progressively in the OT to foreshadow, with increasing clarity, the nature and the ministry of *māsīah*.

- b. Let’s look at a series of types given progressively in the OT that indicate that the *māsīah* foreshowed in the OT is fulfilled in the *Christos* of the NT.

- (1) First, note what God does for the first couple as they are being banished from the garden for their rebellion against Him.

“The LORD GOD made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (Gn. 3:21).

What God provides here is a better garment to cover their shame and protect them from the elements than the one made of fig leaves (Gn. 3:7).

- (a) Admittedly, to provide a better cover for Adam and Eve, an animal (or animals) was slaughtered, which involves the shedding of blood.

- (b) This provision of God for the first sinners, then, serves as a type that foreshadows what will it take for the Messiah to cover them, that is, forgive their sins.

- (c) Since the NT declares that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22<sup>b</sup>), evidently, *Christos*, who shed his blood on the cross to forgive sins, is the reality foreshadowed in Genesis 3:21.

- (2) Shortly later, “Abel brought fat portions from some of the first born of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering” (Gn. 4:4).

- (a) Building upon the previous type, Abel's sacrifice foreshadows that it is going to take the shedding of the blood of a firstborn (thereby, becoming a qualification for *māsīah*) to please God.
- (b) It is safe to assume that *Christos* meets this requirement since "he is the image of the invisible God, the *firstborn* over all creation" (Col. 1:15).

This is one more messianic requirement that Christ met.

- (3) Then comes the sacrifice Noah makes after coming out of the ark following the flood—a God's curse on the sinful mankind.

"Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man . . .'" (Gn. 8:20-21<sup>a</sup>).

- (a) Ostensibly, the cleanliness of the animals sacrificed suggests, as a type, the sinlessness of the Messiah.
- (b) So, building upon the previous two types, Noah's burnt offering foreshadows that the sacrifice pleasing to God that puts a stop to His curse (i.e., wrath) is the shedding of the blood of the Messiah who, as a firstborn, is also sinless.
- (c) This points to the *Christos* of the NT since he, as a firstborn, "had no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21<sup>a</sup>).

- (4) The most impactful type in the OT that foreshadows the nature of the coming Messiah is what God orders Abraham to do with his only son.

"[God] said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you'" (Gn. 22:2).

Later, "Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son" (Gn. 22:13).

Note that a ram took the place of Isaac and died in its stead.

- (a) So, what aspects of the Messiah are foreshadowed through Isaac and the ram?

It's going to take the shedding of the blood of the Messiah—as a sinless firstborn and the only son—who dies substitutionally to please God.

- (b) This points to the *Christos* of the NT who, as "one and only

Son” (Jn. 3:16) of God, became “sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21<sup>b</sup>).

- (5) The last messianic type considered for this study is what God has Moses do in Egypt as He is about to strike every firstborn dead.

“The blood [of ‘lamb . . . without blemish’— Ex. 12:5<sup>a</sup>] shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:13).

- (a) The blood of lamb without blemish foreshadows that the blood that will “save[ us] . . . from the wrath of God” (Rom. 5:9<sup>b</sup>) is the blood shed by the sinless firstborn, and one and only lamb of God who dies substitutionally.

- (b) John the Baptist confirms that this *māsiāh* foreshadowed in the OT is the *Christos* of the NT: “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn. 1:29).

## 2. Now, we will look at how the messianic prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

What complicates this matter is that, before and after the coming of Christ, numerous Jews claimed to be this long-awaited Messiah.

- a. In fact, two leaders of failed messianic movements before the time of Christ are mentioned in a speech by Gamaliel, a leading rabbi in Jerusalem, given to the Sanhedrin.

Acts 5:36-37: “For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.”

- b. As for those Jews who claimed to be the Messiah from 400-1816—mostly in Europe where the Jews were scattered—*The Jewish Alamac* (1980) identifies 24 of them:

“In times of persecution, uncertainty or extreme poverty, many Jews turned for relief to ‘false’ Messiah, many of whom offered to bring them back to Jerusalem.”

- c. So, among the many who claimed to be the Messiah prophesied in the OT, how can we tell apart the real one from the pretenders?

- (1) The only way to be sure is to confirm which one of them fulfilled the messianic prophecies.

(2) Therefore, if the followers of these self-appointed messiahs had checked the latter's background against even just a few of over 300 messianic prophecies, they would have known that these were false messiahs.

2. Two of the key messianic prophecies, among many, are:

- a. Regarding the birthplace of the Messiah, Micah, who served in the 7-8<sup>th</sup> century BC, made the following prophecy:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (Micah 5:2 NIV).

- b. Isaiah, who served around 700 BC, made a stunning prophecy about the nature of Christ's birth. He said:

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Is. 7:14 NIV).

3. So, it all comes down to the matter of who fulfilled the messianic prophecies.

- a. One indisputable fact is that neither Theudas and Judas before Christ nor the twenty-four self-proclaimed messiahs after him, fulfilled these messianic prophecies.
- b. The only one who met these and hundreds of other messianic prophecies (e.g., Hos. 11:1; Zech. 11:12-13) is Jesus.

(1) When the malevolent Herod the king wondered as to “where the Christ was to be born” (Matt. 2:4), the Magi responded:

“In Bethlehem in Judea, . . . for this is what the prophet has written:  
<sup>6</sup> ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel’” (Matt. 2:5-6 NIV).

(2) And regarding the birth of Christ, the apostle Matthew writes:

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’—which means, ‘God with us’” (Matt. 1:22-23).

- c. In fact, according to Peter Stoner, mathematician and astronomer, the odds of fulfilling just eight prophecies by a single person is one in 10<sup>28</sup>.

As mentioned earlier, it is believed that there are over 300 messianic prophecies in the OT and Jesus fulfilled every one of them (e.g., Is. 53:12b/Lk. 22:37; Ps. 22:18/Jn.

19:24; Ps. 41:9/Matt. 26:23, 50; Zech. 13:7/Mk. 14:27, etc.)<sup>1</sup>

4. Then, what do the fulfilled messianic prophecies indicate?

- a. It clearly reveals that no one else but Jesus of Bethlehem is the Messiah (i.e., Christ) prophesied throughout the OT, beginning with Genesis 3:15:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

(1) Note that this cryptic, proto-gospel was already pointing to, among other things, a Messiah who will suffer (the serpent shall bruise you heel) in order to save.

(2) It is, thus, fitting that Jesus, prior to his ascension, had to remind the discouraged and confused Jews, whose hope of being delivered from the Romans by a militant Jesus (Jn. 6:15) was dashed when he suffered death, with these words:

“‘Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory.’<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk. 24:26<sup>b</sup>-27).

- b. Therefore, Jesus is worthy to be called Christ (the true Messiah), an identity that Jesus did not deny even at the risk of being crucified for it.

(1) The night before the crucifixion, “when the high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God’” (Matt. 26:63<sup>b</sup> NIV 2002), Jesus replied:

“Yes, it is as you say” (Matt. 26:64<sup>a</sup> NIV).

Upon hearing that, the teachers of the law and the elders said, “He is worthy of death” (Matt. 26:66<sup>b</sup>).

(2) But Jesus, facing the fulfillment of the last leg of messianic prophecies,

—the ones dealing with his final suffering: his death and the manner of this death (e.g., Ps. 22:1, 34:20<sup>2</sup>)—

did not recant his messiahship because he knew that without the substitutionary death on behalf of helpless sinner, none will be saved.

(3) In fact, Jesus underwent this agonizing moment (“Let this cup pass from me”—

<sup>1</sup> Is. 53:12<sup>b</sup>: “because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors”; Lk. 22:37: “For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.”

<sup>2</sup> “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1/Matt. 27:46).



Matt. 26:39b), not begrudgingly but with joy, for the Hebrews writer says:

“Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2a).

**Discussion<sup>2</sup>:** What is behind Christ’s resoluteness to allow himself to suffer to this degree? How have you experienced this incredible dedication of Christ to save you from going to hell?

## II. The True Identity of Christ: Why Is This Matter So Important?

Why is having the correct—that is, biblical—identity of Jesus Christ so important? Does that really matter as long as one believes in Jesus, regardless of *how* one believes?

### A. Believing in the biblical Jesus matters because:

**Believing in a different Jesus does not save regardless of the sincerity of one’s belief.**

1. The apostle Paul, to the Corinthians who embraced an erroneous Christology, said:

“For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough” (2 Cor. 2:14).

This statement affirms that not all beliefs in Jesus are equal and valid: There is a Jesus whom Paul preached and then there is another Jesus.

2. Does a different Jesus/gospel save?

Paul, to the Galatians who were attracted to a different gospel, said, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—<sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all” (Gal. 1:6 NIV).

Another Jesus, that is, a different gospel, does not save.

3. Contemporary application

In view of that, consider this: Both the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe in Jesus (many, quite sincerely), but does their Jesus save sinners from going to hell?

- a. The Mormon’s view of Christ:

(1) “Jesus and Lucifer were a spirit brother prior to his incarnation. Lucifer became jealous of Christ . . . fell from heaven. So Christ was appointed by Gods to become the redeemer of the race . . .”

(2) "[Jesus] celebrated his own marriage to both 'the Mary and Martha, whereby he could see his seed before he was crucified'" ("Journal of Discourses," Vol. 4, 259-260).

b. The Jehovah's Witnesses' view of Christ:

(The following statements are extracted from their literatures.)

(1) Jesus, the Christ, a created individual, is the second greatest personage of the Universe . . . The truth of the matter is that the word is Christ Jesus, who did have a beginning."

(2) "He was a god, but not the Almighty God, who is Jehovah . . . If Jesus were God, then during Jesus' death God was dead in the grave."

c. Evidently, the Jesus of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses is substantially different from the biblical Jesus.

(1) First, Jesus is the Son of God while Lucifer is an important angel who fell from heaven because of pride (Is. 14:12-14).

(2) Second, Jesus is the second person in the Trinity who did not have a beginning. that is, he is eternal.

**Discussion<sup>3</sup>:** Is the Jesus of the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses the same as the Jesus Paul preached? If no, then what's its soteriological implication? Why is believing in the correct biblical Jesus so important?

**B. Correctly understanding the true identity of Jesus, and then believing that Jesus is absolutely critical for the following reason:**

1. What is the goal of salvation?

While it can be stated in different ways, the following is how I would state it:

The goal of salvation is to be able to go to the Father (Jn. 14:6<sup>b</sup>) upon dying after having "be[ing] reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20<sup>b</sup>) while on earth.

a. But since Jesus asserts that "no one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6<sup>b</sup>), it must be noted that without having the Son, the Father cannot be had, that is to say, without knowing the Son, the Father cannot be known.

b. Both the apostle John and Jesus himself attest to this fact:

- John says, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 Jn. 2:23).

- Jesus himself says, “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (Jn. 5:23<sup>b</sup>); “whoever hates me hates my Father also” (Jn. 15:23); “the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Lk. 10:16<sup>b</sup>)

2. But, believing in another Jesus/a different gospel is equal to not having the Son.

- a. This means that those who believe in another Jesus do not have the Father.
- b. Meaning what? They are still not reconciled to God; therefore, they can neither come to the Father nor dwell in His house (John 14:2).

3. Contemporary application

In view of this clear biblical injunction (“No one who denies the Son has the Father”), how do we respond to Judaism and Islam whose view of Christ is very different?

- a. In Judaism, in which the coming of Messiah has yet to happen, the messiahship of Jesus is clearly rejected.

James Limburg in *Judaism: An Introduction for Christians*, writes:

“The majority of Jews, however, have not understood Jesus to be the Messiah . . . Some Jews are prepared to grant Jesus a place of honor among the righteous and the teachers of Israel. The paths of Jews and Christians are coming closer together in regard to the person of Jesus. However, this convergence comes to a halt when Christians confess Jesus of Nazareth to be the risen one, the Christ, the Savior, and the Son of God. The Jewish scholar Shalom ben-Chorin put it this way: ‘The faith of Jesus unites us, faith in Jesus separates us’” (165)

There are two main reasons for this position against Jesus being the Messiah.

- (1)First, the Jews believe that “in the messianic age it is expected that all creatures will believe in God and proclaim His unity” (Zech. 14:9).

They further hold that “in the messianic age we expect the abolition of all wars between men and complete disarmament” (Is. 2:4)

But noting that people “still clinging to their errors and denial of God” and that “we . . . see the nations fighting and contending with each other more violently than before, they say the messianic age has not yet come.”

In this manner, the Jews refute . . . “the opinion held by . . . the Christians” (*The Jewish Philosophers*, 178-9).

- (2)Second,, seeing Jesus as a deity in equality with God the Father (Jn. 10:30: “I and the Father are one”) is nothing short of blasphemy (Matt. 26:65), since the

traditional Jews hold to the singularity of God (Deut. 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one”).

b. In Islam, the Sonship of Jesus is denied.

- Sura 112 in Coran says, “Say: Allah is One, the Eternal God. He begot none, nor was He begotten. None is equal to Him.”
- Sura 4:171 states, “Allah forbid that He should have a son.”

Instead, Jesus is the second most important prophet, a notch below the Prophet Mohammed.

c. Recognizing that Islam and Christianity do not share the same Father is much easier to do (since Islam flat out rejects the Sonship of Jesus) than recognizing the same about Judaism and Christianity.

(1)Afterall, “because Christians read the same Scriptures that Jews read, neither group can be indifferent to the way in which the other interprets them” (Limburg, 158).

(2)Nevertheless, while Christians should respect and appreciate Judaism, they cannot accept that they are of the same faith since Judaism also rejects the Son.

As seen earlier, the Jewish people feel the same way:

“The faith of Jesus unites us, faith in Jesus separates us.”

**Pastoral Note:** Can a die-heart Muslim recognize the Sonship of Christ? Nabeel Quershi is an American born Muslim whose parents from Pakistan raised him to be a very devout follower of Allah. Called a genius by some, this once super-committed Muslim holds a MD and three master’s degrees. In his book *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (2014), Nabeel shares the agonizing process through which he ended up renouncing Islam to embrace the Christian faith, because he could no longer deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In so doing he lost his family and friends; he also gave up a career in medicine to serve God full-time. At the end of his book, Nabeel said, “All suffering is worth it to follow Jesus. He is that amazing.” Having served the Lord for over a decade he went to be with the Lord at the tender age of 34.

**Discussion<sup>4</sup>:** Many people in today’s postmodern world prefer to see that all religions lead to the same God. In view of that, discuss whether Judaism or Islam can lead us to the Father? If not, what would you say to the followers of Judaism and Islam?

Recall the question: Why is having the correct biblical identity of Jesus Christ so important?

### **C. The third reason has to do with the role of Jesus in revealing the Father to the world.**

1. It has been observed that Scripture gives more attention to the Son and the Spirit than to the Father, because of their special function of revealing God the Father.

For instance, consider Philip who, despite having spent the past three and a half years with Jesus, still wondered about the “whereabouts” of the Father. When he said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us,” he said:

“Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.* How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (Jn. 14:9).

“For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15:15b).

2. Why is this role of Jesus so important?
  - a. It is because since “no one has seen or can see” God (1 Tim. 6:16<sup>a</sup>), empirical and personable knowledge of God is not attainable.
  - b. Now, it is true that “God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature” can be gleaned from “what has been made,” that is, from creation (Rom. 1:20).

But, the knowledge of God gathered from creation is good for knowing something about God but it is not adequate to know God experientially and personally.

- c. It is the biblical Jesus, in whom “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9), who emits empirical and personal knowledge of God.

This, then, enables humans to see what God is truly like and to know Him personally through the Son.

(1)What does this mean?

- (a)First, it means that the way Christ loved while on earth is the way the Father loves.

For instance, Christ who refused to condemn the woman caught in the act of adultery whom the Pharisees wanted to stone (Jn. 8:1-11) shows that the Father is forgiving and loving.

- (b)Second, it means that the holiness of Christ perfectly reflects the holiness of God.

For instance, Christ who drove out the money changers and animal sellers from the temple (Jn. 2:14-16) shows that the Father is holy and will not tolerate the defilement of the sacred things of God.

(c)Third, it implies that the substitutionary death of Jesus reveals the justice and mercy of God.

(2)But, note that the knowledge we have of God, attained through creation (Ps. 19:2<sup>b</sup>: “night after night [heavens] display knowledge”) and scriptural attestation of Christ, is not exhaustive, meaning there is a whole lot more to know about God.

Therefore, we need to recognize that we are finite beings who are inherently limited in grasping all there is to know about God—at least on this side of heaven.

2. The Father is revealed through the historical appearance of the Son, and this manifestation (revelation) of the Father through the Son is executed by the Holy Spirit.

“But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’—<sup>10</sup> *these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God*” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

3. Again, without having the Son, the Father cannot be had.

#### **D. The fourth reason why this matter is so important:**

1. Believing in a falsified Jesus makes us an “antichrist.”

The apostle John, to the *Docetics* who denied that Jesus came in the flesh, said:

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist...” (1 Jn. 4:2-3<sup>a</sup>).

2. In fact, John equates believing in a falsified Jesus with denying Jesus, thereby not having the Father altogether. Again, speaking of the *Docetics*, the apostle states:

“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup> No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 Jn. 2:22-23).

What this means: Either we have the correct understanding of the identity of Christ and then believe in him for salvation, or else any belief that falls short of that is not salvific.

**Discussion<sup>5</sup>:** There are some who will say, “You religious people make a mountain out of a molehill; it makes no difference what kind of Jesus you believe, as long as you believe.” What is behind that type of thinking and attitude? How would you respond?

**Homework 1**

Read the entire chapter 1 and the Bible reading assignment (if given).

