

# Christology Class: the Person and Work of Jesus

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# Lesson 1: Who is Jesus? Matthew 16:13-28

## Introduction

### Our Goal

**Purpose:** The purpose of this class is to guide people to and through the scripture to develop a greater understanding of our Savior, Jesus Christ and through this exercise foster a deeper love and desire to feast upon the inspired perfect word of God (Heb. 4:12 II Tim. 3:16). Only through God's perfect word can we begin to understand the depths of His love for us, who He is, learn to discern His will, and be equipped to discern that which is true (II Tim.2:15)

### Basic flow

- 1) Key question for the day, is there *one way* to view of Jesus? How do we know whose image of Jesus is correct?
- 2) taking a look at a various passages and one key passage
- 3) then looking at questions people have had and what early Christians came to conclude was true of Jesus
- 4) What are some takeaways

## Christology = the study of the Christ

- Basically it is treated in two parts: the Person and Work
- It includes: the names and titles of Jesus. The unity of Jesus' person as divine and human, and the relationship between the two. His mediatorial role. His atonement.

We are focusing on *who* Jesus is and how the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus reveals who God is and how he saved us. Formally this is called Christology, the study of Jesus Christ, his person and work. The person tries to look at who is this one who came and was incarnate and focuses on how Jesus is one person with two natures: divine and human. The work of Jesus looks at *how* he accomplished our salvation through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

We know a lot about who Jesus is by looking at what he did. We want to see how the incarnation reveals the beauty of the gospel in ways we have not seen before and helps us understand scripture better so that we may adore our Lord and Savior even more fully.

## Suggested Schedule

1/9 - Intro, Who is Jesus?

1/16 - Jesus and the God of the Old Testament, Matthew 1 (Marcionism, Modalism/Sabellianism)

1/23 - Is Jesus really divine? John 1:1-18 (Arianism)

1/30 - Is Jesus really human? Multiple texts: birth, suffering, and death (Gnosticism)

2/6 - How can Jesus be both? Philipians 2:5-11, Part 1 (Sort of human, Docetism)

2/13 - How can Jesus be both? Colossians 1:15-20, Part 2 (Sort of God, Adoptionism)

2/20 - How can Jesus be both? Matt. 22:41-46, Part 3 (Divine and Human divided, Nestorians)

2/27 - How can Jesus be both? Matt. 26; Heb. 4; Part 4 (Divine and Human merged, Eutyches)

## Christology is arguably the most important doctrine in the Christian faith. Its in name!

Understanding Jesus is crucial to help us understand:

What it means to be human?

What God is like?

How Jesus can be both human and divine? Why must he be so to reveal God to us and to redeem us?

Indirectly it will help us see how various images of Jesus are inadequate. Constructing Jesus in our own image, or how we wish him to be, diminishes the gospel.

## 1) Who is Christ? What's in a name (Dan)?

As we think about what a name is chosen for, it is worth mentioning that today in most cases names are chosen for much different reasons than they were in the Bible. Today we may choose a name because it sounds cool, it is the name of the father (Jr.), or we may think to spell things differently to make our children stand out or any host of other reasons. When God gives a name, it is very specific and is given to identify something they will do, be etc. A classic example would be Abram to Abraham Gen. 17:5. God said the name change to Abraham was because he would be a father of nations, and so that is what Abraham means and what he became. Jacob to Israel is another example Gen. 32:28. And so it is with the names given to our Lord Jesus Christ in scripture. We will take a look at some key names in this lesson, but by no means an exhaustive list. Each name will spotlight some attribute, office, work, or aspect of the character or nature of our Savior to help us come to a better understanding of the God who ripped time and space to step into our world on our behalf.

- **Advocate I Jn. 2:1**

According to I Jn 2:1, why do we need an Advocate?

Rom 8:33-34 According to this passage, Christ is at God's right hand doing what for us?

- **Almighty/Alpha & Omega Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18**

In v.8 who is the Alpha(First) and the Omega (Last) ?

In v.17-18 how is the First and the Last described?

- **Anointed One Lk.2:10-11, Jn. 4:25-26**

Lk 1:11 Who do the angels say was born today?

Jn. 4:25-26 Who does Jesus say he is?

- **Atoning Sacrifice I Jn.2:2**

In v.2 what is said about the sacrifice of Christ?

- **Son of God Matt 16:13-17**

In v13. Who does Jesus refer to himself as?

In v16 who does Peter say Jesus is? What is Jesus's reaction to this declaration?

- **Son of Man Dan. 7:13-14/Acts 1:9-11/Lk 18:31 (Chris will want to take this one)**

## 2) Commenting on the “Son of Man” in Matthew 16:31-28 & Daniel 7:13-14

- a) Who do others say the Son of Man is? Clearly expectation from disciples response was he would be a human figure. Some argue Jews did anticipate a divine/human figure and some say not. Most say no. Few that say yes argue based on Dan. 7:13; Ps. 45:6; Is. 9:6; Ps. 96:11-13, and 110
- b) But Jesus then asks who do they say he is, equating himself with the Son of Man figure?
- c) “Son of Man” is Jesus' favorite reference to himself. In part some think because of all the messianic images, it was the least distorted by the various messianic interpretations present in Jesus day among Pharisees, Zealots, Essenes, and Sadducees. “Son of Man” is a clear reference to Daniel chapter 7. It is also used extensively in Ezekiel when God refers to the prophet and clearly means just a man. Daniel is more complicated.
  - i) There is divine imagery surrounding the “Ancient of Days” whose face is unseen. He is unapproachable and an all-consuming fire. But he is surrounded by people (in contrast to the four beasts representing various human empires).
  - ii) “One like a son of man” comes with the “clouds of heaven.” Two things: he is a human figure but he is *like* a human (in the sense as fully human). But coming on clouds is an allusion to God appearing among his people in Exodus. He is given all power, glory, and authority by the Ancient of Days. His kingdom eternal thus implying this one, will possess divine rights as well.
  - iii) I am persuaded Daniel is given a vision of Jesus ascension. Jesus seems to us it in this sense as well.

## 3) Whose picture of Jesus is right? Formation of the New Testament and the Apostles Creed

- a) Jesus question to Peter raises a timeless question: Who do people say that Jesus is? Who do we say he is? How do we know? We may point to the scriptures but these days people may point to other early texts excluded from the canon or to differing interpretations about Jesus.
- b) John 20:30-31; 21:24-25. Quickly a summation of the Jesus story was formed as competing accounts of Jesus arose. But many alternative gospels are far too late and clear forgeries to be on par with NT. Creedal summaries also serve as a record of testimonies about who Jesus is. We have record of a variety of local creedal like summaries such as Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies* from the 2nd century. It is quite similar to what we know as the Apostles Creed and is a

summation of the Christ event. These summaries played a role, as a “rule of faith”, in the church **recognizing** the authenticity of the NT writings as the documents got spread around to all the churches.

- c) The story of the councils follows a certain logic that matters.
  - i) What is the Jesus relation to the Father? What about the Holy Spirit? What distinguishes Father, Son, and Spirit, and what does it mean to say one God but Father, Son, and Spirit are equally God? **Each of these debates was ultimately about the gospel itself. Did God come to us? Or do we have to rise up to God?**
  - ii) Creeds were intended to be short summaries to be used in church for discipling new believers prior to baptism. The intention was to give a short summary of the gospel itself in response to contemporary challenges to the gospel. Changes to them over time seek to expand where earlier version were unclear.
- d) **A popular myth for over a hundred years is the *hellenization thesis*.** That these *creeds* are extra-biblical and the result of the influence of Greek philosophy on the Christian faith. Thus making the faith more culturally Greek than universal across any culture.
  - i) If you actually read the church fathers, such as Athanasius *On the Incarnation*, you will see the arguments are rooted in scripture. They argue from scripture and against inadequate interpretations of scripture.
  - ii) Many of the pastors at these councils were from North Africa and Asia. They were not Greek and thus not “western”.
  - iii) The debates and situations around the councils are complex. Words were often misunderstood between Greek and Latin speaking parts of the world. But more often the councils revealed an already existing consensus despite pressure from emperors or prickly personalities among the bishops. **The essential question is: does the outcome of the council still address a crucial matter for the Christian faith despite the circumstances?** Patristic scholars say yes they did despite widespread confusion among other bible scholars.
  - iv) Early church did not define various words in the same way as philosophers did. Words like *homoousian* were ill-defined at first but gradually mutual understanding took place. The final form of the Nicene Creed is such its accessible to any Christian. For example, many believed for something to be divine it must not be subject to change. Christians taught that yes God is immutable (1 Sam. 15:29; Jas. 1:17) but that does not mean he is a divine stoic and does not have emotions. But rather that God is infinitely loving and is not moved by things external to himself to be less loving.
- e) **A second myth that is popular is that our Bible was the result of some kind of power struggle and orthodoxy is merely the theology of the winners. They argue there was no such thing as “orthodoxy” because there were a diversity of views about Jesus. This is simply not the case and fails to**

