

GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
ARUSHA - TANZANIA

SUBJECT: BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON 2: JESUS CHRIST

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2.1 - Jesus Christ: The visible expression of the Invisible God

Jesus came into the world to show us what God the Father is like.
He is the visible representation of the Father, who is invisible (*Hebrews 1:3*)
He embodies the natural and moral characteristics of God

2.1.1- The Humanity of Christ

The incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ refers to the union of deity with humanity in Jesus Christ.

He, the eternal Son of God, became man for the purpose of saving us (*Hebrews 9-18; Philippians 2:5-8; John 1:1-2, 14*).

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary (*Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:34-35; Galatians 4:4*).

In this unique, creative act, God broke through the chain of human generation and brought forth a supernatural Being.

With the incarnation, God set in motion His plan of redemption on earth.

Some of the evidences of Jesus' humanity include His human ancestry, human development, human appearance, human limitations, and human names.

(a) Human ancestry and development

Two gospel writers, Matthew and Luke, trace the human ancestry of Christ

Matthew traces His lineage all the way back to David and further to Abraham (*Matthew 1:1-17*)

Luke traces back to Adam, the first man (*Luke 3:23-38*)

The purpose of this ancestry was:

- (i) To prove that Jesus was from the line of David and therefore heir to the throne of Israel. Otherwise, no Jew would accept Him as his King or Messiah.
- (ii) To prove that Jesus, as the seed of Abraham, was the child of promise through whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. (*Genesis 22:17-18*)

Though Jesus had a human ancestry, He did not have a natural human father. (*Luke 1:34-37*)

Jesus' birth was wonderfully miraculous, yet it was a human birth.

He developed physically and mentally according to the ordinary laws of human growth (*Matthew 13:55, Luke 2:40-41, Mark 1:35; John 4:32-34*)

(b) Human appearance and limitations

All evidence indicates Jesus' physical appearance was similar to that of other men. (*John 19:5, Philippians 2:8*)

When He took the form of man, He willingly subjected Himself to the limitations of humanity (*Philippians 2:5-8*).

Thus, he sometimes becomes physically tired (*John 4:6*), hungry (*Mark 11:12*) and thirsty (*John 19:28*).

He went through temptation (*Matthew 4:1-11*) and was strengthened by the Father when He prayed (*Luke 22:42-44*)

He also experienced pain (*1Peter 4:1*) and finally death (*1Corinthians 15:3; John 19:28-42*) which was the greatest proof of the limitation of His humanity.

(c) Human names

The names given to Jesus indicate His humanity.

He was named Jesus, a Greek form of the Old Testament name Joshua (*Matthew 1:21*) meaning 'Saviour'.

He was called the 'Son David' and 'the son of Abraham' (*Matthew 1:1*)

The 'Son of Man' mostly clearly represents His humanity (*Matthew 26:64-65*)

This term implies that He is truly human as well as being the representative of all mankind.

2.1.2 - The Deity of Christ

(a) Divine rights

Jesus Christ exercised divine rights that only God has.

The divine rights include (i) receiving the worship of men, (ii) forgiving sin, (iii) raising the dead, (iv) the right to judge.

(i) Jesus Christ received worship and it would have been blasphemy if he were not truly divine (Blasphemy is insulting God or claiming wrongly to be divine) - *Matthew 4:10; John 5:23; Matthew 2:11*.

Worship of any other god was forbidden by God (*Exodus 20:3-5*) and those who were not divine refused worship (*Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-18; Revelations 19:10; 22:8-9*)

(ii) Jesus exercised the right to forgive sin, a right reserved for God alone (*Mark 2:7; Matthew 9:2-6*)

(iii) He exercised the right of giving life (*John 5:21, 10:10*) or raising the dead (*Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56; John 11:1-44*)

Mere man cannot give life by his own power.

(iv) Jesus exercised His divine right to judge (*John 5:22; Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2Corinthians 5:10*)

(b) Divine Character

(i) Moral attributes

- Jesus possessed the same moral and natural attributes as God the Father
- He was holy and could not be proved guilty of sin. (*1Peter 2:22; John 8:46*)
- He proved His love in relationships with people from all walks of life and all levels of society (*Luke 19:10; Matthew 11:19; Mark 10:17-22*)
- He prayed both for His followers and for His enemies too (*John 17:9, 20; Luke 23:34*) ; this is perfect example of love.
- He demonstrated His love by displaying genuine humanity and meekness, such as washing His disciples' feet (*John 13:14*) gentle with the sinful (*Luke 7:37-39, 44-50*), and with those who had forsaken Him (*Luke 22:61; John 21:15-23*)

(ii) Natural attributes

- Jesus Christ is Omnipotent. All angels, authorities, and powers of the universe are subject to His power and authority (*1Peter 3:22, Colossians 1:19; 2:9; 1Corinthians 1:24, Matthew 28:18*)
- Jesus is Omnipresent. He fills everything in every way (*Ephesians 1:22-23; Matthew 18:20*)
- Jesus is Omniscient. He knows everything (*John 2:24-25; 16:30; 21:17; Colossians 2:2-3*). He knew the sinful life of the Samaritan woman (*John 4*), the thoughts of the Pharisees (*Luke 6:8*) and the nature and end of the present age (*Matthew 24-25, Mark 13; Luke 21*).
There is no contradiction in the All-knowing character of Jesus in *Matthew 24:36* and *Mark 11:13* because in the flesh He chose to give up His right to the independent exercise of His divine characteristics (e.g. *Matthew 26:52-54; Philippians 2:5-7*)
- Jesus is the eternal Son of God (*John 1:1; Micah 5:2*)
- He has always existed, and will forever exist (*Hebrews 1:11-12; John 1:1-3*)
- He does not change (*Hebrews 13:8*)
- The above attributes are clear evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ

(c) Claims to Deity

Jesus made definite claims that He was God (*John 14:11*)

- (i) Oneness with the Father (*John 10:30*)
- (ii) Declared that He was the Son of God
- (iii) Asserted that salvation could be obtained only through Him (*John 10:9*)
- (iv) The only access to the Father (*John 14:6*)
- (v) Without Him, no-one can do anything (*John 15:5*)
- (vi) He testified to His existence (*John 8:58; 17:5*)
- (vii) Directed His disciples to pray in His name (*John 16:23*)
- (viii) Gave His disciples power to perform miracles (*Luke 9:1-2*)

(d) Names that indicate deity

Names that could only be used in reference to God are given to Jesus Christ throughout the New Testament;

- (i) He was called the Son of God (*Matthew 3:17; 17:5; John 10:36*)
 - (ii) He was called Emmanuel meaning 'God with us' (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23; John 1:14*).
 - (iii) He was called the word of God (*John 1:1-2, 14*)
 - (iv) He was referred to as God (*Titus 2:13*)
 - (v) He was known as Christ (Greek) or Messiah (Hebrew) meaning the 'Anointed One' (*Acts 2:36; John 1:41*). In the Old Testament times, the only people anointed or separated for service are the prophets, priests and kings.
 - (vi) He was called Lord, sometimes used as a title of courtesy or out of respect for His deity (*Luke 1:43; 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 16:31; 1Corinthians 12:3*)
- The name, 'Lord' comes from the translation of the Hebrew term 'Jehovah'. Thus, Jesus Christ is identified with the Old Testament Jehovah.

2.1.3 - The Union of Deity and humanity in Christ

It has been difficult to explain the incarnation of Jesus Christ in terms of His dual nature as God and man.

Jesus was truly God and truly man

He possessed both the human nature and the divine nature.

In His divine nature, he has all the qualities, properties or attributes of God.

In His human nature, He is not God pretending to be a man but truly man (*John 1:14*).

He had bodily and physical qualities of a man.

He did not cease to be God when He became a man.

He simply added a human nature to His divine nature.

He was God-man.

Reasons for the Incarnation

- (i) All mankind was sinful and a blameless sacrifice for sin was necessary. Since God could not die, He became flesh to provide the perfect sacrifice, paying the penalty for sin (*Hebrews 2:9*)
- (ii) Through the incarnation, Jesus revealed the Father to mankind (*John 14:7-11*)

(iii) By becoming man, Jesus provided us with an appropriate example (*1Peter 2:21-25*). As we identify with Him in responses to human situations, we recognize our goal of Christ-likeness (*Romans 8:29*)

2.1.4 - The Works of Christ

The works of Christ refers to His death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation

(a) His Death

His death was different from any other; it was voluntary (*John 10:18; Matthew 27:50*)

He accepted His death as the will of God for the salvation of mankind.

His death was not forced on Him by Satan or the Roman soldiers.

His death was a work in that it paid the penalty for our sin which is separation from God (*Mark 15:34*)

He appeased or calmed the anger of God against us and allowed the divine justice to fall upon Him so that we can be forgiven (*Romans 3:25-26*)

His death enables us to identify with Him through the crucifixion of self (*Galatians 5:20, 24; Romans 8:5-11*)

(b) His Resurrection

Jesus' work would have been incomplete and our faith would have been in vain if He had not risen to life again (*1Corinthians 15:14*)

His resurrection sets Christianity apart from all other religions and beliefs because no other religion can say that its founders' grave is empty.

Because He lives, we have inherited eternal life (*John 11:25-26*).

The resurrection of Christ is the keystone of the Christian faith. It proved the effectiveness of His death and gave it value (*Romans 4:25*)

Some of the reasons why the resurrection is of great importance to us are:-

- (i) Christ's work as a sinners' substitute has been accepted by God because God raised Him from the dead (*Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30*)
- (ii) It confirms His deity (*Romans 1:4*)
- (iii) He became our High priest (*Hebrews 9:24*), our intercessor (*Romans 8:34*), our mediator (*1Timothy 2:5*) and our advocate or lawyer (*1John 2:1*)
- (iv) It demonstrates God's great power in providing salvation for us (*Phil. 3:10*)
- (v) It guarantees our resurrection from the dead (*John 5:28; 6:40; Romans 8:11; 1Corinthians 15:20-23; 1Thessalonians 4:14*).

(c) His Ascension and Exaltation

After forty days of Christ's ministry following His resurrection, He ascended or returned to heaven (*Acts 1:9; 2:32-35; Ephesians 1:20; 1Peter 3:21-22*)

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ were the beginning of His exaltation

In His exaltation, He is 'lifted up' or 'raised to a higher level of honour and glory at the Father's right hand.

In His exaltation, He is placed in His proper place as Sovereign Lord (*Acts 2:33-36; 5:31, Ephesians 1:19-23; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16*)

In His exalted status, we receive some benefits such as:

- (i) He is spiritually present everywhere thus becoming the ideal object of worship for all people (*Ephesians 4:10; 1Corinthians 1:2*)
- (ii) He enters into His priestly ministry in heaven (*Hebrews 4:14; 5:5-10*)
- (iii) He bestows gifts upon His people and the church (*Ephesians 4:8-11; 1Corinthians 12:4-11*)
- (iv) He poured out the Holy Spirit upon His people (*Acts 2:33*)
- (v) As the exalted Prince and Saviour, He is giving repentance and faith to people (*Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2Peter 1:1*)
- (vi) He ascended into heaven with his humanity (His glorified body) and thus able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest since He has been able to share our human experiences (*Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16*)