1. What is the meaning of the terms “Jesus” and “Christ”?
2. Explain the relationship between Jesus and Christ (Messiah).
3. What are the two ways in which the OT prepares for the coming of the Messiah in the NT in the person of *Christos*?
4. What is type? List five messianic types mentioned in the study.
5. What is the importance of the prophecies in the OT, in view of the fact that there were many self-proclaimed messiahs both before and after Christ’s time on earth?
6. Why is having the correct biblical identity of Jesus Christ so important?
- 7-10. Is the Jesus believed and advocated by the following groups a biblical Jesus, or a different Jesus? Explain your answer.
  7. Judaism
  8. Islam
  9. Mormonism
  10. The Jehovah’s Witnesses

## Chapter 2 Historical Views of the Person of Christ

Before delving into the main matters of Christology—his preexistence, incarnation, humanity, deity, the unity of the person of Christ, etc.—we will examine how the person of Christ was understood from the outset until it was officially settled at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD.

The essential matter at hand:

Scripture says that Christ is both human and divine at the same time. For instance, while the Hebrews writer says, “Since the children have flesh and blood, [Jesus] too shared in their humanity” (Heb. 2:14<sup>a</sup>), the same writer asserts that “the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his [God’s] being” (Heb. 1:3<sup>a</sup>).

So, in the early church, one question on many people’s mind was this:  
How much of Jesus is human and how much is divine?

### A. Docetics

The first group to take a stab at this question was the Docetics in the late first century. Docetism, deriving “from the Greek verb ‘to seem or appear,’” was the precursor to Gnosticism that arose in the mid-second century AD (Wright D., 1977:109).

#### 1. The docetic view of the person of Christ

Docetism was heavily influenced by Greek dualism that dichotomized humans into two distinctive parts—soul and body—which then developed into a mind (or soul)/body dualism that pitted one against the other.

- a. Thus, influenced heavily by this Greek dualism, the Docetics privileged spirit while completely ignoring the flesh.
- b. In so doing, they completely denied that Jesus came in the flesh and held that he was entirely of the spirit; that is, “Christ’s human body was a phantasm, and . . . his sufferings and death were mere appearance” (Bettenson 1967: 35).
- c. To them, Jesus was 100 percent divine (that is, Spirit) and zero percent human.

#### 2. The Christology of Docetism according to Scripture

- a. Evidently, Docetics favored Scriptures like Romans 8:9, 1 Peter 1:11, and Philippians 1:19 that speak of Jesus as “the Spirit of Christ.”
- b. But, by the late first century, churches had access to Paul’s epistles, such as his letter to the church in Colossae (written in 60 AD), in which he clearly states, “For in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 2:9).



The Docetics, however, completely ignored that Jesus had come in the flesh.

- c. So, to combat this heresy, the apostle John renounced the Docetics in strongest terms: “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist” (1 John 4:2–3).

**Discussion<sup>1</sup>:** Some medieval monks (including Martin Luther) believed that the “harsh treatment of the body” (Col. 2:23) somehow made them more spiritual or pleased God. In case of the Docetics who completely ignored the body, they probably weren’t given to self-flagellation. Now, Paul says that “physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:9).

So, how do you treat your body? What can happen when we care for it too much or too little? What does that look like? How can our care of the body help or hurt our spiritual life?

After Docetism emerged two groups with polar opposite views on Christology in the first half of the second century.

## B. The Ebionites

This Jewish sect arose in Palestine following the devastating destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, who mercilessly routed a second Jewish revolt for independence in 135 AD.

### 1. The Ebionite view of the person of Christ

Reflecting the dire time that the surviving Jews were facing, the Ebionites saw Jesus “as the Jewish Messiah sent from the Jewish God to be the Jewish people in fulfillment of Jewish Scripture” (“Time” Dec. 2003:58).

- a. Nevertheless, to them, Jesus was a man, the son of Joseph and Mary who was born under normal circumstances (meaning, no virgin birth).
- b. But, because Jesus the man so completely fulfilled the Jewish law, God chose Him to be the Messiah” (Walker 1970:35).

That is to say, Jesus was adopted by God at his baptism when the Christ descended upon the man Jesus, thereby becoming the Son of God. In this manner, Jesus’ divine nature was rejected.

- c. The one who died on the cross was the man Jesus because the Christ left him just before the crucifixion.

### 2. The Christology of Ebionism according to Scripture

- a. The Ebionites favored passages like Hebrews 1:5 (from Ps. 2:7) that says, “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?

This verse makes it sound like Jesus was not always God’s son but became one at some point.

- b. But they ignored what God the Father actually said to Jesus upon his baptism.

“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Lk. 3:21-22).

Meaning what?

Jesus did not become God’s son at his baptism; rather, he already was God’s son (“You are my beloved Son”). The Hebrews writer says, “Although [Jesus] was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”

**Discussion<sup>2</sup>:** While Jesus never ceased to be the Son of God at any time, it is true that because he became “sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21), he was separated from his Father for three days (to us, but perhaps “eternity” to the Son and the Father). What is your thought on that? How should this affect the way we live our lives?

### C. The Gnostics

Following the lead of Docetism, the Gnostics and their version of the gospel emerged in the second and third century.

#### 1. The Gnostic view of the person of Christ

In short, the Gnostics (meaning “knowledge” in the Greek) created a great confusion in churches with extreme dualism that pitted Jesus against the God of the OT.

- a. First, the Gnostics disconnected Jesus from the God of the OT.

(1) They posited that the OT God, an inferior god who emanated from the true God, was a god of the Jews only, who was vindictive and the author of evil.

By contrast, the God of the NT was a God of grace and had love for everyone, who was revealed in Jesus Christ.

(2) They also held that all matter, created by this God of the OT, is evil.

(a) And since the creation (i.e., material world) was not an act of a good god, Christians must reject the world,

Jesus in the flesh and a bodily resurrection.

(b) In so believing, the Gnostics denied the humanity of Christ whose “body,” to them, was a mere phantom.

- b. They, therefore, believed that the mission of Christ, having come from the true God, was to liberate Christians from the tyranny of this harsh God of the OT.
- c. These Gnostic ideas are clearly reflected in the writing of one of the early Gnostics called Saturnino (in the first half of the second century):

“The Savior declared to be without birth, body nor form, claiming to be seen as a man only in appearance. The God of the Jews, he affirms, was one of the angels and that all the princes wanted to destroy his Father. Christ came to destroy the God of the Jews, and to save those who believe in him, and these were those who have a spark of life” (Bettenson, 35).

## 2. The Christology of Gnosticism according to Scripture

Seeing the error of the Christology of Gnosticism doesn’t seem too difficult, because it ignored the teaching about the relationship between the God of the OT and Christ that is clearly reflected in the NT books (49-95), produced much earlier than the Gnostic books (140-220).

- a. First, Jesus came neither to reject the OT nor the God of the OT; instead, he upheld the OT and made it clear that he came from the God of the OT.

- Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt. 5:17).
- To the Sadducees who denied resurrection, Jesus said,

“And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: <sup>32</sup> ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:31-32).

This is as clear as any verse that connects Christ with the God of the OT.

- The disciples finally came to realize this as well, saying to Christ: “Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God” (Jn. 16:30).

To that “Jesus answered them, ‘Do you now believe?’” (Jn. 16:31).

- b. So, the mission of Christ, who had come from the God of the OT, wasn’t to thwart his will but to do His work.

Christ said: “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; <sup>38</sup> but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn. 10:37-38).

**Discussion<sup>3</sup>:** It is odd that a whole theology was developed based on the supposed hostility between Jesus and the God of the OT. An unvarnished truth is that Jesus came to do the will of the Father out of obedience. But this obedience necessitated the sufferings of Christ. The Hebrews writer says, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Why is that important to us in view of Hebrews 2:18? How is your obedience to the Lord?

## D. Arianism

Arianism is the teaching of an Alexandrian presbyter named Arius, who emerged around 318. It is his errant view that led to the convening of the renowned Nicene Council in 325.

### 1. The Arian view of the person of Christ

- a. Arius upheld that Jesus had a beginning—meaning, the Son did not exist before he was begotten by the Father.

(1) This is to say, the Father produced the Son as a creature after which the Son created the rest of creation.

(2) While this makes Jesus the first and greatest of all creatures, he is still a created entity in Arianism.

- b. Arius further claimed that the Father alone was really God; the Son was, therefore, inferior or subordinate to the Father.

This meant that Jesus did not possess by nature or right any of the divine qualities of immortality, sovereignty, perfect wisdom, goodness and purity.

- c. In this fashion, Arianism “denied the Deity and eternal existence of Christ by stating Jesus only pre-existed as the first creature which came from the hand of God” (Wilkins 1983:46).

**Note:** Arianism and the Christology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses are very similar.

### 2. The Christology of Arianism according to Scripture

It is wrong on several accounts, not the least of which is ignoring verses like John 1:1-3 and John 10:30.

- John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

- John 10:30: “I and the Father are one.”

These passages clearly state that:

- a. One, Jesus the Son (the Word, *logos*) was with God the Father from the eternity past (thus, Christ was not created). The Living Bible says, “Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God.”
  - b. Two, the Son and the Father are one (and the same).  
But what exactly does that mean?
3. Consider now how the meaning of their oneness was clarified at the Council of Nicaea (325).

This was the gathering of 300+ bishops in which Arianism was resoundingly denounced through the efforts of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria.

- a. Arias, using the Greek word *homoi* (similar), taught that the Son was like the Father.
- b. In contrast, Athanasius declared, using the Greek word *homo* (same) said, “Two equal persons but one substance”—meaning, the Son is of the same substance as the Father,
- c. The Council of Nicaea overwhelmingly recognized the conclusion of Athanasius to be biblically true. The creed of Nicaea reads as follows:

“We believe in one God the Father, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *begotten of the Father*, only-begotten, *that is, from the substance* [from the Greek *ousia*] *of the Father*; God of God, Light of Light, *true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance* [from the Greek *homoousios*, same+substance] *with the Father*, through whom all things were made, *things in heaven and things on the earth*; who for us men and for our salvation *came down* and was made the flesh, *and became man*, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit.

And those that say: "There was a time when he was not" and: "Before he was begotten he was not," and that "He came into being from what-is-not," or those that allege that the Son of God is 'of another substance or essence' or 'created,' or 'changeable' or 'alterable,' these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes (Bettenson, 25).

Note that this creed makes a strong trinitarian stance as it asserts the belief in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. Questions in need of further examination

- a. First, in John 14:28, Jesus states, “The Father is greater than I.” That seems to go against the creed of Nicaea that saw the Father and the Son as perfect equals. Obviously, this matter needs to be examined and we will do so later in the study.
- b. Second, the words “begetting” and “eternal generation” suggest that Jesus was born—meaning, he was created, and therefore, had a beginning. This matter will also be discussed later.

Once the matter of the relationship between the Father and the Son was settled in the church, the next issue to resolve was the relationship between the two natures of Christ: his divinity and humanity.

### E. Apollinarianism

Apollinaris, a fourth century bishop of Laodicea, thought long and hard about the dual nature of Christ and came up with the following Christology.

#### 1. The Apollinarian view of the dual nature of Christ

- a. First, Apollinaris conceived of the humanity of Jesus (in fact, all men) as consisting of body, soul, and spirit\*.

\*Zech. 12:1<sup>b</sup>: “The LORD . . . formed the spirit of man within him.”

- b. And then, he “sought the solution of the problem of the two natures in Christ in the theory that the *logos* [i.e., divinity] took the place of the human *pnuema* (spirit)” (Berkhof, 1975:102).
- c. He did this, one, to secure the unity of the person in Christ without sacrificing his deity, and two, to guard the sinlessness of Christ.

#### 2. The Christology of Apollinarianism according to Scripture

- a. By replacing the human spirit with *logos*, Jesus no longer had the spirit of man.

(1) This meant that it was no longer true that Jesus was “born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7<sup>b</sup>) since, in Apollinarianism, his human spirit was replaced by *logos*.

(2) To put it another way, since no human beings have *logos* residing in their spirit, for Jesus to be fully human, his human spirit must remain intact.

- b. In the final analysis, Apollinaris “denied the integrity of the complete human nature of Christ” (Wilkins).

So, for this reason, the Council of Constantinople (381 AD) rejected Apollinarianism because it “denied the true and proper humanity of Jesus Christ” (Berkhof, 102) in such a way that he was not “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb 2:17).

- 3. Consider what Gregory of Nazianzus, Archbishop of Constantinople (380-381), declared regarding the dual nature of Christ:

“Do not let men deceive themselves and others by saying that . . . ‘Our Lord and God,’ is without a human mind.

We do not separate the Man from Deity, no, we assert the dogma of the unity and identity of the Person, who aforetime was not man but God, the only Son before all ages, who in these last days assumed manhood also for our salvation . . .

at once earthly and heavenly, tangible and intangible, comprehensible and incomprehensible; that by one and the same person, perfect man and perfect God . . .”

“If any assert that he was . . . accounted worthy of sonship by adoption [against the Ebionites] . . . If any say that his flesh came down from heaven and is not from hence [against Docetism and Gnosticism], but is above us, not of us . . . (let him be anathema).”

**Discussion<sup>4</sup>:** Why is it important that Jesus was “made like [us] in every way” (Heb 2:17)? Why is that important to us (Heb. 4:15-16)?

## F. Nestorianism

Then came Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople in the fourth century.

- 1. The Nestorian view of the dual nature of Christ

Nestorius stressed the complete manhood of Christ by not blending the two natures (divine and human) into a single self-consciousness; instead, he placed them “alongside of each other” so that “the two natures are also two persons” (Berkhof, 1975:104-5).

- a. So, while Nestorianism sees in Christ a man side by side with God, in alliance with God and sharing His purpose, the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Jesus are not united in the same flesh (i.e., one person).
- b. Nestorius, then, used the institution of marriage to further explain his Christology.

He saw the union of Christ's two natures as if it were the "union of husband and wife, who become 'one flesh' while remaining two separate natures and persons" (Bettenson, 46).

- c. As for *logos*, whereas in Apollinarianism the human spirit of Jesus is replaced by *logos*, Nestorius conceived the indwelling of the *logos* in Jesus as a mere moral indwelling, such as believers also enjoy, though not to the same degree.

## 2. The Christology of Nestorianism according to Scripture

- a. Nestorianism was rejected at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD because it failed to maintain the integrity of the personhood of Jesus: Instead of Jesus as one person, he became two persons.
- b. The union of two persons in a matrimony is fitting to explain the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31–3), but, it does little to explain what is called "the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ" (explained later).

## 3. Consider what Cyril, bishop of Alexandria (412-444) said regarding Nestorianism.

"If any one does not acknowledge that the Word [Jesus] which is from God the Father was personally united with flesh, and with his own flesh is one Christ, that is, one and the same God and man together, let him be anathema" (cursed).

"If any one, in the one Christ, divides the persons after their union, conjoining them with a mere conjunction in accordance with worth . . . , instead of a combination according to a union of nature, let him be anathema."

"If any one presumes to call Christ a 'God-bearing man' . . . , let him be anathema."

**Discussion<sup>5</sup>:** Some may feel like this type of theological discussion is splitting hairs. What difference does it make whether Jesus is one person or two? Does it make a difference? Can a different Jesus save (2 Cor. 11:4)?

## G. Eutychianism (a.k.a., Monophysitism)

Then came Eutychus, a presbyter in Constantinople, in the fifth century.

### 1. The Eutychian view of the dual nature of Christ

- a. Eutychus taught that the human and divine natures of Christ were so fused or synthesized that it resulted in a third "singular" nature (a.k.a., Monophysitism).
- b. That is, Jesus' divine nature absorbed his human nature so much so that everything about Christ was divine, even his body.



- c. Eutychianism, therefore, “denied the distinction and coexistence of the two natures, and held to a mingling of both into one, which constituted a third nature” (Wilkins, 47).

Eutyches commented, “I admit that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union one nature” (Bettenson, 49).

## 2. The Christology of Eutychianism according to Scripture

The teaching of Eutychus was denied at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, because it effectively produced a third nature that was neither fully divine nor fully human.

## H. Orthodox doctrine

What then is the orthodox doctrine of the dual nature of Christ?

It was set forth by the fifth century Pope Leo I in his famous “Tome” to Flavian.

It is important to note that the term “hypostatic union” was used to describe the union of the human and divine nature of Christ.

### 1. What Leo declared:

“Thus there was born true God in the entire and perfect nature of true man, complete in its own properties . . . He assumed the form of a servant without the stain of sin, making the human properties greater, but not detracting from the divine . . .

Accordingly, he who made man, while he remained in the form of God, was himself made man in the form of a servant. Each nature preserves its own characteristics without diminution, so that the form of a servant does not detract from the form of God” (Bettenson, 50).

### 2. What does this mean?

“In the one person of Jesus Christ there are two natures, a human nature and divine nature, each in its completeness and integrity, yet so that no third nature is formed thereby.

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

3. This is to say, Jesus’ divinity and humanity should not be synthesized; neither should they be isolated as independent entities; rather they are connected through the hypostatic union.

**Discussion<sup>6</sup>:** How does our recognition of Jesus as a fully human and fully divine being foster and further our trust in him as our Savior and Lord? How has this reality help you personally?

## I. Modern developments

1. A key development in Christology in the nineteenth century was the rise of the historical Jesus by theological liberals. What is the historical Jesus?
  - a. Theological liberalism distinguishes between the real Jesus who lived in Palestine 2,000 years ago (a.k.a., historical Jesus) and a made-up version of Jesus presented in Scripture—a result of efforts by the early church to portray Jesus as a divine figure.

B. The following is an excerpt from the novel *The Da Vinci Code*:

Teabing, British royal historian in the novel, says:

“‘Jesus’ establishment as the Son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea . . . a relatively close vote at that. By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable . . .

It was all about power. Christ the Messiah was critical to the functioning of church and state. Many scholars claim that the early church literally stole Jesus from his original followers, hijacking his human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power . . .

Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal” (233).

“Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned” (234).

**Pastoral Note:** Unfortunately, what this popular novel (later turned into a movie) said about Jesus shook the faith of many Christians, most of whom do not know much about Church History. One such individual said, “That book was so good, but I hated it because it messed with my mind. I could only imagine how many people got screwed over from reading that book.” This example underscores the importance of Christology and Church History.

Now, the two key figures for the rise of the historical Jesus are Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albert Schweitzer.

### 2. Friedrich Schleiermacher

The person who made an important contribution at the outset of the emergence of the historical Jesus was the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

- a. The Christology of Schleiermacher

(1) Regarding his Christology, Colin Brown writes (1968:12):

According to him, “we are not to think of [Jesus] in terms of the creeds of the early church with their overtones of Greek metaphysical speculation.”

(2) Then, how should we think of Jesus? Schleiermacher says:

“The redeemer, then, is like all men in by virtue of the identity of human nature, but distinguished from them by the constant potency of his God-consciousness, which was a veritable [real] existence of God in him.”

(3) What does this mean? Brown writes:

“In other words, we are not to think of Jesus as the God-man of Christian orthodoxy, the divine Word who took human nature upon himself. [Rather] Jesus was a man who walked so closely with God and you could say that God dwelled in him.”

b. The Christology of Schleiermacher according to Scripture

(1) Schleiermacher’s thinking sounds very similar to Ebionism (Jesus the man so completely fulfilled the Jewish law that Christ chose to enter into him.)

(2) By his definition, any person who really believes that he is walking with God can, not only believe that God is with him, but, in fact, dwells in him to the point of becoming God himself.

The Holy Spirit certainly lives in the believers (2 Cor. 1:22), but his indwelling presence does not deify us.

(3) The danger of Schleiermacher’s Christology is evident in the case of Jose Luis de Miranda, a Puerto Rican minister who founded what was once a fledgling ministry called “Growing in Grace International Ministry” (with millions of followers).

(a) First, Miranda claimed that God’s power had delivered him from his drug addiction when he was a young man. So, it can be said that at that time he was walking with God.

(b) Then, later, he claimed that Jesus Christ “came to me and integrated with me.”

(c) But, as his movement grew, Miranda declared himself Christ (2004).

An article about Miranda in 2007 says: “When the crowd spot him,



it goes wild. People chant, ‘Lord! Lord! Lord!’ It quickly becomes clear that they’re referring to him. ‘It’s Jesus Christ himself!’ a preacher onstage announces. ‘Let’s welcome Jesus Christ Man!’”

It should come as no surprise that Miranda was known for leading the life of a high roller and womanizing (among other things). Some people in his congregation actually gave him money so he could gamble.

**Pastoral Note:** It was so sad seeing so many people desperately clinging on to Miranda as if he were their savior. Miranda, who is now dead, was “a shepherd . . . who [did] not care for the lost . . . [ate] the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hooves” (Zech. 11:16). We need to be like Jesus “the good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn. 10:11).

**Discussion<sup>7</sup>:** The apostle John says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). So, if you were to have tested the spirit of Miranda, how would you have done it? Have you ever been deceived by false prophets? Why do you think it happened?

### 3. Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), an accomplished musician and physician who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952, was also a theologian, whose book *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* influenced how theological liberals think about the real Jesus.

#### a. The Christology of Schweitzer

According to Schweitzer, we don’t know much about the real Jesus who actually lived in history.

Why? It is because the writers of the Gospels doctored the facts and created their own image of Jesus, as a divine being, which is artificial.

Recall what we read earlier from *The Da Vinci Code*:

“Many scholars claim that the early church literally stole Jesus from the his original followers, hijacking his human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power . . .”

(1) So, any attempts by theological liberals to discover the historical Jesus always involve rejecting the stories of miracles Christ performed.

For instance, Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the U. S. and a theological liberal “wrote a version of the Four Gospels from which he removed all references to ‘fantastic’ [supernatural] events, retaining only the ethical content of Jesus’ teaching.”

(2) So, the Jesus of the NT is fictitious; this Jesus is neither historical nor real.

Schweitzer writes:

“The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethics of the kingdom of God, who founded the kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration, never had any existence.”

(3) Who, then, is the real, historical Jesus?

Schweitzer argued that contrary to how Jesus is portrayed in the Four Gospels, the historical Jesus was not God, and can scarcely be distinguished from the rest of men.

Again, recall what is said in *The Da Vinci Code*: “Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal” (233).

#### b. The Christology of Schweitzer according to Scripture

This course is not apologetics; therefore, I will not get into any in-depth discussions on authenticating, one, the canonicity of the NT, two, the reliability of NT with respect to safeguarding the teachings and narratives found in the original.

(1) But, the following needs to be said in order for us to be confident about the testimony of the NT in general and the Four Gospels in particular.

(a) Regarding canonicity (i.e., the question of which books are deemed authoritative, and therefore should be included in Scripture), the twenty-seven books of the NT that depict Jesus as God-Man were written way before (all in the first century) any Gnostic books were produced between 140-220.

Once the canonicity of these NT books were recognized by the Church Fathers, they were very vigilant about keeping the Gnostic and other books, which were produced later, that went against the teachings of the NT out of the church.

For instance, consider what is said in the Muratorian Canon of Rome in the second century. It shows the high level of awareness and concerns that the early church had in regard to the canonicity of Scripture:

“There are extant also a letter to the Laodiceans and another to Alexandrians, forged under Paul’s name to further the heresy of Marcion. And there are many others which cannot be received into the Catholic Church. For it is not fitting for gall to be mixed with honey” (Bettenson, 29).

“Honey” here refers to books deemed canonical;  
 “gall” then points to all the pretenders that are not.

- (b) Regarding reliability, there is no other book like the Bible that had undergone such high-level care by copyists (before the invention of movable type) to ensure the accuracy of what was being copied from one manuscript to another.
- (c) Furthermore, the Gospel writers themselves were very concerned that what they wrote were accurate both chronologically and historically.

For instance, doctor Luke writes:

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

As evident here, historical and material accuracy was important to Luke.

- (2) So, when all these facts are considered, the historical Jesus is the Son of God.

- (a) As early as when Jesus was twelve years old (if not earlier), he was very conscious of his Sonship to God the Father.

To his earthly parents, relieved to finally find the boy Jesus who had stayed behind in Jerusalem, he says:

“Why were you searching for me? . . .  
 Don’t you know that I had to be my Father’s house?” (Lk. 2:49 NIV).

- (b) The historical Jesus, the real Jesus who walked the earth, therefore, is the God-Man who taught eternal truth, lived the sinless life of love and justice, performed miracles, and died, resurrected and ascended to heaven.

- (c) To the contrary, the Jesus of theological liberalism is the fictitious Jesus.

- (3) Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof characterizes the attempts by theological liberals to humanize Jesus by way of stripping him of his divinity in the following manner:

“A far-reaching and pernicious distinction was made between the historical Jesus, delineated by writers of the gospels, and the theological Christ [of liberalism], who was the fruit of the fertile imagination of theological thinkers.

The supernatural Christ made way for a human Jesus; and the doctrine of the two natures, for the doctrine of a divine man” (Berkhof, 1996:309).

**Discussion<sup>8</sup>:** Paul lauded the Thessalonians, saying, “You accepted [the word of God] not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13b NIV). So, why is it difficult for people like Schweitzer (the so-called “educated”) to believe the Bible as it is? Have you had problems in this area? Share.

## **J. Conclusion regarding the dual identity of Jesus Christ**

1. He is 100 percent God and 100 percent man—Jesus Christ is God-Man!

Romans 2:5: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . .”

2. Scriptures represent Jesus to have possessed a divine nature and a human nature, each unaltered in essence and undivested (i.e. unstripped) of its normal attributes and powers.
3. Scriptures represent Jesus Christ as a single, undivided personality in whom His divine and human nature are vitally and inseparably united.
4. “[Therefore] Jesus is properly, not God and Man but the God-Man . . . one person with a single consciousness and will” (Strong, 684).

**Homework 2**

Describe the Christology of the following groups, and then appraise their beliefs according to Scripture.

1. Docetism
2. Ebionism
3. Gnosticism
4. Arianism
5. Apollinarianism
6. Nestorianism
7. Eutychianism
8. Schleiermacher
9. Schweitzer
10. Leo I



## Chapter 3 The Eternal Preexistence of Christ

### I. Definition

The eternal preexistence of Christ is defined as follows:

- Christ, as *logos*, has existed forever so that he has an eternal past as well as eternal future.
- Therefore, the existence of Christ did not begin with his birth or even with the conception of his humanity in the womb of Mary.
- Christy's humanity, however, began at the conception.

Obviously, this has a significant Trinitarian implication as well as whether Christ is truly worthy of our adoration and allegiance.

So, what does Scripture say about the preexistence of Christ?

### II. The Witness of the New Testament

#### A. The witness of Christ himself

It must be stated, foremost, that Christ himself clearly indicated his preexistence.

1. When the angry crowd told Jesus, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (Jn. 8:57-58).
  - a. Note that Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This self-disclosure by the Lord clearly indicates that he existed before Abraham.
  - b. Nevertheless, this declaration—"before Abraham was, I am"—doesn't automatically eliminate the possibility that Jesus was brought into existence by some cause since it could just mean that Jesus antedated Abraham but still had a beginning.

But upon examining the Greek phrase *ego eimi*, here translated as "I am," it becomes evident that Jesus is eternal, and not brought into existence by any cause. (This will be discussed shortly.)

**Discussion<sup>1</sup>:** What do you make of the crowd thinking that Jesus appeared about 20 years older than his actual age (Is. 53:2-3)? What could that mean spiritually (2 Cor. 5:21)?

2. Jesus also spoke of his preexistence to Nicodemus the Pharisee, who merely saw him as "a teacher come from God (Jn. 3:2): "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (Jn. 3:13).

This self-disclosure by Jesus makes it clear that he

existed in heaven before being born in this world.

3. But, the clearest declaration of Christ's preexistence from eternity past is found in Revelation with respect to whom the expression "the Alpha and the Omega" is applied.

- a. Keep in mind that of the twenty-four letters in the Greek alphabet, alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is the first letter and omega ( $\omega$ ) is the final one.

Therefore, this signifies that the entity to whom this expression is applied is eternal—meaning, this being has neither a beginning nor an end.

- b. The first time this expression is introduced in Revelation is applied to God the Father.

Revelation 1:8 reads: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'"

- c. And the last time the same expression is used in Revelation, Jesus applies it to himself in relation to his Second Coming.

Rev. 22:10<sup>a</sup>, 12-13: "And he [Jesus] said to me 'Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.'"

If what Jesus says about himself wasn't true, then this declaration would be supremely presumptuous and blasphemous. Truly, he is claiming equality with God the Father.

**Discussion<sup>2</sup>:** Does this self-disclosure of Jesus motivate us to take his words more seriously? How does this discovery (that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega) personally affect you?

4. And because both God the Father and Jesus the Son (along with the Holy Spirit) have always existed from eternity past and will exist into eternity future, Jesus could offer the following prayer the night before his crucifixion:

"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (Jn. 17:5).

The implication of what this prayer means will be addressed later.

Suffice it to say for now that because Jesus preexisted with the Father from eternity past, he could claim that he had the same glory the Father has.

**B. Besides Jesus himself, those around him,  
under the Spirit's inspiration, testified of Christ's preexistence.**

1. The apostle John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.”

This is a good spot to explain the Greek word *Logos*, translated in John 1:1 as “the Word.”

- a. Long before John came on the scene, the essence of *Logos*, which Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher from Ephesus, articulated in the sixth century BC, permeated the Hellenist mindset.
  - (1)Heraclitus, at first, observed what seemed obvious: “the universe, instead of standing still, is in continuous motion . . . Our bodies and minds are changing every moment, and our perceptions and ideas change with them.”<sup>3</sup>
  - (2)But, he also observed that the world, despite constant flux and changes occurring in it at every turn, was not a complete chaos; therefore, Heraclitus declared that *Logos*—the word, the reason of God— was the one that controlled it.
  - (3)Moreover, he held that “nothing moved with aimless feet; in all life and in all the events of life there was a purpose, a plan and design. And what was it that controlled events? Once again, the answer was *Logos*.”<sup>4</sup>
  - (4)And it would take a special revelation given to the apostles John and Paul several centuries later for the world to see that this *Logos* was none other than Jesus by whom “all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16a, 17b).
  - (5)And this *Logos* existed in eternity past, for John 1:1 says in the Living Bible: “Before anything else existed, there was Christ [*Logos*], with God.”

**Discussion<sup>3</sup>:** What do you make of the fact that God used Heraclitus (not a worshiper of Elohim) to prepare for the day when Christ will be revealed as the *Logos* of the universe? (e.g., Num. 22:28: God used a donkey; Lk. 19:40: God willing use stones to speak for Him)

2. With respect to the testimony of the preexistence of Christ by those close to Jesus, John the Baptist, who was born few months before him, said this about his cousin:

“This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me’” (Jn. 1:15).

3. Of course, the apostle Paul had plenty to say about the preexistence of Christ.

- a. He tells the Philippians that Jesus was in the form of God *before* becoming a man.

<sup>3</sup> Greer, *Western World*, 59.

<sup>4</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John* Volume 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 34-35.

Phil. 2:5<sup>b</sup>-7: “Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

(1) Here, Jesus asserts that he was equal to God before the incarnation, which certainly means that he preexisted eternally, since God is eternal (Deut. 33:27).

(Whether Jesus continued to be equal to God while on earth is a separate discussion that will be addressed later in the study.)

(2) And the equality between God the Father and Jesus the Son becomes evident upon examining the Greek phrase *ego eimi* (“I am”) that Jesus applied to himself when he said to the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn. 8:58).

(a) Recall that God told Moses, living out in the desert, to go to Pharaoh “to bring . . . the Israelites out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:10b).

When Moses asked God what to call him, in anticipation of the Israelites asking him that question, God said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14b).

The Hebrew word for “I AM” here is *hayah*, which is related to Yahweh, the most sacred name for the God of Israel.

(b) And the translators of *Septuagint*, the first Greek version of the Hebrew Bible produced in the second and third centuries BC, translated *hayah* as *ego eimi* to refer to the God of the OT.

(3) Note once more that Jesus, by applying *ego eimi* that referred to the eternal God of the OT to himself, was unequivocally claiming equality with God.

**Discussion<sup>4</sup>:** The Gospel of John is full of *ego eimi* (“I AM”): “I am the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12); “I am the gate” (Jn. 10:9); “I am the good shepherd” (Jn. 10:11). How have these declarations of Christ ministered to you, especially during moments of darkness in your life?

b. Paul bolsters the case for the preexistence of Christ by telling the Colossians that Jesus already existed before anything else came into existence; in fact, he created everything.

Col. 1:15-17<sup>a</sup>: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things . . .”

However, the phrase, “firstborn” seems to suggest that Jesus, as the Jehovah’s

Witnesses teach, is a created being—meaning, he did not exist before that event.

But, that is incorrect.

(1)The Greek word for firstborn, *prototokos*, is very commonly a title of honor and rarely carries time significance to a Hebrew mind.

(a) Throughout the OT, the phrase "firstborn" was used to mean “supremacy” or “preeminence” rather than “priority of birth” or “in time” (Gn. 49:3).

For instance, in speaking of King David, God says, “And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:27).

(b) This isn’t talking about birth order (since David had several older brothers) but God’s desire to allow David to be great.

(2) Even rabbis themselves called God “first-born” as the supreme being, “the firstborn of the world” (R. Bechai on Pentateuch cited by Lightfoot, 47).

(3) In Colossians, therefore, “the firstborn” is a title that refers to Christ’s preeminent position, not that he is Jehovah’s first creation.

### C. Why Jesus’ ministry shocked the Jews

1. Because Jesus the Son preexisted with God the Father from eternity past, he could assert confidently, “I and the Father are one” (Jn. 10:30).
2. Consequently, the Son was able to do that which the Jews thought only God the Father had the authority to do: to forgive sins.
3. Once, when Jesus “said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’ . . . some of the scribes were . . . questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’” (Mk. 2:5, 6, 7).

Evidently, these Jewish leaders did not realize that Jesus Christ had the same authority as God to forgive sins because:

- a. First, the Son is as glorious as the Father
- b. Second, “All things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16)—meaning, Christ has the spiritual judication over those whom he had made.

**Discussion<sup>5</sup>:** Does the fact that Jesus preexisted from eternity past with God the Father make him even more worthy of our adoration and allegiance? How does that affect you personally?

### III. The Testimony of the Old Testament

Now, let's examine whether Christ makes appearances in the OT.

This matter hinges on two things:

- First, to whom the designation “LORD” in the OT (all letters capitalized in English translations) is applied in the NT.
- Second, theophany (explained later).

#### A. Is Jehovah Jesus?

First, it is true that “the Son sometimes appears in the OT under the name Jehovah” (Wilkins, 48) or “LORD.”

1. To grasp the significance of this connection, we need to first know that the personal name for God in the OT (Elohim being His official name) is written as YHWH, which is unpronounceable since no vowels are used.

- a. At the same time, the Israelites were fearful of breaking the third commandment that says, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7).

They, therefore, did not attempt to sound out YHWH wherever it is found in the OT.

- b. The Israelites, in search of a substitute name, combined YHWH with vowels from the word “Adonai” (i.e., Lord) and the result was “Jehovah.” So, wherever the word YHWH is found in the OT, it was read as Jehovah.
  - c. But in modern translations of the OT, “the LORD” is used instead of Jehovah.