**distinguish between historical circumstances and the way the church develops doctrine in response to contemporary challenges.**

- i) The primary source of much of the confusion about differing views of Jesus stems from something called “Gnosticism,” an umbrella label of a variety of beliefs and practices that was mixed in with Christianity, Greek philosophy (Plato), and folk religion. The writings of these people is the source of much speculation on the History Channel, *the Da Vinci code*, and a number of other popular impressions of Jesus and the origins of the Bible. Some claim there were 80 different “gospels” in consideration (*Know the Heretics*, 41). Gnosticism shares much in common with current New Age beliefs in America. Gnosticism has proven to be a perennial challenge to the Christian faith. Its basic features are:
  - (1) Creation was not created good, thus our bodies, a source of evil.
  - (2) Hierarchy of divinity, Son less than the Father
  - (3) Only enlightened can have special knowledge of God
  - (4) Very legalistic, “works righteousness” oriented faith
- ii) What is remarkable is that consensus quickly emerged despite ongoing and consistent political interference after Nicea condemned Arianism. A succession of three emperors following Constantine took different stances, would exile bishops who opposed them and in one case, a pagan Emperor reinstated all bishops for the express purpose of trying to create confusion among Christians. Such efforts ultimately failed to thwart the consensus about what the gospel is, God coming to us in Christ Jesus.
- iii) In some cases, orthodoxy was *not* the popular option. Arius had a large following, was favored by the Emperor Constantine, and whose theology would support his unilateral political power. Yes there was much debate and misunderstanding as one would expect with such diversity across the empire. But the end result is clearly the wisest, most universal, and most Biblical solution. What’s remarkable is that any consensus occurred at all!
- iv) Obviously there would quickly be a discussion of which books should be standard, which should be included in the canon and which ones should be rejected. The first heresy to arise would be Marcionism (which we will discuss more next week). Marcion wanted to reject the Old Testament and much of the what we call the New Testament. The “muratorian fragment” is the earliest list we have of the New Testament from the second century. The list is nearly our New Testament canon. What is notable is that it does not include anything like later “gospels” people claim today were pushed out due to political pressure and the like. If anything the debate was for a smaller canon not a larger one! Revelation, Hebrews, and James had question marks. Also considered was the Shepherd of Hermas. It wouldn’t be until the council of Nicea there was a formal recognition of the Christian canon. But by the 4th century it was a

mere formality for the attention of the Council of Nicea was on the deity of Christ. Something the Apostle Creed is not very specific about.

- f) What is extremely important to recognize, and very relevant to us today, is they were discussing *who* Jesus is. It was vital to the gospel and the Biblical witness to be clear that the one who took on flesh is the same one who is the Son of God. To quote Fred Sandes, “God sent God” and this is vital in order to affirm that salvation is by grace. Those condemned as heretics were condemned because their beliefs about Jesus undermined the gospel itself.

#### **4) Takeaways**

- a) What questions have you had, or others you have heard, watched about differing views of who Jesus is?
- b) How can differing pictures of Jesus both challenge our own assumptions and also press to a deeper look at who Jesus is with more conviction?
- c) How does knowing, reading about, other Christians in other times or places, help us understand Jesus and the challenges we face today?
- d) When it comes to how the Bible talks about Jesus, what kind of questions do you have?
- e) The Gnostic creed was “Knowledge is power.” Is that true at all? Is knowledge an important part of being a Christian?
- f) How does Christian knowledge relate to Christian practice? Is it possible, according to Scripture, to have knowledge of God without also allowing that knowledge to affect one’s behavior?

Justin S. Holcomb. Know the Heretics (KNOW Series Book 2) (p. 43). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

## Lesson 2: Jesus and the God of the Old Testament

- 1) Hook: Vengeful Yahweh vs. Gentle Jesus?
  - a) Natures of Christ (Dan and Terri)

Throughout the years it is safe to say that there have been various attempts to distort, water down, and re-package Christ in a more easily understandable human package that is more palatable for consumption by the masses. The basic thrust of the attempts is to simplify the divine revelation of the 2 natures of Christ- both divine and human. It has not changed today. From whatever motive that drives it – ego of man, wisdom of this world, or the gates of hell itself, to diminish Christ and reduce him to a version more easily understood by man is to create a false Christ to stand up in His place. This too is nothing new, look no further than the OT for plentiful examples of man's inclination to re-package God. We hold this truth- Christ was both 100% human and 100% divine, as revealed in God's inerrant Word.

### b) Deity of Christ

#### Old Testament

OT Viewed through the lens of the NT to reveal His deity (this is an important principle of hermeneutics- interpret the Bible through the Bible whenever possible)

**The OT is opaque on Jesus, *"it is like a room richly furnished but dimly lit"* (BB Warfield)**

- **Ps. 97:7,Ps.45:6/Heb.1:6-8**

According to Heb. 1:6 and Ps. 97:7 who will the angels be worshipping?

Whose throne is ascribed to the Son in Heb. 1:8 and Ps. 45:6

- **Ps.110:1/Matt. 22:41-46**

Ps. 110:1 Who is sitting at the right hand?

Matt. 22:41-46 – In v.42 what question did Christ ask them?

In v.43-44 Who is David referring to as Lord, according to Jesus?

#### Angel of the LORD

- **Gen. 18:16-33**

In v. 17 Who is talking about telling Abraham something? Is the title in all caps? What does that mean?

In v.22 How do the parties split up, and who is Abraham left standing before?

- **Josh. 5:13-15**

v.14 How does this Angel describe himself?

v.15 What were His instructions to Joshua? Does this remind you of another experience in the Old Testament?

## 2) Texts: Matthew 1, son of David, born of the Spirit

- a) Jesus is depicted as in continuity with Israel's story
- b) Jesus is depicted as having a miraculous birth, not born by human means but a work of God
- c) Other passages showing Jesus work (John 5) as equivalent to God's work
- d) Title of Savior
- e) The "scandal of particularity." For now, its enough to say all the details of Jesus' life are important for his humanity and ours. "For what is not assumed is not redeemed" (Gregory of Nazianzus, 4th cent.) This is worth exploring in more depth later because it would address questions today such as, how can Jesus be the savior for all people when he was a particular man born thousands of years ago in a different culture? Or gentiles if he was a Jew, women if he was a man? Its important *how* we answer that question both for ourself and in our witness to others.
- f) On "angel of the Lord" passages: "analogy of being" and anthropomorphisms, anthropopathism, anthropopaxism.

## 3) Jesus and the Unity of the Bible: The Problem with Marcionism and Sabellianism

- a) The first two issues that arose are Marcionism and Sabellianism (Modalism)**  
(\*Outline from class with Dr. Fairbairn)
- b) Marcionism, What he taught
  - i) God of OT is wrathful. NT is God of love (Very popular belief)
  - ii) Truncated canon of scripture
  - iii) Christ came to reveal NT God and overthrow OT God
  - iv) Docetic view of Christ (Jesus only appeared to be human)
  - v) Strict moral asceticism (Marcion was a legalist)
- c) Sabellianism (aka Modalism) is also quite popular, even today
  - i) God is the father in OT as Judge
  - ii) God in the gospel's is Jesus during Christ's life.
  - iii) God is the Spirit in the age of the church.
  - iv) Thus God changes forms for certain roles. Not one God in three persons. Denies God's immutability and thus the full deity of each.
- d) Tertullian, who coined the term Trinity, responded arguing

- i) Unity of the Bible and of God
  - ii) Reality of the incarnation
  - iii) Reality of God's dwelling with us on earth
- e) Tertullian's response to modalism
- 4) "I testify that the Father, Son, and Spirit are inseparable from each other.... Now observe, my assertion is that the Father is one, the Son one, and the Spirit one, and that they are distinct from each other. This statement is taken in a wrong sense by every uneducated and perversely disposed person, as if it predicated a diversity, in such a sense as to imply a separation among the Father, Son, and Spirit."
  - a) **The key question is this: is Jesus the same one who redeemed Israel?** Is he the same God as the one whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew? As Moses knew at Mt. Sinai? Did God undergo some radical change in order to be incarnate? Will he be the same yesterday, today, and forever?

