

The Deity of Jesus Christ

Outline

Introduction

- I. Who is this Jesus of Nazareth, the One called Christ (Messiah)?
 - A. He is *the Word (logos)* (Jn 1:1-3)
 - B. Why is the phrase *the Word* (Greek *logos*) used to identify and describe Jesus the Incarnate Son?
 - C. What qualities are attributed to *the Word* in Jn 1:1-5, 14?
 1. Eternality
 2. Deity
 3. Creator
 4. Life
 5. Light
 6. Humanity
 - D. What claims did John the Baptizer make about Jesus in Jn 1:29, 30?
 1. Jesus was God's Sacrifice for sin
 2. Jesus was pre-existent
 - E. What claims did Jesus make about Himself?
 - F. What did the Jews understand Jesus to mean from His claims?
 - G. What then are the only logical options in regard to Jesus' identity?
- II. Why is an accurate identification of Jesus Christ imperative?
- III. Since Jesus has suffered such humiliation, pain and death for me... what then does Jesus want in return from me?
 - A. To deny self!
 - B. To follow!
 - C. To shoulder our cross!
 - D. To make our discipleship a one-way trip!
 - E. To serve with passion!

PART 1

Introduction

This lesson will ask and answer three questions about Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of God, the Christ (Messiah).

- I. Who IS this Jesus of Nazareth, the One called Christ (Messiah)?
- II. Why is an accurate identification of Jesus imperative?
- III. Since Jesus suffered such humiliation, an excruciating death and God's wrath upon sin... for me, then what then does Jesus expect from me in return?

Now, this lesson might seem a very elementary study for a discipleship class. But we...

- never want to take for granted that every person who goes through a discipleship class has repented before God and, totally by faith, called upon the Lord Jesus for salvation. And,
- we never want to take for granted that even saved people know what they need to know about the Savior! I think we can probably assume that some saved people know little of what the Scriptures teach, and that includes what it teaches about Jesus!

In making this second point, I don't want to infer that we have to be experts in Christology in order to have fellowship with our Savior. Certainly not. But practically, the bottom line is this: the more knowledge we can get about a person, and the more time spent fellowshiping with a person, usually means a deeper friendship! So, we can probably assume that (sadly) some saved people maintain only a "casual friend" level of fellowship with Jesus.

But why? Why do some born-again believers have such a casual fellowship with Jesus Christ? There are at least two reasons why some Christians don't grow close to the Savior.

- they are not taught discipleship, i.e., their fellowship with their Redeemer languishes simply because

of ignorance...

I think of the saints that Paul found at Ephesus, described in Acts 19:1-7. These were truly, born-again, heaven-bound, believers—former disciples of John the Baptizer—and possessing John’s authoritative baptism. But Paul evidently sensed a problem. We know that these saints possessed the Holy Spirit as their Escrow, because they WERE born again. But, as I said, Paul sensed or saw that they did not have the special gifts and empowerment that the Holy Spirit was giving to saints who were operating in this unique time before the Scriptures were mostly written and proliferated. This special Spirit-empowerment and authority came only through the authority of a local church. Paul re-baptized them with Local Church (the church at Antioch) authority, and immediately these grace gifts manifested themselves. So what was the problem? The problem was that these saints didn’t know; they had never been taught to associate with one of the Lord’s New Testament churches, or...

- they don’t take advantage of the discipleship process.

Paul tells us that much of the Corinthian body was in this state of spiritual infancy. He wrote, *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able* (I Cor 3:2). And Paul chastised the Hebrew Christians, stating, *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat* (Heb 5:12).

These Christians likely KNEW that they needed to grow in their discipleship friendship with Jesus, but they were not being obedient to God’s call. The Corinthians were evidently caught up in carnal living, in-fighting, bickering and pride. The Hebrew Christians were likely being distracted by intense persecution. In either case, they were allowing external circumstances to prevent them from becoming intimate friends with Jesus.

So... where can we learn the most about Jesus? Obviously, the Gospels tell Jesus’ story, and the book of John is probably the best of the four for this purpose. This is because the Apostle John, his brother James, and then Peter, formed the “inner three” of Jesus’ disciples.

- John witnessed the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mk 5; Lu 8).
- John witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration on the Mount, he saw Moses and Elijah, and he heard the voice of God! (Mat 17).
- John was with Christ in the garden as Jesus prayed on the night of His arrest (Mat 26).
- And John was the only disciple at the cross with Jesus, Mary and the other women. From the cross Jesus gave John the responsibility to care for His mother Mary (Jn 19:27).

And, John’s gospel teaches much theology regarding Jesus as the Christ, the Incarnate Son.

So with our introduction complete, let’s now launch into our Lesson 4, The Deity of Christ, with point number I...

