

The Person Of Jesus: The Only Son Of God

"Life Foundations: Christian Faith Essentials", Part 4

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THE BIG IDEA: JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONE AND ONLY SON AND FULLY QUALIFIED TO BE THE LORD OF OUR LIVES!

And they [the Sanhedrin] all said, 'Are You the Son of God, then?' And He [Jesus] said to them, 'Yes, I am.'
(Luke 22:70, NASB)

Six Key Stages Of The Existence Of Jesus Christ
(Three covered in this session, three covered next session)

I) THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST: BEFORE HE CAME TO EARTH AS THE "GOD-MAN"

(adapted and modified from C. Ryrie, "Basic Theology", p.237-240)

1) The PRE-EXISTENCE of Jesus Christ: He existed before His birth.

No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven—the Son of Man [Jesus]... The One who comes from above is above all... The One who comes from heaven is above all.
(John 3:13 & 31, NIV)

But in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.
(Hebrews 1:2, NIV)

2) The ETERNALITY of Jesus Christ: He existed well before His birth— always, eternally.

'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.' So the Jews said to Him, '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 born, I am.'
(John 8:56-58, NASB)

3) The PRE-EXISTENCE ACTIVITY of Jesus Christ: What He did before His incarnation.

a) He was active in CREATION. (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2)

b) He was active as the ANGEL OF THE LORD. (Genesis 16:7-14, 21:17-18, 22:11-18, 31:11-13, Exodus 3:2, Judges 2:1-4, 5:23, 6:11-22, 13:3-22, 2 Samuel 24:16, Zechariah 1:12, 3:1, 12:8)

II) THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST: CONCEIVED AND BORN AS THE "GOD-MAN"

(adapted and modified from C. Ryrie, "Basic Theology", p.241-253, 260-266)

1) The meaning of the "incarnation":

Jesus Christ took upon Himself HUMAN FLESH at birth, yet without sin.

And the Word [Jesus] became flesh, and dwelt among us... (John 1:14a, NASB)

...God did: sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh... (Romans 8:3b, NASB)

2) The incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ was PREDICTED in the Scriptures.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6, NASB)

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14, NASB)

3) The incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ events...

a) ...Announced by Gabriel. (Luke 1:26-33)

b) ...Caused by the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:35)

c) ...Carried by Mary, who was then a virgin. (Luke 1:38-56)

d) ...In accordance to a particular genealogy. (Matthew 1:1-17 = Joseph's, Luke 3:23-38 = Mary's)

4) The incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ as the "GOD-MAN". ("Hypostatic Union")

a) The "hypostatic union" defined:

The one-person union of the "divine" and "human" natures in Christ.

b) Proof texts for the Deity of Christ:

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word." (Hebrews 1:3a, NIV)

i) He possesses attributes only God has. (Matt.16:21,18:20, 28:18-20, Mark 5:11-15, Luke 6:8,11:17, John 4:29, 8:58, 11:38-44, 17:5)

ii) He performs works only God can do. (Mark 2:1-12, John 5:21, 11:43, 5:22,27)

iii) He was given names only fit for Deity. ("Son of God" Jn.10:36, "Lord and God" Jn.1:1, 20:28)

iv) He claimed to be God. *"I and the Father are One."* (John 10:30)

c) Heretical (false) views of the incarnation of Christ as the “God-Man”

- i) Docetism: Christ only appeared (Greek: “dokeo”) to be a man.
- ii) Ebionism: Christ is not God but was the natural “Son of God” at His baptism.
- iii) Arianism: Christ was “begotten” so He can’t be eternal, had some of the Divine nature.
- iv) Apollinarianism: Christ had human body and soul, but Divine Spirit that dominated.
- v) Nestorianism: Christ was divided into two persons, the union of Divine and human natures.
- vi) Eutychianism: Christ had only one nature that was neither fully Divine or fully human.

GROUP	TIME	HUMAN NATURE	DIVINE NATURE	CHURCH COUNCIL
Docetists	1 st century	Denied – only an appearance of humanity	Affirmed	
Ebionites	2 nd century	Affirmed	Denied – Jesus was natural son of Joseph and Mary	
Arians	4 th century	Affirmed	Denied – Jesus not eternal; similar to, but not same as God	Condemned by Nicea, 325
Apollinarians	4 th century	Divine Logos replaced human spirit	Affirmed	Condemned by Constantinople, 680
Nestorians	5 th century	Christ was two Persons		Condemned by Ephesus, 431
Eutychians	5 th century	Not fully human	Not fully divine	Condemned by Chalcedon, 451
		Christ was a single mixed nature		
Orthodoxy		Perfect humanity	Full Deity	Defined by Chalcedon, 451
		Christ is one Person		

5) The incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ involved His **“SELF EMPTYING”**. (“Kenosis”)

a) The “kenosis” defined:

Christ emptied Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the Godhead at His birth.

i.e. Jesus “limited” Himself without in any way “lessening” Himself.

b) The key text pertaining to the kenosis.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7, NASB)

6) The incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ maintained His INABILITY to sin. (“Impeccability”)

a) “Impeccability” defined:

Christ not only did not sin in any way during His life, He also could not have sinned.

b) The key text pertaining to the “peccability” vs. “impeccability” debate.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15, NASB)

III) THE LIFE OF CHRIST ON EARTH: THE MINISTRY OF THE “GOD-MAN”

(adapted and modified from T. Holladay & K. Warren, “Foundations: 11 Core Truths To Build Your Life On”, p.57-59)

The six major periods of the life of Jesus Christ on earth

1) His birth and CHILDHOOD.

a) Began with: His birth. (Matthew 1-2, Luke 1:1-2:38)

b) Key Events: Dedication in temple. (Luke 2:41-50)

Fleeing from Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-23)

Visit to temple at age 12. (Luke 2:41-50)

c) Ended with: Jesus’ growth in wisdom, stature, favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52)

2) His growth to ADULTHOOD.

a) Began and ended with: Jesus’ growth in wisdom, stature, favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52)

b) Key Events: Joseph likely died between Jesus’ age of 12 to 30.

Jesus had at least (4) half-brothers and (2) half-sisters. (Matthew 13:55-56)

Jesus’ brothers James and Jude were skeptics until after the resurrection (John 7:5, Acts 1:14, 1 Corinthians 15:7), and then both wrote NT epistle’s bearing their names, and James became a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17,15:13-21).

3) The initiation of His MINISTRY.

a) Began with: John the Baptist’s announcement (Mark 1:1-8) and Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:9-11).

b) Key Events: Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. (Mathew 4:1-11)

Jesus turning water into wine. (John 2:1-11)

4) His ministry in JUDEA.

- a) Began with: The cleansing of the temple. (John 2:13)
- b) Key Events: Conversation with Nicodemus, the religious leader. (John 3)
- c) Ended with: Conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. (John 4:1-42)

5) His ministry in GALILEE.

- a) Began with: Healing the nobleman's son at Capernaum. (John 4:46-53)
- b) Key Events: The calling of the disciples. (Luke 5:1-11, 6:12-16)
The sermon on the mount. (Matthew 5-7)
Feeding the 5,000. (Matthew 14:13-21)
- c) Ended with: Peter's confession: Jesus is Christ (Matt.16:13), and the Transfiguration (Matt.17:1).

6) His journey to, sacrifice at, and resurrection in JERUSALEM.

- a) Began with: His resolve to journey to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51)
- b) Key Events: Clashes with the Pharisees. (Luke 14,16)
The resuscitation of Lazarus. (John 11)
Zacchaeus the tax collector's conversion in Jericho. (Luke 19:1)
His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. (Matthew 21:1-11)
Cleansing of the temple. (Luke 19:45-46)
Garden of Gethsemane prayer, arrest and mock trials. (John 17-18)
Death on the Cross, burial and resurrection. (Matthew 27-28)
- c) Ended with: Jesus' ascension into heaven. (Luke 24:50-51)

IV) WHY CHRIST WAS WHO HE WAS: HIS PURPOSES FOR COMING TO EARTH

(adapted and modified from C. Ryrie, "Basic Theology", p.244-245)

1) He came to REVEAL God to us.

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:18, NASB)

2) He came to provide an EXAMPLE for us to follow.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. (1 Peter 2:21, NASB)

3) He came to **PROVIDE** the only effective sacrifice for sin.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3, NASB)

4) He came to **FULFILL** the Davidic Covenant as the ultimate King.

...the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign... (Luke 1:32b-33a, NASB)

5) He came to **DESTROY** the works of the devil.

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8c, NASB)

6) He came to **SYMPATHIZE** with our weakness as our High Priest.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses... Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16, NASB)

7) He came to **QUALIFY** as the Judge of all.

For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son. (John 5:22, NASB)

***SUMMARY THOUGHT: ACKNOWLEDGING THE FULL HUMANITY AND
UNDIMINISHED DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST LEADS US TO LOVE WHO HE IS!***

IV) QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN GROUPS OR FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1) Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus was existent and active before His incarnation and birth? What aspects of His pre-incarnate state were familiar ideas to you? What aspects were new?

2) A major issue in understanding who Jesus is involves His "full humanity" and "undiminished Deity" existing in His one person (the "hypostatic union"). Which ideas or texts were most convincing? Which false or heretical teachings was the most confusing? Why?

3) In surveying the life of Christ, what were some new ideas you learned about Christ's life? Explain.

4) What are some ways you can appreciate Christ for who He is and why He came to earth? Find two or three ways in which you can apply this session to your life.