## 5) Takeaways

- a) Its quite tempting to divide the works of God in order to "simplify" the Trinity. The reality is the doctrine is quite simple and profound. There is God and there is us, with a hard line between the two.
  - i) Problem: it allows us to pick and choose the parts of God and the bible we like, and reject the ones we don't like.
  - ii) It has become common for some to teach we need to do away with the Old Testament in some fashion *but not be* full on Marcionites. Examples include Andy Stanley (*Irresistible*), Pete Enns, and Greg Boyd (*Crucifixion of the Warrior God*).
- b) How do we make sense of God's unchanging character and the unfolding of his plan of redemption? How does the law relate to the gospel?
- c) What happens when we do not attend to the whole of scripture and God? (We get a god in our own image)
- d) How do we answer Biblically and missionally, to objections to Jesus? Are they questions being asked of us by those outside the church that should force to us to reckon with aspects of God's character we have ignored or distorted?

## Lesson 3: Is Jesus really divine? (Arianism)

- 1) **Hook: Do we need a mediator or just an intermediary? Can we rise up to God or must he come down to us?** The next question asked, is not whether there is one God of Bible. It was whether Jesus was God in the same way the Father was God? Was Jesus' (and the Holy Spirit's) divine nature the same or different in some way than God the Father?

### Deity of Christ (Dan and Terri)

New Testament

- **Jn 8:53-59**

In v.58 how does Jesus answer their question?

v.59 What was the Jews response to His answer?

- **Phil. 5-11**

v.6 How is Jesus described?

v.10 What cross reference is given for this OT quote? What does it clarify for you?

- **Col. 2:8-9**

In v.8 what are we warned against?

v.9 How is Christ described?

### His Actions Declare His Deity

- **Rom. 1:2-4**

v.4 What is one way Christ declared Himself to be Son of God, according to Paul?

Did Christ demonstrate power over death anywhere else? Hint- Matt. 9:18-26, Lk. 7:11-17, Jn. 11:1-44

- **Mk. 2:4-11**

v.5 What did Jesus do when they finally got to Him?

v.11 They were very angry about what Jesus did. According to Is. 43:11,25 why would this be?

- **Matt 11:2-5**

v. What is Jesus's response to John's inquiry?

According to Is. 35:4-6, who could be credited for such acts? Did it answer John's question?

## 2) Texts: John 1:1-18, Eternal Word took on flesh

### a) Comments on John 1:1-4

- i) John is contrasting The Word "**was**", his existence in eternity, with The Word "**came to be**", his work in redemptive history.
- ii) A sticky phrase —, some have argued should be "the Word was a god."
  - (1) If John wanted to communicate this he could have easily used *theios* instead of *theos* to avoid confusion that Jesus possessed God-ness, but should not be considered to be fully God.
  - (2) Additionally, the grammar does not allow us to do this since when *to be* is used when the subject has the definite article "the Word", the predicate must also be definite. Hence, *the Word was God*.
  - (3) Thus, the Word has existed eternally as God and with God. Arius claimed, Jesus began to be at some point prior to creation.
- iii) The word with, (*πρὸς*) grammatically tells us the Word is a person, not a thing. The Word is God, and also from God, who is distinct from the Father.
- iv) This subtle distinction is the origin of the nature/person distinction.

b) A hard line between the Creator and creation

c) The Son belongs above the line, though he entered

## 3) Jesus as the Eternal Word, begotten not made

### a) Arianism

- i) In 318, his disciples rioted in Alexandria shouting "There once was a time when the son was not!"
- ii) He rejected modalism and adoptionism (that Jesus was a human who ascended to divinity). But based on Origen's platonism that the Son was of a different divine nature than the Father. Origen taught Jesus was equal to the Father, but *eternally subordinate* to the Father (this has been

a popular teaching by many evangelicals today, especially those defending male headship, i.e. Wayne Grudem. Some of Grudem's teaching has recently been revised in response to extremely strong criticism).

- iii) The rational is God cannot suffer and cannot change. Because the Son suffered and was incarnate, he must be lesser than the Father in some way. Arius taught that the Father decides and the Son obeys.\*
  - iv) The Son was of a *similar substance* (homoiousios) to the Father. Jesus is basically a derivative of the Father.
  - v) For Arius, *begotten* (John 3:16) and *created* were synonyms.
- b) Council of Nicaea met to resolve in 325. They stood with Alexander against Arius.
- i) Added to the apostles creed Jesus was "begotten from the Father... God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made being of one substance [homoousios]."
  - ii) Fairbairn argues *homoousios* was selected not because everyone knew exactly what was meant, but because Arius would never agree to that language. Later councils would clarify what was meant.
  - iii) In other words, Nicaea was a "He Is Not That" but later more work would need to be done to say what is.
- c) Athanasius was banished (5x in total), a disciple of Alexander
- i) wrote *Against the Arians* in 345
  - ii) *On the Incarnation* is a classic work
- d) Constantine died in 337, Constantius favors Nicea, Constantius favors a kind of Arianism.
- e) 350-361, Bishops who affirmed Nicea exiled. Arian leaning approved. There was constant imperial pressure the church resisted. Its a myth orthodoxy won due to politics.
- f) Athanasius' argument eventually won out. He argued based on Ps. 45; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:4; and a host of other texts.
- i) Only God could save humanity. Only God, who is eternal, could bring eternal life. As long as the Son is a created being, eternal life is impossible.
  - ii) If Christ is only a creature, why do we worship him? If Arius is true, we are idolaters.
  - iii) The Father eternal begets, and the Son is begotten *eternally*. As Fred Sanders puts it, there is sentness in God. God sent God in the Son and the Spirit.
  - iv) What is salvation, is to make humans godlike (deified/theosis/Christlike), to be glorified. For us to be glorified, God had to take on flesh in the Son.

- g) Constantinople 1 in 381 would condemn semi-Arianism, affirm the fully deity of the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed took its full form. This is the most universally accepted statement of the Christian Faith.

#### 4) Takeaways

- a) **The key issue, do we have to rise up to God? Or does God have to come down to us?** If Jesus is less than the Father, in some sense, we have an intermediary not a mediator. It must be that the ones who come down (Son and Spirit) must be as fully God as the Father or salvation is impossible.
- b) **Issue is unity of Christ, his person and work, his divine and human natures. The unity of God**
- c) Some notes from a class with Dr. Donald Fairbairn...
- d) "What was not tolerated then, is tolerated today. We have gotten really sloppy with the most central truth of Christianity. We have tolerated it because we have accepted the interpretation of modern heretics about early heretics. (Dr. Donald Fairbairn's words) What do we make of this assertion?"
- e) God must come down for us to be saved. Christian salvation is impossible without the coming of the Son and the Spirit. If they have come down, then they must be from God and of God.
- f) "Not enough to say Jesus had two natures, divine and human. The crucial truth is *the one who became fully human* who did for us what we could not do for ourselves, was indeed the Son of God himself." (Dr. Fairbairn again)

## Lesson 4: Who is Jesus Christ? Is Jesus really human?

### 1) Hook: Is Jesus really human? The foolishness of the cross, how can God suffer human weakness and still be God?

Without a doubt, we desperately need to reflect deeply on the humanity of Jesus. The fear in our circles is that liberal or progressive Christianity stresses Jesus' humanity at the expense of his deity. We have no hesitations saying Jesus is God, but we struggle to speak equally well of his humanity other than he had a body. Without question with so many questions today come from differing views of what it means to be human, we need to look to Jesus' humanity to give a more robust account of his humanity.

For the first Christians the problem was similar and yet different. Their questions point at the heart of the cross for it was inconceivable that God would suffer on the cross. How could the eternal unchanging one, become human and suffer and die? How in the world is that supposed to be a solution to humanity's problem? Lets press in hard on these questions to understand precisely the crux of the problem and then to see more clearly the glory of our salvation.