2. Now, consider two passages from Isaiah and how they are used in the NT.

- a. In Isaiah 40:3, the prophet makes a reference to the LORD:  
“A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the *LORD* [YHWH]; make straight in the desert a highway for our God [Elohim].’”

(1) There is no doubt that both YHWH and Elohim refer to God the Father.

(2) But in the NT, the LORD (i.e., Jehovah) in Isaiah 40:3 is applied to Christ as “the Lord” (but written in small caps).

The apostle Matthews, in speaking of the role of John the Baptist, says:

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

<sup>2</sup> ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ <sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of *the Lord*; make his paths straight”’ (Matt. 3:1-3).

- b. In Isaiah 53:1, the prophet also alludes to the LORD, saying:  
“Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD [YHWH] been revealed?”

Once again, “the LORD” in Isaiah is applied to Christ (the Lord) in the gospels. The apostle John writes:

“Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, <sup>38</sup> so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’” (Jn. 12:37-38).

Notice the subtle change made in the Isaiah passage quoted in John: “the LORD” (in all caps) in Isaiah 53:1 is rendered as “the Lord” (in small caps) in John.

- 3. Thus, these and other similar Scriptures indicate that the Son is present in the OT.
  - a. It should be noted that whenever “the LORD” (in all caps) in the OT is identified with Christ the Lord (in small caps) in the NT, the deity of Jesus is being stressed.
  - b. But, the fact that “the LORD” in all caps in the OT, to point to YHWH, is changed to “the Lord” in small caps in the NT, to refer to Christ, means that the Father is distinguished from the Son as distinctive members/persons of the Trinity.

**Discussion<sup>6</sup>:** How do you feel about the Israelites using a substitute name for God to avoid taking the name of the LORD your God in vain? Do you revere God’s name? In what ways do we take the name of God in vain in our everyday lives?

## B. Theophany

In speaking of whether the preexistence of Christ can be gleaned from the OT, besides the application of “the LORD” in the OT to Christ, the concept of theophany is pivotal.

- 1. What is theophany?

Theophany is “manifestation of God in visible and bodily form before the incarnation” (Holloman, III-I).

The main point of this chapter is that Jesus appears throughout the OT by way of theophany.

- a. Now, this doesn’t mean that Jesus was already in the flesh before he was incarnated;

he wasn't because the humanity of Jesus Christ began at conception.

That is, before "the fullness of time had come [when] God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal 4:4), Jesus remained as the divine *Logos* and was not yet enfleshed.

- b. Therefore, it should be said that through theophany, Christ appeared *like* a man in the same way that the "the Spirit of God descend[ed] like a dove and [came] to rest on [Jesus]" (Matt. 3:16<sup>b</sup>); however, in the OT, Christ was not yet man.
- c. And since the focus is on the manifestation of Christ in the OT, it would be more accurate to say "Christophany" or "Logophany" since, according to John 1:1, Christ is referred to as *Logos*, the Word or Reason of God.

There are several incidences of theophanies in the OT which point to the preexistence of Christ.

## 2. Theophanies in the OT: As the angel of the Lord

- a. "The foremost and most frequent theophany is the Lord's manifestation as 'the angel of the Lord'" (Holloman, III-1).

The NIV Study Bible says, "Traditional Christian interpretation has held that this 'angel' was a preincarnate manifestation of Christ as God's Messenger-Servant" (30).

Now, it should be noted that not all agree that the angel of the Lord is Christ since, in Luke 1:11, 19, the angel of the Lord is identified as Gabriel.

- b. Instances of Christ's appearance as the angel of the Lord in the OT

(1)It was "the angel of the LORD [who] appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Ex. 3:2).

(2)It was "the angel of God [who] said to [Jacob] in the dream, 'Jacob,' . . . lift up your eyes" (Gn. 31:11, 12).

(3)And according to Judges 2:1-4, it was "the angel of the LORD [who] . . . brought [Israel] up from Egypt and brought [her] into the land that [he] swore to give to [her] fathers."

- c. What emerges from many passages that mention "the angel of the LORD" is the unique, that is, trinitarian, relationship between God and the angel of the LORD.

Consider Exodus 3:1-4: "And the *angel of the LORD* appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why



the bush is not burned.’<sup>4</sup> When the *LORD* saw that he turned aside to see, *God* called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’”

Genesis 31:11-13: “Then the *angel of God* said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’<sup>12</sup> And he said, ‘Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.’<sup>13</sup> I am the *God* of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.”

- (1)First, these passages show that “the angel of the Lord exercises the authority and power of deity” (Holloman, III-2). It was he who guided the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years.
- (2)Second, the angel of the Lord is distinguished from the LORD/God. In other words, while both are divine, they are not the same persons or entities.
- (3)Third, the angel of the Lord is to be identified as Christ, that is, the second person of the Trinity.

As for its support, consider these arguments:

- (a)“Since the visible, bodily revelation of God in the NT is through Christ (Jn. 1:18), then it is implied that the angel of the Lord, who appears visibly and bodily as a revelation of God in the OT, is to be identified as Christ” (Holloman, III-3).
  - (b)“The angel of the Lord and Christ are both explicitly spoken of as being sent by the Father (Gn. 24:7; Jn. 20:21), and this same relationship to the Father would add further support to their being the same personage” (Ibid.).
- d. It bears repeating that Christ appearing as the angel of the Lord in the OT does not mean that he was already enfleshed (before being born in Bethlehem), since angels are spirits (Heb. 1:14) who do not possess body.
- (1)In fact, Jesus, after being resurrected, made this point (i.e., angels are bodyless) abundantly clear when he told the skeptical disciples:
 

“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Lk. 24:39).
  - (2)This would mean that Christ merely appeared to be in the flesh but, in reality, he was a type of phantom—which is, “something apparently seen, heard, or sensed, but having no physical reality” (*The American Heritage Dictionary*).

**Discussion<sup>7</sup>:** We see here is a Christ who didn’t wait until his incarnation to be involved with the world. How do these examples of theophanies reveal about the heart of Christ?

How does that affect your devotion to the Lord?

3. Theophanies in the OT: “Another theophany less frequent in the OT is the Lord’s appearance as a man” (Holloman, III-1).

- a. In the book of Daniel, the fourth person seen in the fiery furnace into which the three young Jewish men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—were thrown to burn and die is identified as “a son of the gods.”

Dan. 3:25: “[Nebuchadnezzar] answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

- b. Other times when Christ before his incarnation appeared as a man in the OT:

(1)Gn. 18:1-3, 13-14: “And the *LORD* appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup>He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three *men* were standing in front of him.”

Evidently, “two of the ‘men’ were angels [Gn. 19:1: “The two angels arrived in Sodom”—cf. Gn. 18:22]. The third was the Lord himself” (NIVSB, 32).

(a)During this visit, the LORD tells Sarah that  
“this time next year . . . [she] will have a son” (Gn. 18:10).

(b)Then, “the LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,  
<sup>18</sup>seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?’” (Gn. 18:17).

(2)The entity with whom Jacob wrestled is,  
first, identified as a man, and later, as God.

Gn. 32:24-30: <sup>24</sup>And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day . . . <sup>28</sup>Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed” . . . <sup>30</sup>So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.”

This is likely the pre-incarnate Christ who graciously allowed Jacob to win the wrestling match to transform Jacob from being a deceiver to one who hungered after God (“I will let you go unless you bless me”—Gn. 32:26<sup>b</sup>).

- b. Some people believe that Melchizedek, to whom Abraham gave his tithe, is also the pre-incarnate Christ.

Gn. 14:18-20: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out

bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)<sup>19</sup> And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth;<sup>20</sup> and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”

- c. But Hebrews 7:3 renders that interpretation unlikely:  
 “Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.”

(1)The text says that Melchizedek is *like* the Son of God,

Here, the literary device called simile is used.

(a)Simile compares two different things due to some similarities between the two.

(b)It functions like a metaphor but uses the words “like” or “as” to signify the similarity.

(2)This then means that Melchizedek is not the Christ; instead, he is the literal king of Salem with an unknown origin.

(3)What, then, are some similarities between the two?

(a)Their priesthoods are superior to the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 6:20<sup>5</sup>).

(b)And since the Bible doesn’t provide any genealogical information of Melchizedek, (which is very rare in the OT), the Hebrews writer spiritualizes that omission (“without beginning”) to liken him to the eternal Christ.

**Discussion<sup>8</sup>:** We saw how Christ, through theophany, manifested himself amid the three Jewish young men who were unjustly thrown into the fiery furnace to die. What can we learn about Christ in the manner in which he protected them? That is, instead of pulling them out of the furnace, he joined them in their suffering even as he was protecting them? Have you ever experienced this kind of care from the Lord?

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<sup>5</sup> “Where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

**Homework 3**

1. Define the eternal preexistence of Christ.
2. How does the statement, “Before Abraham was, I am,” point to Christ’s preexistence?
3. How does the expression, “The Alpha and the Omega,” prove Christ’s preexistence and his equality with God the Father (Rev. 1:8, 22:10)?
4. According to how Heraclitus defined *Logos*, what can we learn about Christ the *Logos*?
5. How do the Hebrew word *hayah* (“I AM WHO I AM”—Ex. 3:14) and the Greek expression *ego eimi* (I am—Jn. 8:58) prove the preexistence of Christ and his equality with God the Father?
6. Does the expression “firstborn” (*prototokos*) mean that Jesus was created?  
If not, what does it mean in Colossians 1:16?
7. Why did the ministry of Jesus shock the Jews?
8. What does it mean that “the LORD” in Isaiah 40:3 is applied to Christ in Matthew 3:1-3?
9. What is theophany?
10. Give two examples of theophany in the Old Testament?

## Chapter 4 The Incarnation of Christ

### I. Definition

The incarnation alludes to the coming of Christ (*Logos*), the Son of God, in human flesh.

#### A. Key concepts

1. The incarnation simply means that “the Word (*Logos*) became flesh” (Jn 1:14<sup>a</sup>).
2. Subsequently, the Word incarnate “dwelt (*skēnoō*) among us” (Jn 1:14<sup>b</sup>).

*Skēnoō* means “to reside (as God did in the Tabernacle of old, a symbol of protection and communion)” (Zodhiates, 65).

3. And because *Logos* became embodied and “dwelt among us”, “we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14<sup>b</sup>).

#### B. The effect of the incarnation

The apostle John, now as an elderly man who had walked with the incarnate Word some fifty years earlier, writes:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—<sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—<sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you . . .” (1 Jn. 1:1-3<sup>b</sup>).

What does this mean?

1. First, the incarnation makes it possible to see and touch God and not die for doing so. Recall what God said to Moses: “You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. (Ex. 33:20).
2. Second, the incarnation of *Logos* truly becomes the Immanuel moment: “God is with us.”

Is. 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (i.e., God is with us).

**Discussion<sup>1</sup>:** No one can hardly grow up in the West without ever hearing the name Jesus; some even use it as a cuss word. But the moment Christ becomes real in our lives, that is, when “we have heard [and] seen with our eyes and touched . . . with our hands” the word of life, we experience profound changes. Have you ever encountered such a moment in your life? How did it change you?

## II. Various Aspects to the Incarnation Involving the Trinity

### A. The steps taken toward the incarnation:

Its origination → its implementation → its execution

1. Like all other divine plans, redemptive or otherwise, the origination and initiation of the plan to incarnate *Logos* comes from God the Father.

Among several passages that testify of this fact, two stand out:

- The apostle Peter declares to the Israelites in Jerusalem:  
“Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne . . .” (Acts 2:30).
- The apostle Paul adds: “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh* and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh . . .” (Rom. 8:3).

The sovereignty of God is in the purview, for “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17<sup>a</sup>).

2. The Son, then, implements the Father’s plan by subjecting himself to it.

What does this involve? Paul says that *Logos* “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7).

In other words, Christ has to become a human in order to carry out the Father’s redemptive plan. What does this entail? We will explore that later.

3. And it is always the role of the Holy Spirit to execute or actualize the plans originating from the Father.
  - a. For instance, while Christ commands us to be a witness “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8<sup>b</sup>), it is the Holy Spirit that enables us to do execute that plan.  
  
“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
  - b. In the case of the Word (*Logos*) becoming flesh, the Spirit’s role is making possible the virgin birth.

**Discussion<sup>2</sup>:** What do you perceive from the way the Three Person in the Trinity work with one another? If we were to adopt their manner of working closely together to how we relate to each other—whether it be in our family, work or church—what would that

look like? What often is the case with you when you work with others?

## **B. Genealogy of Jesus: the divine and human lineages through which he came to earth**

1. We examine, first, the divine genealogy of Jesus the Son of God.

- a. It was said earlier that Melchizedek, to whom Abraham gave a tithe (Gn. 14:20), is not the Christ. However, the Hebrews writer, in spiritualizing Melchizedek's mysterious origin, accurately captures the divine lineage of Jesus.

“[Melchizedek] is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever” (Heb. 7:3).

This can be rewritten as: “[Jesus] is without [human] father or [human] mother or [human] genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life . . . the Son of God . . . continues a priest forever.”

This is to say, with respect to Jesus' divine genealogy, he has no beginning and will have no end.

- b. But, the concept of eternal Jesus brings up a problem since the fact that Jesus is the Son of God would mean that the Son proceeds from the Father.

(1)The famous John 3:16<sup>a</sup> says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only *begotten* Son” (KJV).

The Hebrews writer applies Psalms 2:7 to Jesus:

“‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you?’

Or again, ‘I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son’”? (Heb. 1:5).

The word “beget” means, “to bring (a child) into existence by the process of reproduction.

(2)Here, note how the Muslims understand this kind of Christian scriptures.

- (a)The Islamic understanding of the relationship between God and Jesus is one between an earthly father and his son: the father married and has children (as the Mormons believe).

(b)Therefore, it is an insult to Muslims that Christians say that God has a son.

- (c)Not surprisingly, therefore, this is one main reason the Coran denies that Jesus is the Son of God.

Sura 112: “Say: He is Allah, the only God, the Eternal Refuge!

He begets not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable to Him.”  
Sura 4:171: “Far is his transcendent majesty that He should have a son.”

(3) But this is not the Christian understanding.

Note that verses like John 3:16, John 15:28<sup>b</sup> (“the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father”) and Hebrews 1:5 are the basis for the doctrine of eternal generation.

(a) But, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son (and Spirit) doesn’t refer to a moment in which the Son was created without having existed before.

(b) Rather, it refers to:

First: The eternal relationship between the Father and the Son

Second: “The personal property of the Son, [which] is that he is eternally begotten of the Father and shares with the Father in the [life-giving breath] of the Spirit”

“It is a timeless act, the act of an eternal present, an act always continuing and yet ever completed” (Berkhof, 1996:92-94).

(b) Ultimately, “eternal generation” is a human (anthropomorphic) way through which we can adequately understand the true relationship between the Father and the Son that approximates our understanding of generation and birth.

But, the full understanding of their true relationship is beyond our ability to understand on this side of heaven.

2. Now, we consider the human genealogy of Jesus the Son of Man.  
Interestingly, Matthew and Luke present different genealogies of Jesus.

a. Joseph’s line

Matthew 1:1-17 is the genealogical line of Jesus through Joseph who is a royal descendant of King David.

(1) Evidently, the genealogy of Matthew—who wrote his Gospel to convince the Jews that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah prophesized in the OT—seeks to prove that Jesus is the promised king of Israel, a royal heir to King David.

Matt. 1:6: “. . . and Jesse the father of David the king.  
And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.

Matt. 1:16: “. . . and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary,



of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.”

2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16 records what was promised to King David:

“When your [David’s] days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup>He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever . . . And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Evidently, two things were promised to King David:

- (a) An eternal kingdom
- (b) One of David’s descendants will be its ultimate king

(2) So, Matthew traces Christ’s genealogy through Solomon and Jechoniah, and ends with Joseph—this, then, is Jesus’ legal lineage.

Matt. 1:12: “And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.”)

This makes Joseph the legal father of Jesus, thereby giving the latter the royal right to the Davidic line—this makes Jesus the legitimate king of Israel.

#### b. Mary’s line

From Luke 3:23-38 is the genealogical line of Jesus through Mary who was also a descendant of David.

- (1) The genealogy of Luke traces Christ’s lineage from David through his other son, Nathan, and it is from Nathan that Mary proceeded.
- (2) There is one important reason why Mary also has to be a descendant of David.

During the latter part of Judah, King Jehoiakim, a royal descendant of David, raises the ire of God by burning the scroll containing God’s Word (Jer. 36:23)

- (a) In response, God declares that “none of his [Jehoiakim’s] offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah” (Jer. 22:30).

Jeremiah 36:30 reads, “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night.”

- (b) What happened here? None of Jehoiakim’s descendants will ever

occupy the throne of David after his son Jechoniah (a.k.a., Jehoiachin) briefly occupied it for 3 months (2 Chron. 36:9).

- (3) But, this judgement against King Jehoiakim, the official bearer of the royal line of David, creates a dilemma for God:

While the Messiah has to be a royal descendant of King David, at the same time, the Messiah cannot be a royal descendant of Jehoiakim who is also the official bearer of the kingly line of David.

So, how are both conditions met in the birth of Jesus?

- (a) First, the promise made to David is kept since Jesus is indeed his royal offspring through Solomon.

But because Joseph does not contribute biologically to the birth of Jesus—since it is a virgin birth—Jesus is not a physical descendant of David.

- (b) But, it is through Mary his mother, who is a physical descendant of David by way his other son Nathan, Jesus has become a physical descendant of David.

This is to say, Luke's genealogy establishes the physical connection of Christ with David—and ultimately to Adam (Lk. 4:37<sup>b</sup>), the first man; Christ then is the last Adam

Rom. 1:3: "Concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh."