* * *

I. Who is this Jesus of Nazareth, the One called Christ (Messiah)?

A. He is *the Word* (*logos*)

- The Holy Spirit inspired John to describe Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, using the Greek word *logos*. English speakers simply translate it as *Word*.

- **Jn 1:1-3** *In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

There is deep theology in that word *logos*, and also in these verses... but we will only be able to touch the surface during this class.

But first, how do we know that the phrase *the Word* refers to Jesus? Well...

- John (the Apostle) goes on to clearly identify *the Word* as a specific person in vv 1:14

- **Jn 1:14** *And the **Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

And then John the Baptizer tells us the Word was a *him* and a *he* i.e., a person (Jn 1:15).

- **Jn 1:15** *John (the Baptist) bare witness of **him**, and cried, saying, This was **he** of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for **he** was before me.*

And Jesus of Nazareth was the only person of whom John the Baptizer bare witness.

So when John the Apostle writes, *the Word was made flesh*, he is obviously referring to the Incarnation, God the Son becoming an eternal human being. The Eternal Son of God now exists as a Man, the man Jesus of Nazareth, and He will exist as a man, with real human flesh, bones and blood, for eternity. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus, *...ever liveth to make intercession for them* (us!). He sits in the honored right-hand-position at His Father's Throne and serves as our eternal High Priest (Heb 7:24). Jesus is the eternal God-Man.

The Spirit also inspired John (the Apostle) to use the phrase *the Word* in his description of the Trinity.

- **I Jn 5:7** *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, **the Word**, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

- Unarguably then, *the Word* refers to the Incarnate Son of God, Whom the Father, through the angel Gabriel, named *Jesus* (see Mat 1:20, 21 and Lu 1:30, 31).

Note: Our English name *Jesus* is a transliteration of the Greek word pronounced *ee-ay-sooce´*. And this Greek word was itself a rough transliteration of the Hebrew *yeh-ho-shoo´-ah*, which literally means "YHWH-saved". This then makes sense of Gabriel's explanation to Joseph in the dream, *... thou shalt call his name JESUS* (literally... YHWH-saved): *for he shall save his people from their sins* (Mat 1:21).

B. Why is the phrase *the Word* (from the Greek *logos*) used to identify and describe Jesus the Incarnate Son?

- Why didn't the Spirit inspire the use of Jesus' common Hebrew name *Yeh-ho-shoo´-ah* (Joshua), e.g., why not, "In the beginning was Yeh-ho-shoo´-ah..."? The reason is that there are deeper spiritual concepts conveyed in the Greek term *logos*.
- Think about it! What is the function of a word?
 - A word is a communication tool. It expresses or manifests a thought, concept, or idea.
 - In that sense, *the Word* (Jesus the God Man) was manifested to **communicate** God's message in the most effective way possible, i.e., through personal teaching and example! And so *...the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14), but not just so He could be a sacrifice and Savior.
 - The Word was also manifested so that he could bring to humanity the **greatest and most complete revelation of God**. Jesus was God's personal and Incarnate Expression to human kind; Jesus was God's love letter in the flesh to men and women: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...* (Jn 3:16).
- But in the mind of the Greek speaker the concept of this phrase *the Word* (from *logos*) went well beyond a pronounced word or a written word. There is a deep, spiritual concept in the word *logos* that was for the Greeks almost undefinable. *Logos conveys the sense of an idea, a concept, a principle, or a representation.*
 - First, *logos* is not the Greek term normally translated "word" in the grammatical sense. *Lexis* is the grammatical term for "word". To the Greek, the term *logos* projected a deeper concept that dealt with **reason, logic and purpose**.

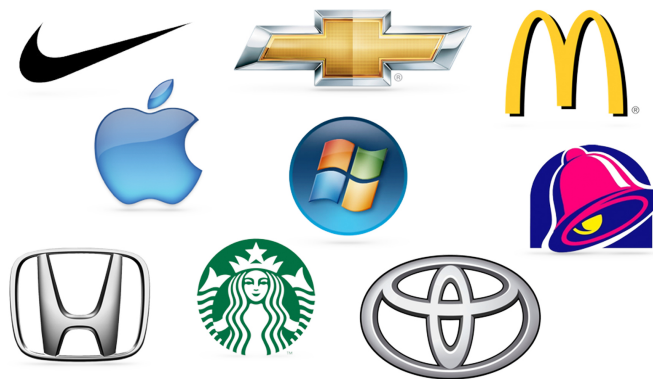
The Greek philosopher Heraclitus used the term *logos* to describe a principle of order and knowledge and the Stoic philosophers identified the term with the divine animating principle pervading the Universe.¹ It should be clear that these pagans were using the word to describe the concept of divine intelligence and order. This is no doubt why God chose to use *logos* to describe The Source of all life, order, reason, and purpose.

- And even for us as non-Greek speakers, we understand that *logos* means at least a representation, because this is one of the roots of our English word **logo**.