### **Humanity of Christ**

The humanity of Christ is as critical as is the deity of Christ, in that apart from it there would be no way for Him to provide the avenue by which all humankind might be reconciled to Himself. In order for Him to be our High Priest, Mediator, and Atoning Sacrifice He needed to be from among man, yet sinless. (Heb. 2:14-18, 4:14-5:10) The gospel of Luke provides the view of Christ as Son of Man, while Matthew as King, Mark as Servant, and John as God.

### **Was born of woman**

- **Lk. 2:4-11**

v.6 What was completed?

v.7 What did Mary provide for Jesus and why?

### **Called man by Himself and others**

- **Jn. 8:40**

v.40 How does Jesus refer to himself?

- **Acts 2: 22-24**

v.22,23 How does Peter describe Christ?

v.23 What did man do to Him?

- **Rom. 5:15**

v.15 What word does Paul choose to describe Jesus on this occasion?

- **Phil. 2:5-8**

v.7 What did Jesus take on, according to Paul?

## 2) Texts: John 1:1-18, Eternal Word took on flesh

- a) A hard line between the Creator and creation
- b) The Son belongs above the line, though he entered
- c) Death as big problem

## 3) The Problem with Gnosticism, a perennial problem

- a) Gnosticism comes from one of the greek words for knowledge, *gnosis* (Lk. 1:77; Rom. 11:33; 2 Pet. 1:5-6; Co.. 2:3). Its the most basic word for knowledge in Greek. Interestingly, *gnosis* is used only 29x vs. *oida* which is used over 300x.
- b) It is related to and evolved from Platonism, the philosophy of Plato. That the spiritual world is where things exist in their purest form. The real world is only shadows, copies of the eternal forms. Thus, what is finite and created is imperfect and transient, thus the source of evil. What is eternal and unchanging is good, that is what is spiritual.
- c) Gnosticism is something that was in the background on some level for *every* church council. It has proven to be a perennial challenge to the Christian faith.
  - i) This was an incredibly diverse group, more of a movement than a codified system of belief. There was no one teacher of Gnosticism but was a constant threat from a variety of people.
  - ii) Examples of early Gnosticism in the NT would be seen in John's writings (**esp. 1 John**) and Paul in 1 Cor. 7, 8:1; or Colossians 2:8 or 1 Timothy 4:3, 6:20.
  - iii) This is a complicated subject but most important for us is to understand three things (Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*):
    - (1) Emphasis on spiritual knowledge
    - (2) Hierarchy of spiritual accomplishment
    - (3) Devaluation of material/physical life and a corresponding avoidance of ethical struggle in this material world.
  - iv) Implications in early church:
    - (1) Hierarchy of divinity, so Son less than the Father. Jesus humanity would be diminished.
    - (2) Only enlightened can have special knowledge of God. It was elitist and very concerned with power.
    - (3) Legalistic, ascetic approach to spirituality that we would interpret as "works righteousness" and would sometimes be very moral (denial of goodness of marriage and sex, 1 Cor. 7) and sometimes very immoral (denial that sexual immorality had any impact on

one's pure soul, 2 Pet.). The commonality is that temporal nature means what we do with it was either of no significance or indulging it all was a vehicle for evil. It is the former of these errors that we do not do much to guard against.

- v) **Key issue: Quoting Rutledge "Gnosticism in all its many forms prevents us from understanding the biblical witness to the crucifixion."**

d) The foolishness of the cross, how can God suffer human weakness and still be God?

- i) Remember the creed said Jesus was born, crucified, buried, and rose again.
- ii) It is unthinkable that the Son of God would suffer and this would be a good thing (something Islam finds untenable). Thus a variety of heresies
- iii) Doceticism (gk. *dokew*, to seem or to appear, found in Marcion) - Jesus only appeared to be human. He was like a "ghost in the shell," (like the A.I. personality in a machine) a transcendent consciousness in a body that seemed human. Docetic portrayals of Christ in apocryphal works would depicting him as experiencing no pain in his suffering. Jesus did not thirst, or grow hungry
  - (1) Refuted by Ignatius of Antioch (died a martyr), Polycarp, and definitively with Irenaeus.
  - (2) Affirmed Christ truly did live in weakness and suffered but did not sin that humanity may be redeemed (Rom. 5; Heb. 2:17). The cross is meaningless if Jesus was not truly human.
- iv) Appollinarianism - one person with one nature, the divine logos in a human body, i.e. Jesus did not have a human mind. He saw himself as defending orthodoxy!
  - (1) This serves as the beginning of all subsequent debates about the relationship between the two natures of Christ.
  - (2) Following Plato believed the human composed of three parts - body, soul, and spirit. Body and soul the lower parts of us. The spirit or intellect is the higher part of us.
  - (3) God is unchanging, all-knowing, and cannot suffer.
  - (4) So, into what sort of flesh can God be made? Jesus took on a soul and body but the divine Logos replaced the human mind.
- v) Refuted at Constantinople in 381 but launches the debates leading up to and after Chalcedon, 451.
  - (1) Key figure is Gregory of Nazianzus, who along with Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa pick up the mantle after Athanasius.
  - (2) Key quote: "what is unassumed is unredeemed."**
  - (3) Christ must have a human mind if our whole personhood is to be redeemed.

e) What is very important to recognize is that Gnosticism has proved to continue to challenge Christianity, especially us Protestants. Holcomb points out that most

conservative Christians today, in a rush to guard ourselves against liberal Christianity end up describing a Jesus very similar to Apollinarius' Jesus.

- f) Its also important to see that Gnostic thought still strongly influences western society from the New Age movement, the Da Vinci code books (with an ironic take on gnosticism), a lot of irreligious spirituality, views on sexuality appear to view the body as irrelevant.
- g) 1 John 3-4 two tests of life is affirming Christ came in the flesh, and caring for the physical needs of another.

#### 4) Takeaways

- a) Knowledge is important in Christianity but what are unhelpful and helpful ways of thinking about knowledge? What role does it play coming to know Christ and growing in Christ?
  - i) How do we guard against human arrogance in knowledge and elitism?
  - ii) How do we also recognize the importance and value of knowledge and guard against a persistent tendency towards anti-intellectualism?
- b) What other ways of knowing do we tend to neglect? How does Christ's humanity challenge are preferred ways of knowledge?
- c) It is very popular to use the term "gnostic" in a pejorative sense, to label anything that stresses knowledge as gnostic, or anything that diminishes physicality.
- d) What is lacking in discipleship if we assume we just have to get our mind right (e.g. Rom. 12:1-2)? Why does correct theology not always result in mature disciples?
- e) We tend to de-emphasize worship practices and spiritual disciplines out of fear of works righteousness or legalism. How can our worship practices reflect the importance of Jesus' humanity? If its merely about what we believe, then why did Jesus command us to obey the sacraments, or to care for the poor?

## Lesson 5: How can Jesus be both? Part 1

### 1) Hook: Sort of human?

#### **The State of Humiliation**

Most simply stated, when we talk about the humiliation of our Savior, Christ Jesus, we are discussing His coming in the flesh and what it involved. (Phil. 2:7-8, Gal. 4:4-5, Jn. 1:14) It is my belief that we will no more fully comprehend this concept this side of heaven than we will fully grasp the concept of the Trinity, but we strive together to grow to more fully understand our Savior, and what He did out of love for those He would call His own. The 5 main points concerning His humiliation that we will look at will be: His incarnation, suffering, death, burial, and descent into hades.

#### **Necessities of the Incarnation**

##### **Jn. 1:14**

- In v.14 Was something taken on, or does something appear to have been lost?

##### **Matt. 1:18 (many texts)**

- V.18 By whom did the Child enter Mary?
- According to Heb. 9:14 Was the conception of our Savior the end of the Holy Spirit's work and presence in our Saviors incarnation? Matt 3:16, Matt.4:1

##### **Is. 7:14/Matt.1:20-23**

- Is. 7:14 What sign was promised by the Lord?
- Matt. 1:23 Who is talking to Joseph, and how does he interpret Is.7:14?

##### **Heb. 5:1-9**

- V. 1 From where must a High Priest come?
- V. 5-7 Who called Christ as High Priest?
- V.8-9 Through His sufferings and perfection, He became what for us?

2) Text: Phil. 2:5-11

3) The humanity is not consumed by the deity

a) The problem of Docetism

b) Modern problem of kenoticism

4) Takeaways

## Lesson 6: How can Jesus be both? Part 2

### 1) Hook: One nature or two? Did God change in taking on flesh? Did God suffer and die on the cross?

Two questions that have been asked is what about God's immutability? That is the attribute of God that he does not change. How can we say that God remains the same in his nature and yet Jesus, the Son of God, took on a human nature? If God changed then how can he be said to be the same? If he had to change to secure our salvation that it seems he was lacking something, and if he lacked something how can he still be God?