1 Cor. 15:45: "Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

- (c) The judgment pronounced against King Jehoiakim (i.e., barring his descendants from ever occupying the throne of Israel) is also fulfilled since Mary does not descend from the royal lineage of Jehoiakim.

**Discussion<sup>3</sup>.** Matthew 5:18 says, "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." We just saw how God kept His words and promises through the miracle of the virgin birth. How have you experienced the faithfulness of God in your own life through promises kept by the Lord?

3. The final question considered for this section regarding the genealogy of Jesus is why Jesus was sent at a certain time (about 2,000 years ago) instead of any other time?

To that Paul says, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law . . ." (Gal. 4:4).

What constitutes “the fullness of time”? That is to ask, “Why was Jesus sent to earth at that particular time instead of some other moments in history?”

- a. It can be argued that—in view of the importance of messianic prophecies to verify the identity of those who claim to be the Messiah—the sending of Jesus to earth has to wait until the last messianic prophecy is given.

- (1)The last messianic prophecy is given by Malachi who writes about the coming of John the Baptist: “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me (Mal. 3:1).

- (2)Malachi dies around 430 BC, but Jesus wouldn’t come to earth and become incarnated for another 400 years.

- (3)This means that there are other matters that factored into determining the fullness of time that would trigger the sending of Jesus to be born as a baby in Bethlehem.

- b. A question that needs to be raised here is this:

When is an apt time not only for Jesus to come and die in a small nation of Israel for our sins, but also to get this message out to the whole world in an effective and timely manner so that as many can be saved without delays?

There are three things that need to be in place for that to happen:

- A well-developed and safe road system that connects the cities for travel
- A common language so that people can communicate regardless where they were
- Strategic places from which the gospel can be launched effectively

- (1)As for a well-developed and safe road system that connects the cities, we need to know why this is important.

According to historian Kenneth Latourette, “at the outset, Christianity was predominantly urban. It moved along the trade route from city to city. By the second decade of its second century . . . its strength was in the cities which were so prominent a feature of the Roman Empire.”

This is to say, the Christian movement, at the outset, was an urban movement, and the most influential factor that guided its spread was the Roman road, which is equivalent to modern-day highways.

It is estimated that the Roman road consisted of 248,601 miles

of road, of which 5,000+ miles were stone-paved

(a) Spreading out from the capital, “these highways connected cities, major towns and military bases. They provided efficient means for the overland movement of . . . trade goods.”

(b) These roads were also safe due to the ubiquitous presence of Roman soldiers who used these highways to travel and transport things.

Therefore, many travelled on these roads, including Christian merchants who shared the gospel as they went about their businesses.

(c) The fact is that the rapid spread of the gospel was not only aided by the Roman road but it followed the previously established trade routes.

That is to say, without the Roman road, the gospel would have sat dormant in Israel.

So, it can be reasoned as follows:

The arrival of the fullness of time (which would trigger the sending of Christ into the world) is put on hold until the Roman road and the trade routes are firmly established, so that the message of why Jesus died can go out in a timely and efficient manner from city to city.

Proverbs 16:4<sup>a</sup> says, “The LORD has made everything for its purpose.”

(2) As for the second item—a common language so that people can communicate regardless where they are—why is this important?

There is nothing like the inability to communicate that seriously hampers progress, whether in education, business, or Christian ministry.

(a) If Jesus had come and died for our sins around the time when Malachi died after penning his last messianic prophecy in 430 BC, the Jewish Christians would have been communicating the gospel in Aramaic or Hebrew—two languages spoken by a relatively few people in the world.

It certainly would have hampered the communication of the gospel and the spread of the gospel itself.

(b) But, by the time Jesus comes to earth (that, is “when the time had fully come”), the universal language is koine (that is, common) Greek.

A scholar writes: “The Greek of the N. T. is the language which was commonly used in the Greek-speaking world from the time of Alexander

the Great to about 500 AD . . . God’s written revelation of his Son was given in the language of the people.” (*Essentials of the N. T. Greek*)

- (c) And the Jews did not begin to learn the Greek language until the rise of Alexander the Great whose great empire (332 BC) also annexed Israel.

It is truly ironic that Peter the fisherman, whom his detractors derided as “uneducated” and “common” man (Acts 4:13), could handle three languages, including Greek.

(Remember, Peter wrote his two letters in Greek; in fact, the entire NT was written in Greek.)

Thus, it can be argued as follows:

The arrival of the fullness of time (which would trigger the sending of Jesus into the world) is put on hold until koine Greek would become the universal tongue, so that the message of why Jesus died can be communicated anywhere without hindrance, both orally and written.

Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.”

**Discussion<sup>4</sup>:** If you suffer from thinking of yourself more highly than you ought (Rom. 12:3<sup>a</sup>)—being prideful and arrogant—I have a perfect cure for it. How many languages do you speak? Are you sure you are smarter than Peter the fisherman? What do you think?

- (3) As for strategic places from which the gospel can be launched effectively, it must be recognized that Paul’s favorite place to evangelize, when he was in Asia Minor and Greece, was always the synagogues.

- (a) Consider where Paul first went in new locations during his first (AD 46-48) and second (AD 49-52) missionary trips:

- “At Salamis, they [Paul and Barnabas] proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues” (Acts 13:5).
- [At] “Pisidian Antioch . . . they entered the synagogues” (Acts 13:14).
- “At Iconium Paul . . . went . . . into the Jewish synagogue . . . a number of Jews and Gentiles believed” (Acts 14:1).
- “They came to Thessalonica, where there was Jewish synagogue” (Acts 17:1).
- “On arriving [at Berea], they went to the . . . synagogue. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of . . . Greek women and many Greek men” (Acts 17:10, 12).
- “In Athens . . . he reasoned in the synagogue” (Acts 17:17).
- [In Corinth] “every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue” (Acts 18:4).

(b)The oldest synagogue fragments date from the third century BC.

(c)So, why was there a need to build synagogues in Asia Minor and Greece in the first place?

The need arose after the Jews were taken as exiles to Assyria (722 BC) and Babylonia (586 BC).

Unable to return home, they built synagogues to worship God and read Scriptures (but not offer sacrifices, which can only be done in the temple).

While only the Jews could enter the synagogues, those whom Luke calls “God-fearing Greeks” (Acts 17:4) were allowed to be near the synagogues to hear the message (Acts 17:4).

(d)It is also sobering to realize that amid the sufferings of the exiled Jews, God was working through their sufferings to build structures to effectively spread the gospel many centuries later.

**Pastoral Note:** When we suffer, we should not think that God is not around; in fact, He may be using our sufferings to further His kingdom, if not now then later.

So, it can be reasoned as follows:

The arrival of the fullness of time is put on hold until enough synagogues are built in strategic cities in the Roman Empire so that the message of why Jesus died can easily be told both to the Jews and Gentiles.

**Discussion<sup>5</sup>:** First Chronicles 12:32 says, “Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” We just learned that the incarnation of Jesus took place just at the right time (i.e., “when the fullness of time had come”).

So, what time is it in your life? Do you know what you ought to do? Is it still time to be patient and wait on the Lord, or is it time to move in faith?

### C. The virgin birth

We are now ready to address the very means through which God sent His Son, born of a woman, into the world: the virgin birth.

#### 1. Its importance as a doctrine

The virgin birth of Christ is a crucial doctrine of Christianity because “it is essential to the trustworthiness of the Gospels (Lk. 1:1-4). To give it up would undermine the rest of the Gospels” (Wilkins, 50).

How so? Why is it so important? Allow me to explain it step-by-step.

2. We begin with the preparation for Christ's virgin birth.

- a. In Luke 1:26-38, the annunciation of this miraculous birth is made to Mary (likely in her teens).

(1) When Mary, after being "told that she will be with child and give birth to a son" (Lk. 1:31), asked the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (Lk. 1:34), "the angel answered her,

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God'" (Lk. 1:35).

(a) In verse 34, the word "virgin" is a translation of the Greek phrase, "*andra ou' ginōskō*," which literally means, "I know not a man."

(b) The verb "know" connotes intimate knowledge attained from sexual intercourse. A good cross-reference is Genesis 4:1<sup>a</sup>: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived."

- (2) Consider also Luke 1:46-55. This Mary's hymn of praise (a.k.a., Magnificat: "glories") was sung long before the birth of Jesus.

"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup> for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation."

"<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; <sup>52</sup> he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; <sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup> as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

Note that the phrase, "He . . . has done great things for me", refers not only to being chosen as God's vessel but also to the virgin birth.

- b. The preparation for the virgin birth is followed by the exclamation of Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39-45), who is Mary's cousin as well as the mother of John the Baptist.

(1) Notice that the great miracle of virgin birth is preceded by a smaller miracle of a barren woman giving birth in her old age (much like Sarah—Gn. 18:10-15).

(a) Observe the similarity between these two barren women:

Regarding Elizabeth (and her husband), Luke says, “But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years” (Lk. 1:7).

Regarding Sarah, it is said, “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah” (Gn. 18:11).

(b) Apparently, John the Baptist and Isaac share this in common: foreshadowing the crux of the future ministry of the Messiah.

- John foreshadows that the crux of Jesus’ ministry will be the forgiveness of sins. Mark reports, “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk. 1:4).
- Isaac foreshadows *how* Jesus will forgive sins: through his substitutionary sacrifice for sins on behalf of those who have committed them.

Note that a ram caught in a thicket is sacrificed (Gn. 22:13), thereby substituting for Isaac who, in this moment, represents sinners.

(2) The second announcement of the birth of Christ comes after Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist, the one who would come in the spirit of Elijah to prepare for the way of the Messiah.

After John’s birth, his father Zechariah prays:

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, <sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins” (Lk. 1:76-77).

(a) The truth of the matter is that some Israelites, so impressed by the ministry of John, “were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ” (Lk. 3:15<sup>b</sup>).

(b) But, that question had long been laid to rest from the very beginning:

“When Elizabeth [still pregnant with John] heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’” (Lk. 1:41-45).

Elizabeth does not call her son “Lord”; instead she calls Mary’s son, “My Lord”.



(c) Later, John the Baptist would echo that conviction by declaring to the Israelites, “I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him” (Jn. 3:28<sup>b</sup>).

c. Thirdly, in Matthew 1:18-25, we have the annunciation made to Joseph.

(1) Recall that in ancient Israel, during the one-year betrothal (i.e., engagement) period in which the man and woman are already recognized as husband and wife, the couple does not have sexual intercourse.

So, upon finding out about Mary’s pregnancy, Joseph, “being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly” (Matt. 1:19).

(2) It is at this time that an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream and says:

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20-21).

(a) This important revelation, which clarifies the supernatural birth of Christ, is made at a very critical moment for Joseph whose divorce would have thwarted God’s redemptive plan.

(b) This shows the veracity of Habakkuk 2:3:  
“For the revelation awaits an appointed time.”

(3) Matthew then adds:

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).” (Matt. 1:22-23).

Again, it bears repeating that Matthew is concerned about the legality of Jesus (part of the royal lineage of King David), that he is the long-anticipated Messiah by virtue of having fulfilled all messianic prophecies.

3. So then, what is the implication of the miracle of his birth—a biological mystery?

It means that “Jesus’ humanity was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Spirit and apart from a human father” (Holloman III-6).

This is to say, “Christ assumed his human nature from the substance of his mother” (Berkhof, 1996:334).

This has two major implications.

- a. First, the virgin birth shows how Jesus does not inherit the sinful nature of man by virtue of not having received any biological contribution from his legal father Joseph.

This isn't to suggest that Mary is not a sinner, but the Spirit's role in the birth of Christ provides a warrant for the Lord's sinlessness.

- b. Second, "it gives the only reasonable explanation of the incarnation of God's Son— It is the best explanation showing how the pre-existent God could be a person joined to humanity, not two persons in one" (Wilkins, 50).

#### 4. Finally, consider whether the virgin birth clearly taught in Scripture?

Evidently, the following passages clearly point to it.

- a. Matthew writes: "And Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom [*hes*] Jesus was born, who is called Christ . . . <sup>18</sup>Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:16, 18).

(1)Note that the relative pronoun "whom" derives from the Greek word *hes*, which is the genitive singular *feminine* relative pronoun, and not *hou* which is the genitive singular *masculine*.

(2)Therefore, "whom" in Matthew 1:16 must refer to Mary, not Joseph— meaning, Jesus is of Mary (in a physical sense), and not of Joseph.

- b. Luke also writes: "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary" (Lk. 1:26-27).

The Greek word for "virgin" here is *parthenos*. The *Greek Dictionary of the NT* defines it as, "a maiden; by implication, an unmarried daughter;—virgin."

- c. Before Matthew and Luke wrote about the virgin birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah had declared about 700 years earlier:

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). (And Matthew quotes this verse in Matthew 1:23.)

(1)The Hebrew word for "virgin" here is *almah*, which can also be understood as a maiden (i.e., a young woman).

(2)But the OT consistently uses *almah* to refer to young women who have not had relations with men.

- (a) Consider how Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac, is described:  
 “The young woman was very attractive in appearance,  
 a maiden [*almah*] whom no man had known” (Gn. 24:16).

Rebekah the maiden was a virgin.

- (b) Song of Songs 6:8 says, “There are sixty queens and eighty  
 concubines, and virgins [*almah*] without number.”

Here, “the word *almah* represents those [young women] who are eligible for marriage but are neither wives (queens) nor concubines. These ‘virgins’ all loved the king and longed to be chosen to be with him (to be his bride).” (Vine, 277).

#### 5. Revisiting the matter of the importance of the virgin birth

- a. As alluded earlier, the virgin birth is imperative for Christ to be God-Man—truly man and yet uncontaminated by sin—and God at the same time.

Heb. 2:14<sup>a</sup>: “Since the children have flesh and blood,  
 he too shared in their humanity.”

2 Cor. 5:21<sup>a</sup>: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us . . .”

Heb. 7:26<sup>b</sup>: “. . . one who is holy, blameless, pure,  
 set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”

- b. As for the second reason, recall that the virgin birth  
 fulfills the prophecy regarding the Jechoniah’s curse.

#### 6. Admittedly, the virgin birth has been under attack by the very people who should believe and then teach it: religious leaders and theologians, both past and present.

- a. In the days of Christ, Israel’s religious leaders, not believing the virgin birth of Jesus, insinuated that he was an illegitimate child (Jn. 8:41)—a result of Mary’s fling with a Samaritan man; in fact, they said Jesus was demon-possessed.

One day, “the Jews answered him, ‘Aren’t we right in saying  
 that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?’” (Jn. 8:48).

- b. And for some time now, theological liberals have flat out denied the virgin birth because of their naturalistic worldview: “Miracles are impossible.”

(1) What they have said:

(a) “The virgin birth was created to cover up Jesus’ illegitimacy.”

(b) Whether virgin birth or resurrection really happened is unimportant;  
 “for through these pious legends of the early church we may encounter  
 God and the [transcendent] realities to which these stories point” (Ramm, 30).

(2) The Bible, however, makes it very clear that Jesus is born of a woman, a virgin.

Evidently, “you can find out quite a bit about a person’s belief in the  
 deity of Christ by his [or her] view of the virgin birth” (Wilkins, 50).

**Discussion<sup>6</sup>:** The story of Mary is God favoring a weak and powerless—“You are highly  
 favored! The Lord is with you” (Lk. 1:28 NIV). Ironically, what God allowed to happen in  
 Mary’s life led to a misunderstanding that almost led to a divorce; in other words, things got  
 worse before they got better.

So, how has the Lord shown you the same kind of grace and favor upon you?  
 How have your encounters with the Lord (not necessarily pleasant at first) changed you?

### III. Changes

While *Logos*, that is, Christ, is eternal and everlasting, he undergoes  
 certain changes in his state and position/status upon being incarnated.

#### A. Place of dwelling

Evidently, there is a change in his dwelling place from heaven to earth.

1. Jesus says to large crowds, who were looking to have their stomachs  
 filled with the loaves, as it happened the day before (Jn. 6:26):

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of  
 this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life  
 of the world is my flesh” (Jn. 6:51).

Jesus clearly states that he came down from heaven.

2. Jesus, in his last prayer on the night before the crucifixion, says:  
 “I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now  
 I am leaving the world and going to the Father” (Jn. 16:28).

He came from the Father in order to enter the world.

#### B. So then, what is the meaning of this change of residence?

1. First, it means that Jesus goes from the state of richness to poverty.

The apostle Paul declares, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

- a. The advocates of Prosperity Gospel read materialism into this verse, thereby using this passage to justify their teaching that God wants His children to become financially and materially wealthy. That is incorrect.
- b. Instead, “he was rich” means that Jesus had “equality with God” (Phil. 2:6) in every aspect before the incarnation.

But, during his days on earth, he voluntarily imposed certain restrictions on himself as part of being a full human.

The apostle Paul refers to this as, “[Jesus] made himself nothing” (Phil. 2:7<sup>a</sup>)—meaning, “he became poor” for our sake so that we can be rich, that is, brought closer to God through Christ.

2. What really makes Jesus to go from his richness in heaven to poverty on earth is the change in his glory from heavenly glory to obscurity.

- a. Again, the night before the crucifixion, Jesus prays: “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (Jn. 17:5).

This statement clearly shows that Jesus left behind his glory with the Father in heaven in order to be incarnated. No human can comprehend that loss!

**Pastoral Note:** Have you taken a loss (e.g., financial, relational, career, etc.) in order to serve the Lord? Take heart because Christ knows how you feel and empathizes with you (Heb. 4:15-16).

- b. Furthermore, the apostle John underscores how the world showed total disrespect for Christ, saying, “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him” (John 1:10).