And so what is a “logo” in our parlance? A logo is a symbol, that, in our mind, immediately identifies a product or a business AND the philosophy and focus of that business.

Think of some famous logos that you might recognize instantly. Look at these logos below; what comes to mind? From these logos you probably recognize the business, and you know what that business does, and what that business promotes or produces, and probably some of the philosophy of that business.

In a sense then, the Incarnate Word was/is the Logo of Jehovah God! God is a Spirit... and we can't see spirits. And so God became a man, not only so He could sacrifice Himself for our sins, but also so that humanity could identify with the Trinity God. Jesus was God's ultimate communication tool, revealing The Father to humanity, IN PERSON, IN MESSAGE, and IN EXAMPLE. So, when we see Jesus we, in a sense, see the Logo of God.



- Yes, in Jesus, we see the Logo of God, but we must be careful here because Jesus is more than just a representation or symbol of God! To us a logo represents a business and its product and its business concept, but that is where our analogy breaks down a bit. Jesus not only represents God to humanity, Jesus **IS** God! He is not just a concept piece! Jesus is the REAL THING (to use the Coca-Cola marketing slogan). When Philip asked, *Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us* (Jn 14:8), Jesus replied with a chide, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?* (Jn 14:9). And in Jn 10:30, Jesus proclaimed, *I and my father are one*.

So, Jesus is the Father's representation to humanity, but He is also all of God that we will ever see, touch, feel and relate to. In the Millennial Kingdom and then for all eternity on The New Earth, when we go to the Holy City, The New Jerusalem, to worship, we will worship not just a bright light (a “shekinah”), even though Jesus's brightness and glory will fill that city. And we will worship not just a symbol or effigy! No, we will see, adore and worship Jesus of Nazareth, the Eternal God Man!

C. What qualities are attributed to *the Word* in Jn 1:1-5, 14?

1. Eternality

- John tells us, *In the beginning was the Word* (Jn 1:1a).

And we logically ask, “Beginning of what?” In this context *beginning* likely refers to the Creation (Gen 1:1, 2), because God has no beginning. Time began (for the Creation). Space began. Then Matter began. Everything existing began... except for God! God did not begin! He simply IS; He told Moses, “I AM”. And the tense of the Greek verb translated *was* here in Jn 1:1a supports that concept. It indicates an action in the past that continues into the present.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos>

- The obvious sense then is that the Son of God was preexistent; at the Creation He already was, of better stated “is”. The emphasis is that the Word existed PRIOR to His incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth.
- In summary, Jesus the Word is not a created being. He is **eternal!** [NOTE: This is a very, very important point because several modern-day cults teach that Jesus is a created being.]

2. Deity

- John tells us that the Son was not only eternal WITH God, but that He **was** and **IS** God. Again, this is a very important doctrine because many cults deny the eternal Deity of Jesus. Read Jn 1:1b, c: *...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

- Let’s also read Jn 8:58; 10:30 and 14:9.

- **Jn 8:58** - *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

If we casually read John 8:58 we are likely to miss the nuclear explosion that rocked the minds of those Jews who heard Jesus speak it! Here Jesus stunned the Jews by claiming to be Jehovah (YHWH), the Self-Existent One, who One who came in a Theophany and spoke to Abraham on the plains of Mamre (as recorded in Gen 18), and that Divine Person who spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex 3:14).

- Those Jewish leaders demonstrated that they understood Jesus’ claim by quickly gathering up stones, intending to execute Jesus for blasphemy.

- **Jn 10:30** (He proclaimed to the Jews...) *I and my Father are one.*

- **Jn 14:9** *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

3. Creator

- John and Paul tell us that the *the Word*, the Son of God, was the hands-on Creator. Not only was *the Word* existing at the beginning (of creation) but He was **The Cause** of Creation!

- **Jn 1:3** (Speaking of Jesus The Word, John writes...) *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (Jn 1:3).*

- And then there is the very famous verse in Colossians...

- **Col 1:16, 17** (Speaking of the Son in v 13 and 14, Paul continues in vv 16 and 17) *...For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist* (to be manifested and cohere, i.e., hold together).

4. Life

- John tells us that the Jesus the Son is the source of life: *In Him was life...* (Jn 1:4a).

- While this can be understood to mean “spiritual life”, i.e., the power to redeem and quicken (make alive) those who were spiritually dead (i.e., fallen humanity), I believe it also identifies the Son, as the Creator; **The Son is the Source of biological life itself.** At the Creation, God breathed into Adam the *breath of life* and only then did Adam become a living soul (Gen 2:7)!

- Men are pretty good at taking life! But only God can create life! Scientists will NEVER be able to create life. Life comes ONLY from God; He is the Source and Sustainer of LIFE.