The second question is related to a deeper mystery, that is did God suffer and die on the cross? Some have leveled popular depictions of what happened when Jesus died on the cross as "divine child abuse". There are a variety of ways this question is talked about today and so its important to explore. If God died on the cross than how could Jesus be raised? Is sin so bad and so powerful it killed even God? Were the Father and Son separated at the cross?

Both of these questions require resolving the question of how the two natures of Christ are related. This would be the key issue following Nicea and Constantinople I. It would take another hundred years to sort out and from some vantage points was never resolved. But it would be a mistake to say that "the definition of Chalcedon" does not reflect something true about Jesus because, at least immediately, because it lacked the universal support of Nicea. It would take several more councils to bring greater understanding of what Chalcedon meant.

It goes without saying that this is some really difficult stuff to press into. Additionally, they serve as the backdrop for debates among the Reformers surrounding the sacraments. How do the Lord's Supper and Baptism relate to the gospel? How is Christ said to be in the Lord's Supper? What is the purpose and benefit of Baptism? The debates between Luther, Zwingli, and later Calvin and others was all about how the understood Christology in relationship to the sacraments. (Side note: I think they all would have a lot to say in the negative about what many evangelicals believe today).

### The Suffering of our Savior

#### Life

##### **Is.53:3**

- How does Isaiah describe our Savior's life?

##### **Is. 53:6**

- What weight was Christ burdened with throughout His life?

##### **Is. 53:10-11**

- V.10 What did Christ endure on our behalf?

- V.11 What is the result, according to this verse?

## **Temptation**

### **Matt. 4-1-11**

- V.2 How long had Jesus gone without food?
- V.2-3 When did the Devil decide to attack?
- V.3-10 What were the attacks on our Savior? How did He respond?
- According to I Jn. 2:16, what 3 categories do our lusts fall into? Matt. 4:3-11 How do we see it play out in the temptation of our Savior?

### **Matt. 26:38-42**

- V.38 How is our Lord's grief described?
- V.39 What is His request?

1) V.42 How does Jesus settle the matter?

2) Text: Colossians 1:15-20

3) Divine and human divided, Nestorius

a) Key figures:

- i) We already discussed two who got it going, Apollinarius and Gregory of Nazianzus: "what is unassumed is unhealed. But what is united in God is also saved."
- ii) The next two figures are Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius. They are colorful characters and much debated.
- iii) There are a lot of complicated details, a lot of politics, and a lot of confusing terms that led to settling on what is called the "hypostatic union."
- iv) The defender of Orthodoxy and defeating of Arianism was Athanasius and his answer to the problem of God's immutability and the suffering of the Son of God was that "God suffered impassibly."
- v) Justin Holcomb asks us to consider these questions in reflecting on the relationship between the divine and human natures:

*"To take only one scenario, think of how differently his temptation in the desert would be interpreted if he had a divine but not a human mind. Or consider his redemptive sufferings on the cross — what if he were suffering only as an ordinary human being, or conversely only as a*

*human body propelled by a divine control center? Would that change how we look to Christ for inspiration or even salvation?"*

- Holcomb, Justin S.. Know the Creeds and Councils (KNOW Series Book 1) (p. 42). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

b) Politics and truth: Cyril and Nestorius, then Eutyches and Maximus

- i) At a glance, it would appear that Cyril and Nestorius represent two extremes. Cyril as an advocate for the monophysite (one nature and one person in Jesus) view and Nestorius for the dyophysite (two natures and two persons) view.
- ii) The politics of the next three councils Ephesus (431, 449, 475). Only the first is considered ecumenical. The opposing side were frozen out of two of them with deliberate political maneuvering so others could not attend. The mudslinging at times makes our present internet culture seem mild.
- iii) A huge part of the problem was trying to understand the terms people were using them and *how* they were using them.
- iv) But Fairbairn makes a crucial point... that doesn't mean the ultimate conclusion of Chalcedon was wrong.

c) Nestorius, Christ divided...

- i) A disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The aftermath of Apollinarius required a rethink of the incarnation. It should be noted these people are trying to argue *for* orthodoxy but the church ultimately determined their solution to be inadequate understanding of the gospel. This should sober us when it comes to contemporary debates, sometimes those passionately aiming end up missing the mark terribly. In my opinion, such sober mindedness is needed in current debates about social justice.
- ii) Nestorius and his mentors said, the human events of Jesus' life (tempted, hunger, suffering, etc) must be ascribed to the human Jesus independent of the Son of God or the Logos. Mass confusion centered around what different people meant by different words... ousia, physis, hypostasis, and prosopon.
- iii) Nestorius focused much on Mary and rejected that she was the "God-bearer" but the "Christ-bearer." Why does this all matter? Nestorius argued what we see in the Christ is the prosopon, the external presentation appears to be one person but is two. Nestorius was trying to guard the two natures from being confused and the human to be absorbed by the divine, or the divine to be changed by the human.
- iv) But when we press into *how* they were using familiar and yet confusing terms it was a different gospel than others. Fairbairn says, "The picture that emerged... was that of Christ as a uniquely graced man, a man who received grace from the indwelling Logos in a greater way than we do from the indwelling Holy Spirit." Therefore, "He is not God the Son who

has come down to save us, but rather he is a divinely indwelt man who can lead us up to God.” (Story of Creeds, 88)

- v) Thus, Nestorius spoke of two persons whom we see as one. Jesus in a super simplistic way had a split personality, like the Hulk. For Nestorius, the man Jesus died on the cross but the Logos did not suffer. Mary did not give birth to the Son of God, but the Christ who appeared as a man. To Cyril and others, Nestorius’ mistake was worse than Apollinarius.
- d) Eutyches, Christ united...
  - i) It may be best to speak of the opposite error at this point, who does overlap this period before moving the controversial defender of Orthodoxy in Cyril.
  - ii) If Nestorius made a grave mistake in overly separating the two natures then Eutyches made an equally grave mistake but stressing the union of the two natures in Christ. Jesus is in effect and entirely new kind of being with the divine and human natures fused together into one person. Eutyches was a follower of Cyril and took what he was arguing for to the opposite error of Nestorius. The humanity would be absorbed he deity.
- e) Cyril of Alexandria
  - i) What Cyril argued for again and again was that the Logos was the same one who was born of Mary, is the same one who was baptized, tempted, and lived. Jesus was the same one who suffered, died, buried, and was raised. The same one who came down was the same one who was raised.
  - ii) Cyril’s stress on the one person of Christ, in part due to confusing terminology, has been interrupted as a monophysite. In the aftermath of the Ephesian councils, and even after Chalcedon, churches in the east broke off. These would be Assyrian church of the East (yes the same as the one down the street), Coptic, Ethiopian Orthodox, Russian, etc. It begins the road to the great schism and the iconoclasm (along with a lot other political drama). It should be noted that today, the ACE and others have settled their long disagreements with the Western in affirming what Chalcedon was and was not.
  - iii) Definition (or Symbol) of Chalcedon 451...

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

[\*Historic Creeds and Confessions\*](#), electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Lexham Press, 1997).

- f) Is Jesus one person or two? One nature or two?
- i) What is the key here? It is about WHO did it not what. The WHO is crucial!
  - ii) It really was the Son of God who came down from heaven. Salvation is fully an act of God's grace and in assuming our nature, God himself united our frailty with his eternal life. Salvation is not merely a deliverance from sin, but an invitation into the divine life shared between Father and Son. It is about living out our adoption as sons and daughters of God.
  - iii) What this means for God's immutability? God's nature is unchanged for it is the person of the Son of God who added to his divinity, humanity. The two natures remain distinct but are united in the one person. This is not a contradiction but a paradox. Fairbairn says simply, "Natures do not act. Persons do."
  - iv) It really was the Son of God who suffered but without ceasing to be the Son and united with the Trinity. Hence, many many evangelical theologians think the hymn is wrong that the FAther turned his face away.
  - v) Divine child abuse? No! BUT the answer does point to popular ways that we speak of the death of Christ do describe it like that. This is a misunderstanding of what penal substitution is and is not. It also reflects confusion about the Trinity.
  - vi) The Father sent his Son and the Son willingly laid down his life. Father's gaze upon his Son did not cease because the wrath of God was laid on the Son fully. It pleased the Father to do this, the Son endured it for our joy knowing we would be reconciled to God. Furthermore, separating the Son from the Father would suggest that sin is more powerful than God! **It was God the Son who suffered, yet God the Son suffered AS A MAN.** This is where a robust understanding of the incarnation is helpful. It was the Son of God who chose to suffer for us, but the suffering was with respect to his human nature. But it was the person, the Son of God, who did the work in the flesh. Because the divine and human natures were united in the person of Christ, the eternal divine life brings eternal life to the finite human life. The divine life cannot be defeated, cannot be overcome, and it was necessary for it to be united with the human in Christ for us to have eternal life by being united with Christ by the Spirit. It also means that God himself in the Son redeemed *all* of human experience for even on Holy Saturday Christ was there.
- g) Fairbairn says:
- i) It is not enough to speak of Christ as divine and human. It is not enough to say that he is one person who possesses two natures.