**Discussion<sup>7</sup>:** Can you imagine what this must have been like: voluntarily giving up the riches Christ had to become a literally poor and despised human (Is. 53:3)—so that we can be rescued from the coming wrath of God? What should be our proper response to this Christ? What does the world need to hear from us?

**C. Related to the change in residence and going from rich to poor is the change in Jesus' position and form—from equality with God to servanthood.**

The key passage that amply deals with this matter is Philippians 2:5-8:

“<sup>5</sup> . . . Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied [*kenosis*], himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

1. Christ's emptying of himself—*kenosis* in Greek—at his incarnation involves two things.
  - a. First, it involves “condescension seen in his . . . leaving heaven's glory to take a human nature” (Wilkins, 51).
  - b. Second, it also involves “humiliation seen in his life of suffering leading to and including the cross” (ibid.)
2. So then, how did *kenosis* manifest once Jesus was incarnated on earth?
  - a. First, it led to the temporary suspension of divine prerogatives, including the operation of certain attributes at times.

I will call this “the self-negation of Jesus”.

- b. Second, it also led to taking on human limitations (also, part and parcel of the self-negation of Jesus)

I will refer to this as “the taking on of human limitations”.

These two aspects, while closely related, are not one and the same.

**D. The self-negation of Jesus: the temporary suspension of divine prerogatives**

1. The question is whether Christ underwent changes when he incarnated on earth.
  - a. Notice that based on the following passages, it appears that nothing really changed after Jesus incarnated on earth.
    - (1)The reason “the Jews were seeking all the more to kill [Jesus was] . . . because . . . he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (Jn. 5:18).
    - (2)Jesus himself says, “I and the Father are one” (Jn. 10:30).

(3)The apostle Paul agrees, saying, “For in [Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily . . .” (Col. 2:9).

These passages suggest that the Son and the Father are equal in every sense.

- b. But, if nothing changed after the incarnation, then how are we to understand what Jesus says in John 14:28:

“You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

This sure sounds like the Father is greater than the Son, meaning the Son is not equal to God. This implies that some things indeed changed when Jesus became a human.

## 2. What this verse means and does not mean

- a. First, “the Father is greater than I” does not mean “the creaturely subordination of the Son to the Father . . . [who] was greater in power or in divinity” (Tasker, 1960:173).

- b. But, according to *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Bruce et al.), “the Father is greater than I” could mean two things.

(1)First, it could mean that “the Father exists in heaven in complete power and glory, while Jesus [is] then living on earth in relative humility and obscurity.”

This refers to the temporary self-negation of Jesus.

- (a)Recall what Christ says to the Father the night before the crucifixion: “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (Jn. 17:5).

This prayer indicates that Jesus renounced the glory he shared with the Father to incarnate.

- (b)So, the self-negation of Jesus means that, along with the glory of heaven, the operation of certain attributes was suspended while he remained as a fully man on earth.

- (c)But, the renouncement of glory and the suspension of attributes were temporary, as evidenced in the above prayer in which Jesus fully expected the Father to restore his glory.

(2)Second, it could also mean that in Godhead, the one “designated

‘father’ has greater authority . . . over the one designated ‘son’”<sup>6</sup>  
but only in functional and administrative sense.

Hebrews 5:5, 8 shows this clearly: “Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by [God the Father] . . . Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”

This refers to the Son accepting the will of the Father—the appointment to the high priesthood in which Christ himself would become the propitiation for our sins— amid his desire for this the cup of suffering to pass from him (Matt. 26:39).

c. I believe both views have biblical merits. Having said that, allow me to explain the view of the temporary self-abnegation of Jesus in two ways:

- One: The suspension of divine prerogatives to be a human
- Two: The limitations the *Logos* took on to be a human

3. The self-negation of Jesus:

the voluntary suspension of divine prerogatives to be a human

a. In a nutshell, this view upholds the following understanding:

(1) Jesus voluntarily suspends certain divine attributes to come in the flesh (e.g., omniscience)—thereby, making the Father greater than the Son while he was on earth.

(2) But Jesus never relinquishes his divine essence—thereby, always maintaining equality with the Father.

b. This view bears out in the Greek when “the Father is greater than I” of John 14:28<sup>b</sup> is contrasted with Jesus is “made so much better than the angels” of Hebrews 1:4<sup>b</sup> (KJV).

(1) In John’s passage, the Greek word *meizōn* is translated as “greater” while in the Hebrews’ passage, the Greek word *kreittōn* is rendered as “better.”

(2) Based on this the renowned cult expert Walter Martin (in response to the Jehovah’s Witnesses who believe in a created Jesus inferior to Jehovah):

“In [John 14], as the Son of man who had emptied himself of his prerogatives of deity (Phil 2:8–11), and taken upon himself the form of a slave, the Lord Jesus Christ could truthfully say, ‘My Father is greater than I,’ greater being a *quantitative* term descriptive of *position*” (Martin and Klann 1981:163).

c. So, this is what Paul means when he declares, “Though [Jesus] was in the

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce et al., *Hard Sayings*, 504.



form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Phil. 2:6).

(1) Here the Greek word for “grasp”, *harpagmon*, means to utilize what you already have, to appropriate or use (Forster).

(2) Therefore, Philippians 2:6 means that Christ didn’t utilize the divinity which he already had—that is to say, he voluntarily suspended it.

c. But, doesn’t that make Jesus less than God the Father?

That is to ask, does the word ‘form’ (“though he was in the form of God”) mean the essence of the glory of God?

If that is the case, this verse could mean that Christ changed his essence. Or else, it could mean that the nature (state) of man was added to Jesus.

(1) According to theologian Berkhof, “the incarnation does not mean that *Logos* [i.e., Jesus] ceased to be what he was before. As to his essential being, the *Logos* was exactly the same before and after the incarnation” (Berkhof, 1996:334).

(2) That the divine nature of Jesus remained the same as that of the Father even after the incarnation is very clear when comparing “the Father is greater than I” (Jn. 14:28<sup>b</sup>) with Jesus is “made so much better [*kreittōn*] than the angels” of Hebrews 1:4<sup>b</sup> (KJV).

“In the first chapter of Hebrews . . . the comparison made there between the Lord Jesus Christ and angels is clearly one of nature. The Greek *kreittōn* being a term descriptive of quality; Christ [like God the Father] was *qualitatively* better than the angels because he was their Creator (Col 1:16–17), and as such, he existed before all things . . .” (Martin and Klann 1981:163).

(a) But *kreittōn* is not used when saying “the Father is greater than the Son, as if the Father is qualitatively better and essentially superior than the Son.

(b) Both the Father and the Son are qualitatively and essentially greater and superior than angels; and the Son, even after his incarnation, remained equal to God in his qualitative essence.

(2) Therefore, “though [Jesus] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” means that Jesus simply “acquired an additional form, without in any way changing his original nature” (Berkhof, 334).

d. But Jesus took back all his glory and attributes and authority once he resurrected and/or returned to heaven to resume his place “at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55).

Recall what Jesus said just before his ascension:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:18<sup>b</sup>).

That is why the disciples “would have rejoiced, because [Christ was] going to the Father” (John 14:28<sup>b</sup>) to reclaim all that he had temporarily given up for our sake.

4. Now, let’s investigate the self-negation of Jesus in terms of the limitations he added on to himself when becoming a man.

The focus here is not on divine prerogatives that Jesus voluntarily renounced for a time, but human limitations that he voluntarily took on.

- a. First, Jesus chooses not to exercise his divine prerogative (but not always)—his power and authority—on of account his full humanity.

(1) For instance, Jesus tells Peter, who tries to fend off with his sword those who came to arrest Christ, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53)?

Jesus could have called for help to save himself, but he didn’t because that would have jeopardized the Father’s plan to redeem sinners through the Son.

(2) It is evident that Jesus suspends his omnipresence while on earth as well; that is to say, Jesus is not physically present in more than one place at the same time.

(3) We also see that his omniscience is not always utilized, for Christ chooses not to know when he would return, saying:

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mk. 13:32).

But, at times Jesus does exercise his omniscience while on earth:

(a) Like when he tells Peter to throw out his line to catch a fish that had a four-drachma coin in its mouth to pay tax (Matt. 17:27).

(b) Jesus knew, without having to ask the Samaritan woman, that she “had five husbands, and the man [she] now ha[d was] not [her] husband” (Jn. 4:18<sup>b</sup>).

- b. Second, Jesus, being fully human, assumed all of its limitations—meaning, Christ was subject to hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (Jn. 4:7), fatigue (Jn. 4:6), etc. (further discussed later).

5. Why did Christ do this to himself?

- a. He did it so that he could perfectly experience the nature of the unglorified humanity which he assumed.

The Hebrews writer says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

- b. Truth be told, Jesus, being omniscient, knows what it is to be a human without ever becoming one; but his incarnation does bolster our ability to trust him, that he can empathize with our ordeals because he underwent the same human experiences.

6. Be that as it may, it is important to be reminded of the following:

- a. There were some attributes Jesus never gave up while on earth, such as:

- (1) Holiness (remained sinless)

- (2) Love (as depicted in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

- (3) Justice (as seen through throwing out the money changers from the temple)

- (4) Immutability (Heb. 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”), etc.

- b. The incarnation does not entail a qualitative or essential inferiority of the Son to the Father but administrative or functional subordination.

**Discussion<sup>8</sup>:** What are some key points about the incarnation of Christ that really touch your heart? What are some areas of your life that can greatly improve as a result of taking the incarnation of Christ more seriously and personally?

**Homework 4**

1. Define the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
2. Discuss the various aspects to the incarnation involving the Trinity.
3. Explain the difference between the genealogy of Matthew and the genealogy of Luke.
4. What constituted the fullness of time when it was deemed right to send Jesus to earth (Gal. 4:4)?
5. What are the two reasons the virgin birth is so important?
6. Explain why the most opt translation for the Hebrew word *almah* (Is. 7:14) is virgin.
7. What does it mean that Jesus gave up his riches to became poor for our sake (2 Cor. 8:9)?
8. In what sense was the Father greater than Jesus while he was on earth (Jn. 14:28)?
9. Explain the temporary self-negation of Jesus in his incarnation with respect to the suspension of his divine prerogatives.
10. Explain the temporary self-negation of Jesus in his incarnation with respect to adding on the limitations of humanity.

## Chapter 5 The Perfect Humanity of Christ

“Christ was fully identified with true humanity. He had no sin nature, but possession of a sin nature is not essential to genuine human nature. Actually, sin is an abnormality which has entered the human race through the transgression of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were certainly fully human in their pre-fall state. Because Christ is true and sinless man on one hand and undiminished deity on the other hand, he was able to act as the perfect savior from sin (Jn. 1:1, 14; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25-26).

In contemporary theology, there is little opposition to the belief in Christ’s real humanity, although sometimes the sinfulness of his humanity is denied. Frequently, his humanity has received such overemphasis that his full deity has either been underemphasized or denied altogether” (Holloman, III-14).

### I. The Humanity of Christ

Jesus was a perfectly normal human being.

- As such, his growth as a human should not be thought of as aided by his deity but as a result of normal human development consisting of various stages, physical and otherwise.
- But the fact that sin was absent in Jesus, both by nature and in deed, certainly contributed to the most ideal human development in history on the part of Christ.

#### A. For starters, as pointed out in the previous chapter, Jesus had a human lineage.

1. He was a descendant of King David.

Rom. 1:3<sup>b</sup>: “Concerning his Son, who was descended from David”

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the designation “Son of David” refers to Jesus as the legal, royal and ultimate successor to the throne of David. Jesus is to be the last and the greatest king of Israel.

2. Further up in the genealogical tree is found another famous ancestor of Jesus: Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish race (Jn. 8:39).

Matt. 1:1: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

- a. Obviously, Jesus being the Son of Abraham points to the Hebrew heritage of Jesus.
- b. Even more important is the fact that Jesus is the seed promised to Abraham through which God would justify the nations.

Gal. 1:16, 8: <sup>16</sup> Now the promises were made to Abraham and to

his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.

<sup>8</sup> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

(1) Indeed, the promise made to Abraham wasn’t only for the Jews since God made this promise (Gn. 12:3) before Abraham became a Jew (referring to his circumcision occurring in Genesis 17).

(2) So, how does one become a son of Abraham? Paul says, “Know then that it is those of faith [in the Son of Abraham] who are the sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:8).

c. The title that really underscores Christ’s humanity is “Son of Man.”

(1) And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:23).

This declaration by Jesus underscores how the Son of Man “made himself nothing” when he took “human likeness” (Phil. 2:7) in his incarnation.

(2) On other occasion, “Jesus says, ‘For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’” (Mk. 10:45).

This statement by Jesus points to how the Son of Man took “the very nature of a servant” (Phil. 2:7) in his incarnation to save the lost.

(3) Finally, the title of Son of Man shows that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.

(a) Around the sixth century BC, the prophet Daniel wrote: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom . . .” (Dan. 7:13-14<sup>a</sup>).

Here, we see that a son of man is given a powerful and glorious kingdom.

(b) This is fulfilled in Christ, for he says: “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:28).

## **B. Now, Jesus underwent all stages of human development without exception.**

1. First: Unlike Adam who began his life as an adult, Jesus was conceived in a woman’s womb and was born into this world as a baby.

The baby Jesus partook of real flesh and blood.

Heb. 2:14<sup>a</sup>: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things . . .”

2. Second: He then proceeded to grow and mature in all aspects of human life.

After the child Jesus returned home following his purification rite performed at the temple in Jerusalem (at 40 days after the birth), Luke says:

“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him” (Lk. 2:40).

Around the time Jesus was twelve years old, Luke says this about Jesus: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Lk. 2:52).

- a. This shows that Jesus grew physically (“strong”, “increase in stature”).
- b. Jesus also grew intellectually as well (“filled with wisdom”).

(1) Jesus probably received elementary education given at synagogues.

(2) Evidently, Jesus did not attend the Rabbinical school as did Paul.

The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied? (Jn. 7:15).

(3) Then, where did Jesus get this education?

Based on these two scriptures:

“And [the twelve-year-old Jesus] went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them” (Lk. 2:51).

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read” (Lk. 4:17).

we can speculate that:

(a) He learned from his godly parents.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

(b) Evidently, Jesus regularly attended synagogue services where he would have learned from the rabbis.

(c) As a Jewish man, he would have gone to the temple three times year to keep special religious celebrations like the Feast of the Tabernacles and Passover.

(d) And of course, Jesus would have studied the Scripture on his own.

**Pastoral Note:** It is never too late to share faith with our kids, even grown-up children—but always with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). It broke my heart when my recently deceased uncle said to me, after I told him to share his faith with his grown-up children who do not believe, “I can’t because I made so many mistakes.” After the funeral, I shared that story with my cousins, telling them, “If you want to see your dad again, believe Jesus.”

c. Jesus grew spiritually (“favor with God”)

Evidently, he built a routine of regularly seeking the Lord.

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (Mk. 1:35).

d. Jesus grew socially (“favor with man”).

(1) “All spoke well of [Jesus] and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth” (Lk. 4:22<sup>a</sup>).

(2) But, these same people would turn on Jesus once he taught things they disliked; in fact, right after marveling at Jesus, they got so offended at him for pointing out how God had bypassed the Jews to bless the Gentiles, they attempted to “throw him down the cliff” (Lk. 4:28-29).

**Discussion<sup>1</sup>:** Are you growing spiritually? What does that even mean? Can growth take place without the proper intake of nutrients geared toward development (along with doing exercise)? What are you doing to grow spiritually, intellectually and socially?

### **C. The fact that Jesus was a normal human being is attested by the fact that he had a soul and spirit.**

1. Jesus, agonizing over his impending crucifixion, enlists the prayer of his disciples, saying, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”

The Greek word for “soul” is *psuchē* from which get the word psychology.

2. A day later, his death on the cross is described in the following way:  
“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit” (Matt. 27:50).

a. The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*.

b. When *pneuma* refers to the Holy Spirit, the first letter in the word “spirit” is capitalized (“Spirit”); but when it refers to



the human spirit, it is written in small caps—"spirit."

- c. Here, "spirit" is in small caps, referring to the spirit of man in Jesus.

#### **D. Instances when Christ's humanity is clearly seen**

It was said earlier that since Jesus is omniscient ("for he knew all men"—Jn. 2:24b), he does not have to become a human in order to know what it is to be a human.

(By the way, the main reason Christ became a human was so that he can "[bear] our sins in his body . . . so that we might die to sins"—1 Pet. 2:24).

Now, it is great to have eternal life in Christ once we die; but in the meantime, the life on earth can still be difficult and dangerous.

So, we need a stronger entity to lean on, trusting that this individual is able and willing to understand and emphasize with our pain and suffering.

And because Scripture clearly shows a Jesus "who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15<sup>b</sup>), we can have the confidence that he is "[able] to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15<sup>a</sup>).

"For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

So, let's look at instances in which Jesus showed his true humanity.

1. First, consider Jesus' humanity shown through his physical needs (i.e., limitations).

- a. He felt hunger like a normal human being.

For instance, one "morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry.<sup>19</sup> And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves" (Matt. 21:18-19<sup>a</sup>).

- b. He experienced thirst like a normal person.

Hanging on the cross, "Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst'" (Jn. 19:28).

- c. He experienced fatigue and tiredness.

Once, Jesus was so tired that he didn't wake up from what probably was a deep sleep when a great storm was about to capsize the boat he was in.

Matthew writes, “And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep” (Matt. 8:24).

After a long walk from “the Judean countryside” (Jn. 3:22) to Samaria, “Jesus . . . [became] wearied . . . from his journey (Jn. 4:6).

- d. And, of course, he felt the pain from every blow to his body and piercing of his hands and legs.

Matthew records that “they spit on [Jesus] and took the reed and struck him on the head” (Matt. 27:30).

