

LESSON 2:

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE. LIVE OUT YOUR FAITH.

Christ is the central theme of Christianity, and Christology is the study what we believe about of the *person* and *work* of Jesus Christ. The whole substance and strength of the Christian faith revolves around the person and work of the Son of God.

I. PRE-INCARNATION

A. THE MEANING OF PRE-INCARNATION

The word “incarnation” comes from the Latin word meaning “EN-FLESH-MENT.” The incarnation of Christ refers to when He was “made flesh” (Jn 1:1-3, 12-14). Pre-incarnation refers to the existence of Christ *before* His birth, before creation and before time; that Jesus Christ is eternal and has always existed (1 Tim 3:16). Cults usually (i.e. Jehovah’s Witnesses) deny the eternal existence of Christ.

B. EVIDENCE FOR PRE-EXISTENCE

If Christ came into existence only at His birth, then He was/is not eternal; He then would not be equal to God the Father—the trinity does not exist. God alone is eternal; thus, if Christ did not exist before His own birth, His own claims to being God were lies.

1. The word “BEGOTTEN” (Psa 2:7) — The word shows relationship of nature; the Messiah would be/ is the “Son” of God, and thus the Father and Son would be/are equal in essence. (Jn 1:14-18; 3:16-18; Heb 1:5; 5:5; 1 Jn 4:9; See also Jn 5:18).
2. The eternity of the “Begotten” Son — His Heavenly Origin (Jn 3:13, 31). His Work as Creator (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). His Relationship to the Father (Jn 10:30; 17:5; Phil 2:6). The Testimony of John the Baptist (Jn 1:15,30). The Testimony of OT Prophets (Mic 5:2; Hab 1:12; Isa 9:6). The Testimony of Christ (Jn 8:58; Rev 1:8, 17-18).

II. INCARNATION

A. THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Romans 5:12-19 demonstrates that the sinful nature of man is inherited through Adam’s seed; specifically the man. By implication, one born of a virgin would not have inherited the universal sinfulness of humanity.

Logically it would seem that since life is in the blood (Lev 17:11), when man sinned it affected his blood. Jesus was born of a woman but did not have a drop of Adam's blood in His veins. From the time of conception to time of birth of an infant, not one drop of blood ever passes from mother to child. The blood of Christ was sinless and incorruptible, and His body saw no decay when He was buried. (Matt 1:18; 27:4; Acts 2:31; I Pet 1:18-19; Heb 9:22; Rev 1:5)

B. HE EMPTIED HIMSELF (PHIL 2:7)

1. "Made... of no reputation" means *emptying*.
2. Christ did not "empty" Himself of His deity.
3. Christ did not "empty" Himself of certain divine attributes. He was always holy, just and true.
4. Christ surrendered/set aside the free and independent exercise of certain attributes—omnipotence, omnipresence, etc. (Matt 26:53; Jn 8:29; 4:34)

C. CHRIST MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN

1. He was "made flesh" (Jn 1:14) and thus *manifested* (1 Jn 1:1-3), or *revealed* unto mankind as a man.
2. He was "made in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7); Made in "the form" and "like" mankind. Christ became like man in the humanity of his nature, but not in the sinfulness of his nature.
3. As we are "partakers of flesh and blood, [Christ] also himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb 2:14). "Partakers" means to share fully. All of Adam's children do, "flesh and blood." "Took part" means to take part but not all; i.e. – not the sinfulness of humanity, but of humanity itself.

III. HUMANITY

A. BIRTH

Christ was born of a virgin (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18-23; Lk 1:27). On several occasions He is referred to as Joseph's son (Lk 3:23), but in each case this is done by those who were not His friends or who were as yet imperfectly acquainted with Him (Philip, in Jn 1:45). Jesus used the title "Son of man" for Himself more than any other, thus identifying with His humanity (found eighty times in the NT).

B. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Christ's physical and mental development resulted not from His deity, but from the ordinary laws of human growth, unhindered by corruption. His mental growth can be attributed to His training in a godly home, and His regularity at the synagogue (Luke 2:40,52).

C. APPEARANCE

The woman of Samaria recognised Jesus as a Jew by His features and speech. To her He was just an ordinary Jewish man. There is no Biblical warrant for surrounding the head of Christ with a halo. He did not have long hair nor was He effeminate!

D. WEAKNESS?

He experienced fatigue through hunger, thirst, tiredness, etc. He wept over the death of His friend Lazarus. However, He never became sick or suffered from disease. (Matt 4:2; Jn 4:6; 11:35; 19:28)

IV. DEITY

A. DIVINE NAMES WERE GIVEN TO HIM

Doubting Thomas referred to Him as God. The Jews wanted to kill Him because He said that God was His Father. (Jn 5:18; 14:6-11; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Rev 1:8)

B. DIVINE WORSHIP WAS ASCRIBED TO HIM

The Scriptures recognize worship as being due to God alone. Jesus Christ accepted such worship and even called for it. (Matt 4:10; Lk 24:52; Jn 20:28)

C. DIVINE OFFICES WERE GRANTED TO HIM

He is the Creator and Sustainer/Upholder of all things (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17). He has the right to forgive sins (Mk 2:5-10). He is the judge of all men (Jn 5:22).

D. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES POSSESSED BY HIM

Omnipotence (Matt 28:18). Omniscience (Jn 16:30). Omnipresence (Matt 18:20). Immutability (Heb 13:8)

V. TEMPTATION

A. COULD JESUS SIN?

The Bible says He did not sin, but could He have sinned? Some attribute to Christ the inability to sin. Others concede only that He was able not to sin—in other words, by the power of God He did not yield to sin. To the human mind the thought of temptation without the possibility of sinning seems unreal. If He could have sinned then God could sin... this is unthinkable! The two-fold nature of Christ is a mystery. (1 Tim 3:16; Jas 1:13; Matt 4:1-11)

B. WAS HIS TEMPTATION GENUINE?

1. Jesus fasted forty days (Matt 4:1-11).

Jesus fasted forty days, identifying with both Moses (Ex 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8)—the two greatest prophets of Israel. Although He was as weak as any man ever would be when tempted, He too overcame sin by the power of God. Jesus never performed a miracle to meet a personal need; His fasting was not supernaturally sustained by Himself (Matt 4:2).

2. Jesus was tempted in every part of His humanity.

Jesus did not experience every kind of temptation, but was tempted in every part of His humanity (Matt 4:1-11; 1 Jn 2:16). Hebrews 4:15 states that He did so “without sin” which means apart from sin (singular, referring to the absence of sin-nature).

3. Jesus temptation proved he was God.

His temptation was not to see if He *would* sin, but to prove that because He was the Son of God He would *not* sin.

4. The experiencing of Jesus' temptation was not sin.

Temptation is not sin in itself; the yielding to temptation is sin. The suffering of temptation lies in our resistance to it; those who resist struggle most (Jas 1:14; Heb 12:2-4).

VI. DEATH

The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is the fundamental theme of the Gospel. It is this redemption that distinguishes Christianity from any and all other religions.

A. AS A RANSOM

Jesus said that He came to “give His life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). To “ransom” means to buy back a person by paying the price for which he is held in captivity. Man is “sold under sin” (Rom 7:14)

B. AS A PROPITIATION

“Propitiation” means to satisfy. Christ is the “propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn 2:2). The mercy seat covering the ark of the covenant was called a “propitiation”. God’s holiness demands punishment for sin, and God can only forgive sinners by the death-payment of Christ for sin. (Isa 53:11; Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5)

C. AS A RECONCILIATION

“Reconciliation” means to cause or affect a thorough change. God was “reconciling the world unto Himself” through Jesus Christ. Christ’s death removed the enmity (the sin barrier) existing between God and man (2 Cor 5:18-19, 21).

D. AS A SUBSTITUTION

The Scriptures say that Christ was “wounded for our transgressions... bruised for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5). Jesus willingly died in our place, bore our sins and paid the penalty due our sins.

VII. RESURRECTION

A. IMPORTANCE

The resurrection is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Paul showed in 1 Corinthians 15 that the believer’s entire faith stands or falls with Christ’s bodily resurrection. Faith in the resurrection is essential to salvation (Rom 10:9-10). It occupies a prominent place in the Scriptures—spoken of more than one hundred times in the NT

Christ’s resurrection was a testimony to the fact that His death was sufficient, therefore, He was raised. Christ “was raised again for our justification”—meaning on account of or because of our justification. (Rom 4:25)

B. NATURE

1. It was an ACTUAL resurrection

Some state that Jesus merely fell into a swoon, from which the cool air of the tomb and the spices revived Him. So He came forth from the tomb as though He had really risen from the dead.

However, Jesus appeared to disciples three days later not as a half-dead man. Not only did the soldiers pronounce Him dead, but Jesus Himself testified to the fact of His death; "I am he that liveth, and was dead" (Rev 1:18).

2. It was a BODILY resurrection

The Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists say that Jesus Christ rose only spiritually.

However, only bodies are buried and only bodies can rise—the Bible describes only bodily resurrections. Jesus Himself declared after His resurrection that He had "flesh" and "bones". (Luke 24:39-40; I Cor 15:44; Rev 20:5,12)

C. PROOFS

1. The EMPTY TOMB

Some state that the body was stolen. However, Roman soldiers carefully guarded the body, awaiting death if they failed in their duties. The enemies of Christ did not wish to steal His body; they wanted it buried to crush this movement. We know the disciples did not steal the body for they were afraid.

2. The GRAVE CLOTHES

Jesus was wound up with grave clothes from His head to his feet. Peter believed in the resurrection after he saw the linen clothes "wrapped together," which literally means rolled up. The clothes were in their original position. Jesus miraculously passed through them leaving them undisturbed. (Jn 20:7)

3. The APPEARANCES of Christ

The resurrection of Christ as a historical fact is verified by a sufficient number of witnesses, over five hundred in all. Both Paul and James had opposed Christ until after the resurrection. (Acts 1:14; I Cor 15:3-9)

4. The TRANSFORMED Disciples

After the death of Christ, their faith was shattered as they met behind closed doors for fear of their lives. After Christ appeared to them they were so convinced that nothing could change their belief concerning His bodily resurrection. Every one of the disciples (except the apostle John) died a martyr's death for his loyalty to the story of Christ's resurrection—would the disciples have given their lives for a lie? The salvation of Jesus' brothers was due to the resurrection. (Jn 7:1-5; Acts 1:14; I Cor 15:7)