- ii) The crucial truth is that the one who became fully human, the one who did for us what we could not and would not do ourselves, was indeed God the Son himself.
- iii) Chalcedon (451) states this clearly and unequivocally, in spite of what modern interpreters say about it.
- iv) If the truth were anything less than this, salvation would be impossible.

#### 4) Takeaways

## Lesson 7: How can Jesus be both? Part 3

### 1) Hook: Was Jesus really tempted in every way as we are? How can he redeem our will to be one with God?

We have come to the last issue we will address in how Jesus is one person with two natures, which we call the “hypostatic union.” We answered last week the crucial thing to understand is scripture speaks of one person throughout the New Testament. However the mystery of the two natures of Christ relate, they are united in that Jesus was one person. There is only one “who” to be our mediator between God and man.

Now we move to what is called the “two-will controversy.” When Jesus was faced with temptation, did he really face it as we did? Wouldn’t the divine will enable him to do what we cannot and therefore, he wasn’t really tempted like us? To be tempted is to be human is it not? How can it be said he was divine if his human will made him as weak as us?

In the aftermath of Chalcedon in 451, the controversy continued in trying to understand its implications. Many eastern churches, (formerly referred to as Oriental churches) rejected Chalcedon as too “Nestorian”. It would come to a head and reach its conclusion in a third council at Constantinople in 681 to decided the issue of one will or two will’s in the person of Christ. If Christ is one person did he not have one will? Or does will belong to nature and thus he had “two wills”? The importance relates to how we understand where sin comes from. Is sin a problem of the mind, thus the solution is education? Is sin a problem of the body, thus the solution is spiritual? Or is sin a problem of the will? One can see today that some simplistic solutions we give to our problems or societies problems rest in a simplistic or misunderstanding of what it means to be human. Wrestling with the human will set against God should be seen as of primary importance in the Christian faith, not a body, mind, or merely spiritual problem. But a problem of the will.

### His Death

#### Gal. 3:13

- How does Paul describe what our Savior took on our behalf?

**Heb. 2:9**

- According to the author of Hebrews, what did Christ taste on our behalf?

**II Cor. 5:21**

- According to this verse, He who was sinless became what for us?

**Rom. 3:24-25**

- V.25 Whom was displayed publicly for propitiation of our sin? Think about what that means.

**Rom. 8:3**

- How and why was our Savior sent, according to this verse?

**I Jn. 4:9-10**

- The Father sent the Son, and the Son of God chose to come..why according to V.10
- V.10 What was not the cause of His coming?

**Is. 53:4-9**

- How was the death of our Savior described?
- V.6 The Father put what of ours on Him?
- V.7 How would you describe the way he took on our penalty?

**2) Text: Matt. 26:36-46 (cf. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15)**

- a) What do we mean by will? How might this be distinguished from sinful desires or godly desires? [Open question]
- b) Was the Son's will opposed to the Father's?
  - i) How can we say God would have a divided will within himself?
  - ii) If we conclude there are three will's, does that not infringe on the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit such that we would have 3 gods?
- c) If will belongs to nature, how can Christ be one person with two wills?

**3) Redeeming the will,**

- a) Scholar Demetrios Bathrellos puts it like this: "If Christ did not have two distinct wills — namely, a human will next to his divine will — then a basic aspect of our humanity would have been left unassumed, or would have been confused with the divinity, and this would have endangered not only the reality of the humanity of Christ and his consubstantiality with us [in other words, Christ would not have

really been human as we understand human], but also the reality of our salvation.”

Holcomb, Justin S.. Know the Creeds and Councils (KNOW Series Book 1) (pp. 81-82). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

- b) Consider these two examples to make it clear why this is important: Pyrrhus (one will) and Maximus the Confessor (two wills) from “Know the Creeds and Councils”

*To see how the “one will” versus “two will” theories make a difference, consider how a Monothelite theologian, Pyrrhus, and a Dyothelite theologian, Maximus, handle the issue of Christ’s suffering. Pyrrhus describes the plea of agony at the garden of Gethsemane as “expressing our nature, which loves life and does not want to die.”<sup>28</sup> Christ was not really asking the Father to spare him the cross, Pyrrhus explains, since that would mean that Christ was willing something that the Father did not. Instead, he was empathizing with how one of us would feel in the situation. By way of contrast, Maximus argued that Christ genuinely wrestled with the question of dying, but redeemed our disobedience in Eden by making his human will obedient to the point of death. Pyrrhus’s position certainly resolves some potential difficulties with Christ’s divinity, especially his relationship to God the Father, but in the final analysis, Christ’s life ends up being a sort of sham, where he takes on human experience as though he is playing a part in a play. Thus, the seemingly minor doctrine of “two wills” has real consequence.*

Holcomb, Justin S.. Know the Creeds and Councils (KNOW Series Book 1) (p. 82). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

- c) Maximus the Confessor becomes the champion of Orthodoxy and no major group in Christianity affirms “one will.”
- i) He reasoned that because God is one nature and three persons, and also one will then the will must be a function of nature.
  - ii) Its not merely the mind, our cognitive ability that needs healing, but it is our will. Our will needs to be redeemed so Christ must have assumed it.
  - iii) Until Constantinople III in 681 Maximus was persecuted by one will defenders in the east horribly. Exiled in 654. His right hand and tongue cut off in 661, and was martyred before the council in 662. (Story of... 151)
  - iv) It was necessary for Christ, the Son of God, to bring the human will into submission to accomplish our salvation.

#### 4) Takeaways

- a) One thing that is important to see is that by not giving into temptation, Christ experienced it to a greater degree than we did since by giving into it, we do not feel its full force.
- b) Another is to see that the divine and human will are not in fundamental conflict as perceived by modern people. In Christ we see the human and divine wills can be at peace and work in harmony. It is not a threat to us, to have our wills conformed to Christ’s will but rather is how we become more fully human, living in

partnership and dependence on our heavenly Father by the Spirit that we may be like the Son our Lord.

c) Slide takeaways from Fairbairn

## Lesson 8: How can Jesus be both? Part 4

### 1) Hook: Answering lingering questions

Divine child abuse

Helpful resources - KNOW Series

#### Resources

##### *Beginner*

**Michael Reeves. *Rejoicing in Christ*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015**

Michael Bird. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*, 2nd ed. Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Athanasius of Alexandria. *Athanasius: On the Incarnation of the Word of God*. Translated by T. Herbert Bindley. Second Edition Revised. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1903.

**Justin Holcomb. *Know the Creeds and Councils*. Zondervan, 2014.**

**Justin Holcomb. *Know the Heretics*. Zondervan, 2014.**

##### *Intermediate*

**Donald Fairbairn and Ryan Reeves. *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.**

Ward, Mark, Jessica Parks, Brannon Ellis, and Todd Hains, eds. *Lexham Survey of Theology*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018.

##### *Advanced*

Richard Norris, Jr., Ed. *The Christological Controversy*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1980.

Cole, Graham A. *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Vol. 30. New Studies in Biblical Theology. England; Downers Grove, IL:

Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2013.

##### *Hella Advanced*

**Ian McFarland. *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2019.**

Anything by T.F. Torrance

##### *Other Supplemental Resources*

**Michael Reeves. *Delighting in the Trinity*. InterVarsity Press Academic, 2012.**

Donald Fairbairn. *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Fred Sanders. *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*. 2nd. Ed. Crossway, 2017.