## 2. Second, we now consider Jesus’ humanity shown through varying human emotions.

- a. Like every human being who ever lived, Jesus felt sad over a number of things to the point of weeping.

(1) He wept over the unrepentant Israelites, symbolized by Jerusalem, and the impending judgment against them.

Luke notes that “as [Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said . . . ‘[t]he days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side’” (Lk. 19:41, 43 NIV).

(2) He wept over the death of his friend Lazarus and people’s persistent unbelief. The shortest verse in the Bible says, “Jesus wept” (Jn. 11:35).

(3) He wept for himself when he agonized over the upcoming crucifixion.

The Hebrews writer states: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and *tears*, to him who was able to save him from death . . .” (Heb. 5:7<sup>a</sup>).

- b. At the opposite end of the spectrum from sadness, he felt righteous anger when seeing injustice.

(1) Mark says that Jesus “looked around at” those who objected to him healing the sick on the sabbath “with anger [and] grieved at their hardness of heart” (Mk. 3:5).

(2) We see a full expression of Jesus’ anger when he threw out the money changers, who turned his “Father’s house into a market” (Jn. 2:16<sup>b</sup>), from the temple.

- c. He was even troubled in his spirit.

Facing the cross the next day, Jesus “began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death’” (Matt. 26:26b-27a).

- d. Jesus also expressed his disappointment when his men failed to support him in prayer at the moment of facing his greatest trial.

“He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, ‘So, could you not watch with me one hour?’” (Matt. 26:40).

- e. As a teacher of God’s word, Jesus felt frustrated when his pupils showed that they still had not grasped the lessons he had taught them repeatedly.

(1) On the night of the crucifixion, “Philip said to [Jesus], ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’”<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? (Jn. 14:8-9).

(2) Jesus often said to his disciples, “You of little faith” (Matt. 14:31<sup>b</sup>), “Are you so dull” (Mk. 7:18<sup>a</sup>), “How foolish you are” (Lk. 24:25<sup>a</sup>), etc.

Yes, Jesus knows the frustrations of those who teach God’s word without seeing much results or changes.

**Pastoral Note:** One way to deal with the frustration of not seeing much fruits is to pray through Psalm 126:5-6: “Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. <sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.”

- e. Of course, he felt compassion.  
For instance, “when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

**Discussion<sup>2</sup>:** Can you identify with any one of these emotions Jesus felt while he was on earth? What are you going through at the moment? How would you articulate your emotion to the Lord? “Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

- 3. Third, we also need to note that Jesus faced many temptations, the kinds we face in our daily lives.

- a. Before proceeding, it is important to note two things:

(1) Jesus was tempted in his humanity but not in his divinity.

This assertion is based on James 1:13<sup>a</sup> that says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil . . .”

- (a) Thus, the temptations that Jesus faced on earth could not have been experienced in his divinity but only in his humanity.

How the two natures of Christ worked out in this fashion with respect to being tempted remains as a mystery to our finite mind.

- (b) Nevertheless, Jesus, as a normal human being yet without sin, was still capable of yielding to temptations.

Recall that the sinless Adam, whose creation by God elicited him to say, “It was very good” (Gn. 1:31<sup>b</sup>), sinned initially without the deleterious influence of sinful nature.

This indicates that:

- First, for a sinless person it is *possible* not to sin.
- Second, the sinless human nature can be tempted.
- A sinless person can yield to temptations and sin.

By the way, for everyone who ever lived after Adam, having been born with an inherent sinful nature (Jer. 17:9<sup>a</sup>: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick”), it is impossible not to sin (Rom. 3:23).

- (2) The second thing that needs to be noted is this:  
Being tempted is not a sin but giving into it, is.

Consider James 1:14-15: “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup>Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

- (a) It appears that going from “[one’s] own desire [i.e., being tempted] to “giving birth to sin” occurs when one begins to plot to turn the desire into reality.
- (b) For instance, Jesus taught, “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

This appears to be saying that looking at a woman (happenstance or physical reflex) is not a sin but looking at her lustfully (intention added) is.

Now, let’s look into actual temptations Jesus faced during his earthly existence.

- b. The most significant temptations Jesus faced were the three that he countered directly from the devil at the conclusion of his 40-day fast.

- (1) The first of these doesn't seem much of a temptation. What is so wrong with turning stones to become bread, especially when you haven't eaten for 40 days?

This is the temptation of using what is legitimate power to get things that *that* power is not meant to be used to get them.

This is the first step toward the abuse of power that, in the end, serves one's own self-interest.

- (a) More importantly, if Jesus had given into the devil's dare, it would have rendered Jesus' death useless to atone for our sins since he would have become a slave to the devil, like the rest of the world (1 Jn. 5:19).

The apostle Peter states that "people are slaves to whatever has mastered them" (2 Pet. 2:19<sup>b</sup> NIV).

- (b) Jesus fends off this temptation with a reminder that he is serving God's interest, and not his own: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4).

- (c) This is to say, while turning stones to become bread (however illegitimately) appeals to a hungry person (whether physical, financial or relational), the way to overcome that is to find satisfaction in God's word so that *that* person can complete the work of God assigned to him.

- (2) The second temptation is the temptation of "boasting . . . what he has and does" (1 Jn. 2:16<sup>b</sup> NIV).

Matt. 4:5-6: "Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup>and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

- (a) Certainly, the Father would have called on His angels to rescue Jesus before he hit bottom, and it would have been impressive if that happened.

- (b) But, Jesus, instead of seeing this as an opportunity to demonstrate his importance before the world, saw it as testing God, saying, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt. 4:7<sup>b</sup>).

- (c) So, to overcome this type of temptation, the desire to show our self-importance to the world needs to be curbed; and to do that, we must be mindful of how self-aggrandizement affect our effectiveness to serve God's interest on earth.

(3)The third temptation is the temptation of taking a short-cut to accomplish the objective, only to find at the end that the stated objective has not been realized.

(a)The stated objective of Jesus is to rescue the kingdoms of the world “from the dominion of darkness and [bring them] into the kingdom of the Son” (Col. 1:13). And dying on the cross for the sins of world is his chosen method because there is no other way to realize the objective.

(b)But, the devil presents an alternative, a short-cut that would preclude a painful death on the cross.

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:8-9).

(c)Jesus overcomes this temptation by recognizing that heeding the devil’s alternative (or any method not approved by God), however attractive and efficient, is actually serving his own end (“my will”), and not God’s.

So, Jesus says the enemy, ““Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (Matt. 4:10<sup>b</sup>).

c. Besides these three major temptations, Jesus faced other temptations with which we can all identify.

For instance, Jesus was greatly misunderstood by his own family who, at first, didn’t accept his ministry at all. And his pure motive was questioned by them.

The temptation, therefore, was to reject or distance himself from the family; Jesus didn’t do that. And later, all or some of them—James and Jude—became believers.

(1)For instance, “when [Jesus’] family heard [about his growing ministry], they went out to seize him, for they were saying, ‘He is out of his mind’” (Mk. 3:21).

Apparently, Jesus’ family thought that he was crazy!

**Pastoral Note:** Has this ever happened to you? Your family thinks that you are a basket case. But, when push comes to shove, we must ultimately choose God’s will over ours, or that of our parents. You really need to lean hard on Jesus who certainly knows what this is all about.

(2)Questioning the motive of Jesus, “his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea . . . for no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.’ For not even his brothers believed in him” (Jn. 7:4-5).

This is to say, Jesus’ half-brothers thought that Jesus was into self-seeking.

- d. Jesus was doubted by his closest ally, but he kept himself from being discouraged while maintaining his support of the friend.

Of all people, John the Baptist, when he was imprisoned, began to question whether Christ is the real Messiah.

The men sent by John asked Jesus, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’” (Lk. 7:20).

(1) In response, Jesus “answered them, ‘Go and tell John . . . the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>23</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me’” (Lk. 7:22-23).

(2) But despite John’s doubt about Jesus, his support of John never wavered, for Jesus immediately said, “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John” (Lk. 7:28<sup>a</sup>).

- e. Even worse than doubted by an ally, Jesus was betrayed by a friend. But, instead of giving into the temptation of bitterness and victim mentality, Jesus continued to love his friend-turned-traitor.

When Judas “came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” . . . and kissed him[,] Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do” (Matt. 26:49-50).

- f. Jesus was also rejected and abandoned by the very disciples whom he had invested himself for 3½ years.

Most people facing that kind of situation would be tempted to reject them as well. Jesus, too, may have been tempted but he didn’t yield to it since he didn’t abandon them.

The angel tells the woman at the tomb to tell those who had abandoned the Lord prior to the crucifixion, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you” (Mk. 16:7).

**Pastoral Note:** I am sure Peter was so glad to hear that Jesus wanted to see him after what he did to the Lord. Peter probably felt even more grateful that Jesus singled him out to ensure that Peter knew that the Lord wanted to see him. Now, that’s unconditional love!

- g. Jesus was unfairly discredited by the leaders of society (his peers, if you will). But, instead of running away from them, he confronted them with firm words.

Once, “when the Pharisees heard [about Jesus healing a demonized person], they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons’” (Matt. 12:24),

Jesus, instead of hiding from or arguing with them, firmly responded, saying:

“... if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:26-28).

In short, the Lord stood his ground, fighting deception with truth and logic.

- h. He was greatly concerned about what will happen to his mother Mary after his death. But, Jesus didn’t let this concern interfere with doing the will of the Father.

The apostle John writes, “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home” (Jn. 19:26-27).



It is speculated that when John escaped to Ephesus when the Roman Empire invaded Jerusalem in 70 AD, he took Mary with her. In fact, there is a shrine dedicated to Mary in Ephesus today.

- i. And as we already saw, Jesus could have used his power to avoid crucifixion by calling on twelve legions of angels to intervene but restrained himself from doing so.

#### **D. How long is Christ man as well as God (a.k.a., God-Man)?**

We learned that before the incarnation, Jesus was the eternal *Logos* who existed before anything began; and after the incarnation, a perfect humanity was added onto *Logos*.

- 1. So, did Christ return to being *Logos* without the flesh after returning to heaven?

For the correct response, consider these verses:

- a. Right after Jesus ascended to heaven, the angels said to the onlookers, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10 NIV).

The fact that Christ can be seen in his second coming



indicates that he is still enfleshed (with a glorified body).

- b. Deacon Stephen, as he was being martyred at the hands of the Jews, had a vision of which he says, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56).

Note that even after returning to heaven, Christ remained as the Son of Man.

- 2. Scripturally speaking, then, it is evident that Jesus is God-Man forever.

**Discussion<sup>3</sup>:** Can you identify with any one of these temptations Jesus may have faced while he was on earth? What temptation are you facing at the present moment? How would you articulate your prayer to the Lord to enlist his help in overcoming this temptation?

## Homework 5

1. Explain the importance of the human lineage of Christ as the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the Son of Man.
2. Explain how Christ demonstrated his true humanity by experiencing physical limitations.
3. Explain how Christ demonstrated his true humanity through the display of his emotions.
4. Explain how Christ can help those who are being tempted.
5. Summarize the nature of the three temptations Christ faced from the devil and how he overcame them.
6. Explain the difference between being tempted and giving into temptation. In light of your answer, was the temptations Jesus faced real or abstractive?

## Chapter 6 The Deity of Christ and Its Necessity for His Redemptive Work

We already discussed the divine nature, that is, the deity of Christ in chapter 2. In this chapter, we focus on the necessity of his divine nature and how that is so pivotal to the successful execution of God's redemptive plan for the world for which Jesus was sent by the Father.

Before proceeding, note that Christ comes to earth in the capacity of prophet, priest and king.

- Obviously, there had been many prophets, priests and kings who preceded Christ—none of whom was divine and devoid of a sinful nature.
- But, because Christ is to be the ultimate prophet, priest and king—meaning, no one will succeed him—this raises the bar of the requirement for these three offices.

One simple requirement is this: Inasmuch as acceptable sacrifices in the OT had to be “animals . . . without defect” (Ex. 12:5<sup>b</sup>), the ultimate prophet, priest and king had to be “without sin” (Heb. 4:15<sup>b</sup>).

- The question, then, is, “Is there anyone among humans who is without sin? If not, then, where can such individual be found on this side of heaven?”

### I. Only a God-Man Can Do What Jesus Set out to Accomplish as the Ultimate Prophet

Although Jesus is more than a prophet, he, nonetheless, does identify himself as a prophet.

#### A. Testimonies indicating Jesus as a prophet

1. First, the key testimonies pointing to Jesus as a prophet come from Jesus himself.

- a. In response to a cool reception of his hometown people toward his ministry, Jesus says, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household” (Matt. 13:57<sup>b</sup>).
- b. Furthermore, Jesus places himself along the lines of the prophet Jonah while, at the same time, distinguishes himself from Jonah as being greater than him.

He says, “For just as [the prophet Jonah—Matt. 12:39] was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:40-41).

So, in what sense is the prophet Jesus great than the OT prophets such as Jonah?

2. Second, many Israelites certainly see Jesus as a prophet.

- a. With respect to the identity of Jesus, Matthew notes that “some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Matt. 16:14).
- b. And in time, that’s what most Israelites thought of Jesus, for “the crowds said, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee’” (Matt. 21:11).

**B. So then, what separates Jesus the prophet from other prophets?**

1. We begin with this question: What is the primary role of the OT prophets?
  - a. These are a select group of people through whom God progressively reveals Himself—His law and will—to the Israelites.
  - b. So, the prologue of “thus says the Lord” is followed God’s direction revelation imparted through the mouth of the prophet that became Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20-21).
2. So, how is the prophet Jesus different from the way these OT prophets revealed God’s will to the people?
  - a. The major difference is this: Jesus doesn’t simply impart revelation from the Father as the OT prophets did; rather, he himself is the revelation of the Father in the flesh.
    - (1) Thus, Jesus says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9<sup>b</sup>); “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn. 14:10<sup>b</sup>).
    - (2) Therefore, John the apostle can confidently assert, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known” (Jn. 1:18).
  - b. In Jesus, all prior revelations are fulfilled—he is “the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through” Jesus who perfectly reveals the Father to the world because the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son.
3. Therefore, the prophet Jesus is greater than all the OT prophets, including Jonah.

**C. What then is the requirement for the ultimate prophet who perfectly embodies, and therefore, reveals God Himself to the world?**

1. Given that “no one can see [God] and live” (Ex. 33:20<sup>b</sup>)
 

—until we are in heaven where “nothing impure will ever enter it” (Rev. 21:27) and since no human is sinless and holy on this side of heaven—

the only one who can perfectly reveal God Himself to the world is “one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners” (Heb. 7:26<sup>b</sup>).

2. “Jesus Christ, . . . God the One and Only” (Jn. 1:17<sup>b</sup>, 18<sup>a</sup>), in whom no sin is found, is the only one who qualifies.

But, as long as he stays “at the Father’s side” (Jn. 1:18<sup>b</sup>), thereby not be in the world, he cannot assume the role of the ultimate prophet, priest and king here on earth.

3. But, because Jesus is incarnated, becoming a sinless God-Man through the virgin birth, he is able and has become the ultimate prophet, priest and king on earth.

**Discussion<sup>1</sup>:** The apostle Paul says that the believers are “a letter from Christ . . . , written not with ink but with Spirit of the living God . . . read by everybody” (2 Cor. 3:3<sup>a</sup>, 2<sup>b</sup>). In view of that, what similarity exists between how Jesus revealed the Father to the world and how we ought to do it? When the world reads you, what message is being imparted to them?

## II. Only a God-Man Can Do What Jesus Set out to Accomplish as the Ultimate High Priest

This discussion begins with the biblical concept of mediator since it is a crucial component to priesthood: a go-between who attempts to negotiate a settlement amid contending parties.

### A. First, Jesus comes to be the mediator between God the Father and sinners.

The apostle Paul states: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

1. Again, a holy God cannot deal directly with unholy sinners without “put[ting them] to death” (Ex. 19:12<sup>b</sup>), because God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5<sup>b</sup>)—meaning, the presence of light triggers the absence of darkness.

That is to say, instead of fellowship between God and man, “the wrath of God remains on him” (Jn. 3:36<sup>b</sup>).

- a. Furthermore, John says that “the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (Jn. 1:5 NASB)—meaning, it is useless for God to speak to sinners unless someone, a mediator, intervenes to make Him and His truth be known.
  - b. This mediator, thus, needs to be holy—sinless—to be in the “same room” with God; simultaneously, this mediator needs to be a man to communicate with men.
2. That mediator is Jesus, of whom the apostle John says: “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (Jn. 1:18).

Accordingly:

- a. First, Jesus is God, meaning he is sinless.

- b. Second, Jesus, therefore, can be at the Father's side to hear His voice, unlike sinners who cannot.

Jesus says, "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen . . ." (Jn. 5:37).

On the contrary, Jesus, the Son of God, has heard from and seen the Father.

- c. Third, because Jesus became incarnate, that is, became a God-man, "we have heard seen and heard" (1 Jn. 1:3) the testimony of Jesus about the Father; as a result, "from now on, [we] do know [the Father] and have seen Him" (Jn. 14:7).

Now, we need to tie the concept of mediator to the high priesthood.

**B. Not only is Jesus the mediator between God and men, he is the high priest whose ministry surpasses the previous priesthood.**

Note that a priest is someone who represents God to men and men to God.