5. Light

- John tells us that the Incarnate Son’s life *...was the light of men* (Jn 1:4b, 5). Furthermore, I Jn 1:5 reads emphatically: *God is light.* These statements can be understood both in the spiritual

sense and the emphatic or literal sense. Both senses are probably accurate. Jesus is the Spiritual Light (showing people the pathway to eternal life) and as we will soon study, from Him will emanate a physical light that the Hebrews called “shekinah”.

- Jesus as Spiritual Light

- **First, Jesus “spiritual light” exposes sin!** Unfortunately, most people were, and still are, unreceptive to His light in that sense. Like insects exposed when you overturn a rock, men scurry away from the light and envelope themselves with darkness. Jesus explained why in Jn 3:19: *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

And here is a true-life object lesson that demonstrates mankind’s predisposition to use physical darkness to cloak their evil deeds. In the 1960’s my brother-in-law was serving in the U. S. Navy. He was stationed at Long Beach, CA. During that time my wife’s family and maternal grandmother visited Dale at Long Beach. On one occasion, while walking down a street, they passed a tavern, and Cathy’s grandmother very innocently asked, “Why are all the windows dark?” Bars, taverns, and other places that cater to men’s base nature, darken their windows or have no windows at all, because their customers do not enjoy their debauchery and their licentiousness to be on open display. They love the darkness!

Jesus’ “light” made the Rulers of Jesus’ day so uncomfortable that they were willing to commit murder to extinguish that light! When confronted by the Truth and exposed for what they were, the self-righteous Pharisees sought to kill their very own Messiah! In their secret caucus they admitted, *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation* (Jn 11:48). They were more interested in keeping their prestigious positions as Israel’s leaders and their semi-sovereignty as a nation, than having an open mind and considering the miracle worker in front of their eyes!

- **Second, Jesus “spiritual light” illuminates the pathway to the Cross** (to salvation)! When John writes that Jesus’ life was *the light of men* I get a mental picture of Jesus as the Lighthouse in a dark, sin-cursed, hopeless World. His pure light shines into this dark world as a beacon for those who are lost on those storm-tossed high seas of sin. And then beyond the Cross, Jesus lightens our pathway of the Christian Walk. David wrote, *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps 119:105).

- Jesus as Physical Light

- I personally believe that in a literal sense, **God is manifested by light**. I Jn 1:5 emphatically reads, *God is light*. When Paul met Jesus on that Damascus road the Savior revealed Himself as an intensely-bright light. When testifying before Agrippa and describing his experience, Paul recounted, *At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me* (Acts 26:13). A light that can even be perceived to be brighter than the sun is a very bright light! And during Jesus’ transfiguration on the mount Matthew writes, *...and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light* (Mat 17:2).

- And when you start exploring the physical properties of light as proposed by Dr. Einstein in his Relativity theories, this statement that *God is light* gets very fascinating. Mr. Einstein showed in his mathematics that light—not time—was THE constant in the Universe. Time is subservient to light. And the mathematics of Relativity further predict that at the speed of light, theoretically one’s mass would become infinite, one’s dimensional shape would compress infinitely, and time would stand still. If I might be allowed to speculate, this sounds very descriptive of Divine existence: Infinite, invisible (dimensionless) and timeless!

6. Humanity

- Finally John tells us that *the Word was made flesh* (Jn 1:14), i.e., He became a real, 100%, human man. But He was no ordinary man. He was a sinless man, full of grace and truth.
- And... what many people don’t stop to realize is this: when the 2nd Person of the Godhead, the Son, incarnated Himself a human man, He will forever BE a man. He is a man right now, sitting

in Heaven at the right hand of the Father. He will be a man when He returns on that white horse of Rev 19. He will be a man as he sits on David's throne in Jerusalem during the 1000-year Kingdom. And He will be a man forever as He accepts worship in the New Jerusalem, upon that New Earth. He forever will BE the God-Man, Jesus of Nazareth, Jehovah-in-Flesh.

One day, when we are living on the New Earth, and we come to worship the King in the Holy City New Jerusalem, we will see Jesus of Nazareth, the God Man, in His glorified state. John in the Revelation writes that His radiance (his glory or light) will fill that city, which is over 1400 miles cubed! And it will fill that city so completely that there will be no need for the light of a lantern, or the sun, or the moon. I picture in my mind that the city will be without a shadow!

- This quality of **humanity** just so happens to be the last mentioned, but it is of critical importance. This is where we part from the cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons. They refuse to recognize Jesus as Eternal Jehovah God, the **Eternal** God-Man. Instead they relegate Him to either being a temporary Deity, e.g., taking on Deity at His baptism and then relinquishing His Deity at His death on the cross (Jehovah's Witnesses) or as created being on the level of Lucifer (Mormons).

Next week we will continue studying "Who is this Jesus of Nazareth..." with our next point...

D. What claims did John the Baptizer make about Jesus in Jn 1:29, 30?