- 2) Texts
- 3) What is the gospel?
- 4) Takeaways

## **Lesson 8**

### **His Burial**

His burial is considered part of the state of humiliation, as death and burial is directly tied to the penalty of sin entering the human race through Adam. Dying and returning to dust, or undergoing decay, are a direct result of the punishment of sin (Gen 3:19), and are played out in the burial of humankind. Although our Savior did not “undergo decay” (Ps. 16:10) He was subjected to burial in the ground just like any other human. Because of its tie to the curse of sin, it is considered a humiliation as described in some passages of scripture we will look at. Not only did His burial further prove the truth of His death on the cross, but also sanctified the grave for us, as He removed the terror of the finality of death, burial, and decay for the redeemed.

### **Gen. 3:17-19**

- In v.17 this “curse” has come about why? Because man chose to listen to his wife and sin by disobeying God.
- In v.19 What were we taken from and to what shall we return? Dust- humankind was not intended to die and decay, but this is a direct result of sin entering the race through Adam.

### **Ps.16:10-11**

- In Acts 2:24 Peter describes that the fulfillment of this Psalm in Christ’s resurrection put an end to what?
- Acts 2:29-32 in 29-30 how do we know David was not referring to himself? I believe David probably was considering his resurrection here, but also through the Spirit pointing to Christ’s conquering of the grave as the avenue by which this would occur. Ps. 13:34-37

### **Rom. 6:1-6**

- V.3 Baptism symbolizes what in a believers life? Baptized into His death.
- V.4 After we come out of baptism, it symbolizes what in the life of a believer? Just as Christ was raised from the dead, so we are raised to new life in Him when we are saved. Baptism in water does not achieve this, but is merely a outward symbol for what has occurred.
- V.6 What does it mean when we say we are “crucified with Him”, according to this verse? We are saying “that our body of sin has been done away with.” We are no longer slaves to sin, but are free. In this verse the humiliation of His death is tied to the fact it represented the death of our old sinful nature. Sin=death Rom. 6:23, James 1:14-15

## **Lesson 9**

### **Decent into Hades**

In my opinion (Dan and with maybe a little more historical context I, Chris, would agree), I believe that there is confusion around this topic. Even in the earliest forms of the Apostolic Creed, there is not consistency around this idea. There was confusion in the melding and translation of languages (Latin & Greek), where some would translate “inferna” Hades or others would translate it “lower parts”. Some copies had this idea but omitted the discussion of His burial. Some omitted the descent idea, and only mentioned His burial. In this one man’s opinion, I believe there was a lot going on from the cross to His resurrection that we will never know this side of heaven, as the scriptures do not make clear these elements to us. (at least not to me) I believe this idea was meant to address His burial, or descent into the earth in death, where He demonstrated His power over death through His resurrection. We will investigate a few of the verses used for this topic and see what we can glean from them.

### **Eph. 4:9**

- In this verse it is argued that the descent spoken of here represents the soul of our Lord descending into Hades
- V.9 starts out with “Now this expression”- what is this referring to? The OT quote from Ps.68:18 in v.8
- What is the writer establishing with his argument about the implication of ascent? He states that one must first descend before they can ascend.
- In v.10 he continues this line of thought by demonstrating this person (Christ v.7) is the one who has done this. Then contrasts the height of His ascension with the previous description “lower parts” in v.9 with “ascended far above all the heavens” to paint the picture of the magnitude of His glorification above all.
- The passage seems to be establishing more the point of His incarnation on earth (Jn. 3:13), which brought about the fulfillment of the quote “He gave gifts to man v.8” and fits the overall theme of how believers ought to live with one another 4:1-2. This line of thought fits better with the transition to the application of spiritual gifts in the church v.11-12. The picture of the body in the womb is clearer as the subject in Ps.139:15, which uses similar language by David speaking of God forming his body in the “depths of the earth”.

### **I Pet. 3:18-19**

- Here it is argued by supporters of the descent theory that these verses demonstrate Christ’s soul descended into Hades to proclaim His victory to the spirits held captive there. Some say to provide a second chance to them, others just to proclaim the news.
- In v. 18 He was “put to death in the flesh” ..what next? Made alive in the Spirit. In this case it appears to be referring to the Holy Spirit’s work, which is consistent with Heb. 9:14
- In v.19 it refers to spirits. What does it say about them? That He went and made proclamation to them that are NOW in prison. The “now” is in italics, which indicates the

word was not present in the original texts, but implied by the language. This implies they are currently in prison, but at the time of Noah they were not.

- In v.20 it continues to describe these spirits. How are they described? They were disobedient in the days of Noah. In v. 19 the writer speaks of the “Spirit” mentioned in v.18 as going to preach to these persons. It seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit preached through Noah to these persons back in the day of Noah, and that these persons are “NOW” in prison as a result of their lack of repentance. This is consistent with the overall topic of this section of scripture, which is suffering. We are called to suffer for what is right, as Christ suffered in obedience to the Father. The persons in the days of Noah suffer for disobedience to Christ.
- V.21 then ties it together by discussing the connection of baptism and Noah and company coming through the flood alive. He teaches the difference between outward cleanliness and the purification of our complete beings by our repentance and cleansing of Christ’s work.
- The other issue with the idea of Christ’s soul descending to Hades would be something we discussed previously about the unity of the Triune God. Could the Holy Spirit separate from the Son’s person and operate independently of Father and Son? I would say no, we have looked previously at the presence of God fully active in the work of salvation Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To begin to think of separate persons operating independently leads us to some of the erroneous views we discussed concerning the various heresies. Modalism comes to mind as the trap of this type of thought.

### **I Pet 4:4-6**

- Here the supporters of the descent theory suggest that v.6 implies this theory.
- This passage carries on the thought of suffering for what is right.
- V.1-4 discuss how Christ suffered in the flesh and we should arm ourselves with the same purpose.
- He goes on to state in v.3-4 that they have spent enough time pursuing sinful lusts, but now are called to the will of God.
- V.4 The writer explains that the change to obedience to the will of God would confound the unrepentant and cause them to malign them v. 4.
- V.5-6 Discuss the fact that all will give an account to God for their actions- living and dead Acts 10:42-43
- V.6 Seems to imply that the same gospel was preached to those who died before, indicating that they are saved by faith in Christ, no different than anyone else v.6 “Live in the Spirit”
- V.6 The other thing to notice is that it says “they are judged in the flesh as men”. This can only happen while they are alive.

# Throwing down Ideas - Planning and Brainstorming

Goal: To help people see from scripture the universal witness of church that Jesus is the “God-man” who is the only savior.

## Definition

**The doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ encompasses the various aspects of his identity as the eternal Word made flesh as well as the various aspects of his accomplishment of redemption from his incarnation to his exaltation to the Father’s right hand.<sup>1</sup>**

## Scope

- There is a wide range of things that can be discussed but we do not have to cover them all
- This includes several subjects of which people can sometimes be confused as to how they relate to gospel or if they are even important.<sup>2</sup>
  - The names and titles of Jesus (Son of God, Son of Man, etc.)
  - The Unity of Jesus’ person as fully divine and fully human (hypostatic union)
  - Jesus’ mediatorial work
    - Second Adam
    - Office of Prophet, Priest, and King
    - Jesus as Judge
  - The work of Jesus in bringing salvation and atoning for our sins
    - Jesus’ humiliation
      - Incarnation and life (under this would be impeccability, virgin birth, and “kenosis”)
      - Crucifixion and death (under this would be “theories of the atonement,” its extent, and his descent into hell which widely misunderstood what its about and not about)
    - Jesus’ Exaltation
      - Resurrection and ascension
      - Jesus’ reign at right hand of God and Intercession
- **It my judgment we should focus on the person of Christ and aim to show that debates about the person of Christ were critical in getting the gospel right on the grounds of scripture and in order to understand the work of Christ.**
  - Discussion of church councils is helpful but it should be demonstrated how their conclusions *illuminated scripture*.
  - Contrary to many popular perceptions, I am persuaded the councils were *not* corrupted by political concerns or Greek philosophy. There are a few exceptions in later centuries such as “the robber synod.”

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Sanders, [“The Person and Work of Christ.”](#) in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> This follows the layout from the above article by Sanders.

- Speaking to his mediatorial work should be brief and simple
- Addressing his work of atonement is enough material for a class all its own.

Some fundamental concepts important but not the focus of the class.