1. In the OT era, Aaron's descendants performed the duties of the high priesthood, the most important task being representing the people in the Holy of Holies once a year to atone for their sins with animal blood.
  - a. But, the priests in the Aaronic priesthood have three major weaknesses.
    - (1)First, "death prevented them from continuing in the office" (Heb. 7:23<sup>b</sup>).
    - (2)Second, because the high priests are also sinners, they "need to offer sacrifices . . . first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people" (Heb. 7:27).
    - (3)Third, their animal "sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).
  - b. In view of this, a better priesthood is needed to bring about a permanent forgiveness of sin.
    - (1)The only one qualifying for this priesthood is someone who is sinless, lives forever and has a sacrifice whose efficacy is permanent.
    - (2)Such person is not found among men, "for all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23<sup>a</sup>); and no such permanent sacrifice is found among what men possess or have invented.
    - (3)This is why Jesus cannot just be a good man but divine as well.
  - c. The Scripture declares that Jesus the God-Man meets all three criteria.

- (1) First, “[Jesus the God-Man] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever” (Heb. 7:24).
- (2) “[Jesus the God-Man] has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7:27).
- (3) “When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God . . . <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:12, 14).

This is to say, Jesus is not like Aaronic priests who mediated a temporary peace settlement between a holy God and unholy sinners with the blood of someone else;

rather, he became the mediation itself when “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

- d. And Jesus the God-Man, as the mediator between God and men, and as the high priest who represents God to men and men to God, continues to carry on the work of the mediator and priest at the present moment.

John writes, “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:2).

**C. Finally, Jesus is the final king who, as the legal heir to the throne of David, comes to fulfill the promise made to David.**

1. Here, it is important to note that Jesus did not come into the world simply to become the king of a small nation of Israel.
  - a. Ultimately, the kingdom promised to David—a “kingdom [that] “will endure forever” (2 Sam. 7:16<sup>b</sup>)—is the Kingdom of God.
  - b. Prior to the second coming of Christ that will usher in the eternal state (Matt. 25:34), the Kingdom of God on earth is spiritual in nature.

Jesus says, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, <sup>21</sup> nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Lk. 17:20<sup>b</sup>-21).

- c. So, what is the objective of Jesus who comes into the world to reign in the spiritual Kingdom of God?

- a. As a matter of speaking, a king is really no king unless he has subjects in his kingdom who are ruled by the king.
- b. So, Jesus comes into the world to “rescue [those who . . . were held in slavery—(Heb. 2:15)] “from the dominion of darkness and [bring them] into the kingdom of the Son . . . in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

Those who are rescued from the dominion of darkness become the subjects of Christ’s (spiritual) kingdom who are then ruled by King Jesus.

2. Here, the concepts of redemption and ransom go hand in hand.

- a. The two related Greek words that fully capture the meaning of “redemption” are:

(1)*Agorazō*—meaning, “to pay the ransom price” (Holloman, III-32).

1 Cor. 6:20: “for you were bought [*agorazō*] with a price.  
So glorify God in your body.”

(2)*Exagorazō*—meaning, “to remove from the market place (i.e., the slave market).”

- b. Based on these two words, it can be said that ransom refers to an apt payment needed to secure the release of those who are kidnapped or enslaved.

So, to whom is this ransom owed?

(1)Primarily, the ransom refers to “the righteous requirements of the law” (Rom. 8:4), exacted by God who, as “a righteous judge” (Ps. 7:11), requires that the penalty of sin is paid for by death, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

(2)Secondarily, it also refers to “the written code [law]. . . that was against us and that stood opposed to us” (Col. 2:14) through which the devil “accuses [the believers] before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10<sup>b</sup>).

- c. For this transition to take place (“being rescued from the dominion of darkness and [be] brought . . . into the kingdom of the Son”—Col. 1:13), Jesus, as the king, must pay the ransom to redeem those who are held in slavery by the enemy (Heb. 2:14).

As Colossians 1:14 notes, only those who are redeemed—thereby, whose sins are forgiven—can be brought into the kingdom of the Son; but without satisfying the righteous requirement of the law and the ransom demand nothing changes.

3. Henceforth, Jesus the king offers himself as the once-and-for-all redemptive sacrifice to bear the wrath of God and as the right “ransom for all men” (1 Tim. 2:5<sup>b</sup>) to “rescue [them] from the dominion of darkness” (Col. 1:13<sup>b</sup>).



4. So, in what sense is Jesus the king uniquely qualified to set sinners free from the kingdom of darkness?

- a. A sinner can redeem himself by paying for the penalty of his sin with his own eternal death (Rom. 6:23<sup>a</sup>: “the wages of sin is death”), but his death does not benefit others—meaning, it cannot offer a way of escape for other sinners.

A psalmist says: “Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,<sup>8</sup> for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,<sup>9</sup> that he should live on forever and never see the pit” (Ps. 49:7-9).

As mentioned earlier, this eliminates all humanity since all have sinned.

- b. But, only a God-Man can be the perfect redemptive sacrifice to forgive our sins because only he is sinless, and his incarnation enables him to “[bear] our sins in his body . . . so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24<sup>a</sup>).

Jesus Christ is that God-Man who is uniquely qualified to liberate sinners.

5. The ransom payment also covers for the OT saints.

- a. So, where did Jesus go after dying on the cross?

Several churches (particularly Reformed) continue to recite the Apostle Creed that says that Jesus “descended into hell.” Obviously, this underscores an enormous price Jesus paid to redeem us.

- b. But there is another view that focuses on the fate of the OT saints.

(1) During the OT period, no one could enter heaven because Christ had not yet died “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2b). And Christ, after having done so, was the first to enter heaven (Heb 9:24).<sup>7</sup>

(2) This means that the OT saints such as Abraham and Noah had to wait *somewhere* before Jesus received the promise of heaven.

(3) It has been speculated that the OT saints descended into a place called *sheol* (often translated as “grave”)<sup>8</sup> to wait for Christ’s coming.

(3) Thus, utilizing 1 Peter 3:19<sup>a</sup> that says, “[Jesus] went and preached to the spirits in

<sup>7</sup> “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself”

<sup>8</sup> If “Sheol” is referred to as “Abraham’s bosom” (KJV) in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–21), then, it is the home of both the righteous and the unrighteous but whose dwellings are separated by an unbridgeable chasm.

prison,” it is believed that Jesus went to *Sheol* to declare his victory over sin and death, after which they ascended to heaven with Christ (“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives”—Eph. 4:8b).

5. So, when the right ransom is paid, and the redemptive sacrifice is offered by the sinless God-Man,

only then we are “brought from death to life” (Rom. 6:13<sup>b</sup>);  
only then we are “rescued . . . from the dominion of darkness  
and brought . . . into the kingdom of the Son . . . in whom we have  
redemption, the forgiveness of sin” (Col. 1:13<sup>a</sup>-14).

**Discussion<sup>2</sup>:** We often say that while religion is man’s attempt to reach God, the Christian faith is God’s attempt to reach men. What is the key difference? Why is man’s attempt futile and God’s attempt effective? How have you found this to be true in your own life?

## II. Proving the Deity of Christ from Scripture

### A. First, his deity is confirmed by his divine attributes.

1. First, Jesus Christ is eternal and everlasting.

We already saw this previously in our study.

- a. “Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God” (Jn. 1:1<sup>a</sup> TLB).
- b. He is “the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 22:13).
- c. He existed before Abraham (Jn. 8:58) even though he came to earth 2,000 years after Abraham had lived.

2. Second, Jesus is omnipotent.

“Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist” (Matt. 12:11<sup>a</sup>) but “John did no sign” (Jn. 10:41); but, Jesus the God-Man performed many miracles.

3. Third, Jesus is omnipresent.

After God the Father “raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places . . . <sup>22</sup> he put all things under [Christ’s] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:20, 22-23).

Underscore the last part of verse 23: Jesus “fills all in all.”

The NIV says, “Fills everything in every way”—that speaks of Christ’s omnipresence.

4. Fourth, Jesus is omniscient.

It was noted earlier that Jesus did not know the time of his second-coming.

Mark 3:32: “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

- a. It can be stated that this lack of knowledge was true only in his human nature.
- b. “His divine nature possessed this knowledge of the time of his return. But it was not the Father’s will that such knowledge be transmitted to Christ’s human nature” (Holloman III-16). How that was so is a mystery to our finite mind.

5. Fifth, Jesus is immutable.

The Hebrews writer reminds us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

6. Besides all this, Jesus is perfectly . .

- a. Holy: seen through his sinlessness and righteous anger against injustice (Jn. 2:16).
- b. Loving: therefore, he always initiates the love relationship with us (“We love because he first loved us”—1 Jn.4:10).
- c. Meek and gentle

Jesus says this about himself: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 12:28-29).

- d. Humble
- e. Compassionate (especially toward the children: “Let the children come to you me, and do not hinder them”—Matt. 19:14<sup>a</sup>).

**B. Second, the deity of Jesus Christ is attested by his work of creation done prior to the incarnation, and his numerous miracles performed during his earthly ministry, particularly the resurrection.**

1. Again, it is Christ who created the universe before his incarnation.

The apostle John says, “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn. 1:3).

The apostle Paul agrees, saying, “All things were created through him and for him” (Col. 3:16<sup>b</sup>).

2. With respect to many miracles Jesus performed on earth, he believed that these alone were enough to prove that he is from the above.

Jn. 14:11: “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves” (NIV 1984).

### **C. The miracle of resurrection**

The most significant miracle that lends credence to the deity of Christ and everything he taught and promised such as his return (“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also”—Jn. 14:3)

is his resurrection from the dead.

1. So weighty is this supernatural event that the apostle Paul believes that the sustainability and survivability of the Christian faith hangs in the balance.

That is to say, the resurrection of Christ is the lynchpin that holds the entirety of the Christian faith together; without it the center of the faith collapses.

He writes, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

<sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:13-19).

Accordingly, if the resurrection of Christ turns out to be false, then:

- a. Our preaching is in vain.
- b. Our faith is in vain.
- c. We misrepresent God.
- d. Our faith is futile.
- e. We are still in our sins.

f. We are to be pitied because, in actuality, we still have no hope.

## 2. But, is the resurrection of Christ really a miracle?

While all four Gospel writers attest to a literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, there are several alternative theories that refute it.

a. One such theory is found right in the NT—that the disciples stole Jesus’ body.

According to Matthew, the elders of Israel told the bewildered Roman guards to “tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep’” (Matt. 28:13).

This view is improbable for several reasons.

(1)First, the frightened disciples, who had run for their lives less than three days earlier, wouldn’t have risked their lives to do this.

(2)Second, for the disciples to steal the body, they first had to move a “very large” stone (Mk. 16:4) that sealed the tomb.

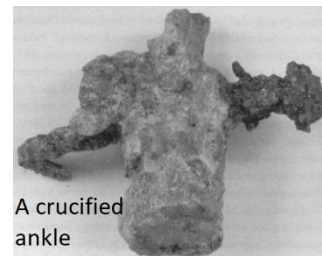
If indeed the guards were sleeping (highly unlikely since the penalty of losing their prisoner is death—Acts 12:19), it would have been improbable to move the boulder without waking them up.

(3)Third, given that quashing the rumor of Jesus’ resurrection was a matter of finding his body, it is noteworthy that the detractors, who used any means necessary to stop the Christian faith (Acts 4:18), never found the body.

b. Another theory is called the swoon theory.

It theorizes that Jesus had merely fainted and lost consciousness; but, sometime after being placed in the tomb, he recovered and then escaped, never to be found again.

This theory is also improbable.



(1)Since crucified people have mangled hands and feet, and suffer from a significant loss of blood, they are absolutely in no shape to walk, much less travel to a distant place to disappear from the scene.

(2)Furthermore, a crucified person is in no shape to move a large stone sealing the tomb all by himself, which typically take several people to do it (Jn. 11:41).

c. Still yet another theory is called delusion theory, which

postulates that the disciples had hallucinatory experiences—meaning, they so badly wanted to see Jesus alive that they began to see things.

(1) Admittedly, this can explain for one or two persons, but the number of people who claimed have seen the resurrected Jesus at the same time is 500.

The apostle Paul reports that “[Jesus] appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time” (1 Cor. 15:6).

(2) No, this theory makes no sense.

3. On the contrary, as said earlier, the Gospel writers are united in their declaration that Jesus resurrected literally and physically.

a. According to Luke, the resurrected Jesus said to skeptical disciples:

“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”<sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet” (Lk. 24:39-40).

b. According to the apostle John, Jesus said to doubting Thomas, who had not seen the resurrected Christ as other disciples did several days earlier:

“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe” (Jn. 20:27).

c. In fact, after the resurrection, Jesus, being hungry, ate.

“[Jesus] said to [the disciples], ‘Have you anything here to eat?’<sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish,<sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them.”

4. Perhaps, the most telling sign that points to the resurrection of Christ is the sudden transformation of the disciples from being extremely afraid to boldly testifying of Christ even though the threats were made against their life for doing so.

a. For instance, we all know that Peter denied knowing Jesus three times on the night of his arrest (Mk. 15:66-72).

b. But, no more than two months after denying Jesus, Peter boldly testifies of Christ before his detractors.

Upon being “commanded . . . not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18 NIV), Peter says:

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,<sup>20</sup> for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

- c. So, what happened to Peter and other disciples?

N. T. Wright explains:

“The crucifixion of a Messiah did not say to a first century Jew that he was the true Messiah and that the kingdom had come. It said exactly the opposite. It said that he was not and that it had not.”

Then “why [did] this group of first-century Jews, who had cherished messianic hopes and focused them on Jesus of Nazareth not only continued to believe that he was the Messiah after his death but actively announced him as such in the Jewish as well as the pagan world, cheerfully redrawing the picture of Messiahship around him but refusing to abandon it[?]”

WHY? Because they saw a physically resurrected Jesus!

Accordingly, among the many miracles performed by Christ, the resurrection of Jesus stands out as the one that truly confirms the deity of Jesus Christ, as attested by Thomas, who, upon touching the resurrected body, declares: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28).

**Discussion<sup>3</sup>:** Have you ever had some doubts about this supernatural occurrence? How have you dealt with it? How has the resurrection of Jesus personally affected your life?

5. One last point related to Christ’s resurrection.

- a. Admittedly, once Jesus resurrected he had “a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44<sup>a</sup>), which Paul also calls “heavenly body” (1 Cor. 15:40<sup>a</sup>) and “imperishable” body (1 Cor. 15:53<sup>b</sup>).
- b. But, evidently, this spiritual body still bore the nail marks in Christ’s hands and feet. I hazard to guess that Jesus, once having returned to the Father (Jn. 20:17) and fully gloried in His presence, no longer bore these scars.
- c. This is also our hope, that in a place where there is “no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4 NIV), our glorified, resurrected body will be pain-free and scar-free.

**C. The third area through which we can attest to the deity of Christ is his authority to do things that no humans can or allow to do.**

And this is what really riled up the detractors of Jesus.

1. Jesus has the power and authority to forgive sins.

Mk. 2:5-7: “And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ <sup>6</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> ‘Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’”

So, how can Jesus forgive our sins?

It is because we “were bought at a price” (1 Cor. 6:20<sup>b</sup>)—that price being “the blood of Jesus his Son [that] cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7).

2. Jesus has the power and authority to heal and cast out demons, even on the sabbath.

“Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> So . . . <sup>16</sup> some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath” (Jn. 9:14-16<sup>a</sup>).

To that Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:27-28).

a. When men try to cast out demons on their own, the demons will overpower them.

Once, “seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were [invoking the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits].

But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” <sup>16</sup> And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded” (Acts 19:14-16).

b. But when Jesus cast out demons by his own authority, the demons obey him.

One day, the demons “cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’ <sup>30</sup> Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. <sup>31</sup> And the demons begged him, saying, ‘If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.’

<sup>32</sup> And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go.’ So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.”

3. Jesus has the power and authority to grant adoption to God’s family.

Jn. 1:12-13: “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

4. Related to adoption is Jesus’ power and authority impart eternal life and raise the dead.



Jn. 5:21: “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.”

Jn. 6:40: “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Jesus can impart “the free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:23<sup>a</sup>) because:

- “By his death he . . . destroy[ed] him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14);
- “By the grace of God he [has] taste[d] death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9<sup>b</sup>).

5. Jesus has been granted the power and authority to execute all judgments.

Jn. 5:22: “For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.”

Jn. 5:27: “And [the Father] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.”

And this judgment will be meted out at the final judgment of God.

- a. For dispensationalists, this refers to the Great White Throne judgment that is reserved only for the unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15).
- b. For those of the Reformed faith, this is the general resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous at the end (Jn. 5:28-29).

6. The truth is that the devil did not and could not force Jesus to become a ransom to meet his demand.

Instead, Jesus voluntarily “gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4<sup>a</sup>) because he alone has the authority and power to lay down his own life and then take it up again. The devil could not coerce him to do that.

Jesus declares: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (Jn. 10:17-18).

7. And finally, Jesus alone has the power and authority to reveal the Father to the world and the way to reach Him (Jn. 14:6).

Jesus says, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and

no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:27).

Jesus says to Thomas, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6).

**Discussion<sup>4</sup>:** Jesus once asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Matt. 16:13<sup>b</sup>). Who is he in your life? What aspects of his divine attributes have ministered to you in recent times?

## Homework 6

1. What are the three main offices of Jesus Christ?
2. In what sense is the prophet Jesus greater than the OT prophets?
3. Why does the mediator between a holy God and sinners need to be a God-Man?
4. In what ways are the priesthood of Jesus better than the Aaronic priesthood?
5. Did Jesus as the king come into the world to establish a literal kingdom for Israel, or to establish the Kingdom of God to rescue those who are enslaved in the kingdom of darkness?
6. What are the two ways to understand the theological concept of ransom?
7. How can those enslaved in the dominion of darkness be brought into the Kingdom of the Son?
8. What are the three areas through which the deity of Christ can be proven from Scripture?
9. List five divine attributes of Christ along with at least one supportive scriptural reference?
10. Why is the resurrection of Christ so important to the Christian faith?  
What is one telling indicator that the resurrection of Christ indeed occurred?