- The unity of the Bible and of the work of Father, Son, and Spirit throughout the whole Bible (inseparable operations).
- God's accommodation/condescension to us to reveal himself to us (analogy of scripture)
- The distinction between the divine essence and divine persons and how they are related to the divine acts in history vs. divine essence in eternity.
- This is a "top shelf" doctrine that apart from the whole gospel falls apart and everything else in one's theology will be corrupted.
  - Grace should be granted to the innocently confused or misunderstanding on terminology and semantics. Trust people's Spirit driven intuition and help them see the Spirit at work there.
  - Repentance to those who willfully deny its truths.
  - There is sufficient grounds on this subject to take quite seriously if one departs from the boundaries laid in Nicea and Chalcedon.
  - But we should also recognize there is a lot of room for people to explore here within the bounds of orthodoxy. **It is not as narrow as many perceive but the guardrails are there to keep you from driving off a cliff.**
- Two critical related doctrines are our theology of God and of human beings.

Proposed Outlines for class

## **PERSON AND WORKS OF CHRIST**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this class is to guide people to and through the scripture to develop a greater understanding of our Savior, Jesus Christ and through this exercise foster a deeper love and desire to feast upon the inspired perfect word of God (Heb. 4:12 II Tim. 3:16). Only through God's perfect word can we begin to understand the depths of His love for us, who He is, learn to discern His will, and be equipped to discern that which is true (II Tim.2:15).

### **Names of Christ**

Studying the names the Father has used for His Son will begin to reveal the person, nature, office, and work he came to accomplish. This will set the stage for following study points.

#### **· Son of Man (82 occurrences in the gospels)**

Jesus' favorite self-designation, cf. Dan. 7:13 compare with Ezekiel's usage of phrase)

#### **- Son of God (28 occurrences)**

#### **- Lord and Savior (lots)**

**These titles I think are primary and filled with confusion. It thinks its important to spend extended time on them.**

The last Adam I Cor. 15:45

- Advocate I Jn. 2:1
- Almighty/Alpha & Omega Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18
- Anointed One Acts 4:25 Christ Matt. 1:16, Rom. 14:9 - many texts
- Arm of the Lord Isa. 53:1
- Atoning Sacrifice I Jn.2:2
- Author of our faith Heb. 12:2
- Author of life Acts 3:15
- Author of salvation Heb. 2:10
- Bread of God/Bread of Life Jn. 6:12, 6:35
- Bridegroom Matt. 9:15
- Chief Shepherd I Pet. 5:4
- Commander of the Lord's army Josh. 5:14
- Cornerstone Eph. 2:20, I Pet. 2:6
- Everlasting Father/Wonderful/Counselor/Mighty God/Prince of Peace Isa. 9:6
- Still working and organizing- going to come back to this and use the names that make sense for guiding the following study...due to the sheer volume of names. (could probably spend a year just studying His names!)

### **Natures of Christ**

Throughout the years it is safe to say that there have been various attempts to distort, water down, and re-package Christ in a more easily understandable human package that is more palatable for consumption by the masses. The basic thrust of the attempts is to simplify the divine revelation of the 2 natures of Christ- both divine and human. It has not changed today. From whatever motive that drives it – ego of man, wisdom of this world, or the gates of hell itself, to diminish Christ and reduce him to a version more easily understood by man is to create a false Christ to stand up in His place. This too is nothing new, look no further than the OT for plentiful examples of man's inclination to re-package God. We hold this truth- Christ was both 100% human and 100% divine, as revealed in God's inerrant Word.

## Deity of Christ

Some names to consider (by no means exhaustive)

- Anointed One/Lord's Anointed (Messiah/Christ) Matt. 1:16, Acts 4:25-26 Rom. 3:21-25- many texts
- Commander of the Lord's Army Josh. 5:14
- High Priest Heb. 2:16-18
- God Rom. 9:5, Titus 2:13, II Pet. 1:1
- I Am Jn. 8:58 Compare-Ex. 3:14

Scripture proofs to study pertaining to the deity of Christ

### Old Testament

· OT Viewed through the lens of the NT to reveal His deity (this is an important principle of hermeneutics- interpret the Bible through the Bible whenever possible) Ps. 2:6-12/Heb.1:5, Ps. 45:6-7/Heb.1:8-9, Ps.110:1/Heb.1:13

The OT is opaque on Jesus, "it is like a room richly furnished but dimly lit" (BB Warfield)

"Angel of the Lord" passages very important to discuss for it sets the stage for the incarnation. But these are not "Christophanies" since God is Trinity we must not divide the works of the persons of the Trinity. God is a unity and Father Son and Spirit are at work in all that God does since he is eternal Father, Son and Spirit.

Exodus 3, 24, 33-34 also absolutely crucial. Key is the that God is hidden yet revealed. This remains true in the person of Jesus (much to explain as to what I mean and do not mean). If we stick close to what scripture reveals and to what it does not reveal this should be clear.

· Is. 9:6, Jer. 23:6, Dan. 7:13/Acts 1:9-11, 2:33, Mic.5:2/Jn 7:42, Zech.13:7/Matt.26:31

### New Testament

- "I Am"- Jn. 8:58
- Phil. 2:6 Existed in the form of God
- Col.1:19, 2:9 Fullness of deity dwells

His Actions Declare Deity

- Rom. 1:4 Resurrection
- Mk. 2:1-11/Is. 43:11 Forgiveness of sins
- Matt. 9:18-26, Lk. 7:11-17, Jn. 11:1-44 Power over death
- Matt. 11:2-5/Is.35:5 healing of deaf, mute, blind, and lame

- Hebrews 1:1-3

## Humanity of Christ

The humanity of Christ is as critical as is the deity of Christ, in that apart from it there would be no way for Him provide the avenue by which all men might be reconciled to Himself. In order for Him to be our High Priest, Mediator, and Atoning Sacrifice He needed to be from among man, yet sinless. (Heb. 2:14-18, 4:14-5:10) The gospel of Luke provides the view of Christ as Son of Man, while Matthew as King, Mark as Servant, and John as God.

Scripture proofs to study pertaining to the humanity of Christ:

Further clarifications (to be integrated into lessons when appropriate)

Terms to define: hypostatic union, substance, subsistence, "persons", essence...

These terms properly defined are not, as many believe, philosophical distortions of scripture but ways of summarizing what scripture clearly teaches about Jesus.

What is the relationship between the two natures?

Jesus humanity and divinity were not mixed or confused but remain distinct

Two-will Christology important to understand for Christ' priestly role in us handling temptation (Matt. 26:36-46).

How does Jesus' divinity relate to the God of Israel (Marcionism to be rejected but a common confusion)?

Jesus is not a super human (euthychism)

Jesus is not a human who ascended to divinity (apollinarianism)

Jesus did not only appear to be human (docetiscism - This one is very important since many evangelicals so emphasize his divinity so as to diminish the important of his humanity.)

Jesus is the God-man, God the Son assuming flesh

What was affirmed at Nicea and Chalcedon?

What does Phil. 2 mean by the "self-emptying (kenosis)?"

What does Colossians 1:18 mean that Jesus is the firstborn and the beginning? Does that imply Jesus is not eternal?

## Pastoral Questions

If Jesus could not sin, how can he be helpful for me when I struggle with temptation?

If Jesus was a Jewish man who lived 2000 years ago, what relevance is that to me as a (for example) 21st century woman? Is Jesus' humanity defined by having particular features?

If Jesus is divine, why doesn't the Bible say "Jesus is God" or why didn't Jesus say it directly and why is it said so indirectly?

Is Jesus talking to himself when he prays?

How was Jesus conceived? What does it mean that he was conceived “by the Holy Spirit? Is Jesus a demi-god like Hercules when Zeus slept with a woman? Why not?

If God is infinite and eternal, how can God take on finite and temporal flesh?

Did God die on the cross? Was Jesus separated from his Father?

Was Jesus subordinate to the Father? (NO, in the way many people tend to think about it, that would be Arianism. Yes with respect to his humanity but absolutely not with respect to his divinity. Christ also willingly laid down his own life and was united with the Father’s will. Also, consider the manner in which Jesus used his authority Mark 10:45. Everything about his incarnation flips our conceptions of authority and submission on its head.)

... others...

Apologetic Issues:

Why Jehovah’s witnesses get John 1 wrong

Why church of latter day saints gets Jesus’ sonship wrong

Islam’s distortion of Jesus

Jesus’ incarnation is not an “avatar” as Hare Krishna or Hindu gods

Other projections of people’s desires onto Jesus...