

CORE CHRISTIANITY

Please read chapters 1 and 2 - APRIL 11 & 15, 2022

Why did God have to become human (in the incarnation of Jesus Christ)?

- ▶ TO REVEAL GOD TO MAN: God had revealed Himself in many ways to humans (dreams, voice, fire, and visions plus speaking through prophets to name a few). But nothing so clearly illuminated us about God than the incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ TO REVEAL MAN'S NATURE TO MAN: Jesus showed us our current state of sinfulness and all that we might become by believing and following Him.
- ▶ TO REDEEM MAN: Through His perfect life and sacrifice on the cross, it is possible for all of mankind to be adopted into God's family.
- ▶ TO RESTRAIN SATAN: Christ's resurrection was the final victory over death.
- ▶ TO RESCUE THE WHOLE OF CREATION: All things in creation were decaying in sin. Now, man and creation are both joined to Jesus in resurrection and life. As man will be transformed to new bodies when Jesus returns, so will creation as we know it be transformed to new glory with the New Jerusalem.
- ▶ TO RESTORE ISRAEL: God fulfilled His promise of a Messiah through the line of David. To this day, people return to Israel to worship and await Christ's return, when He will occupy David's throne.
- ▶ HE CAME TO REIGN: This we know, that all things were made subject to Christ. When He has come into His glory and gathered His kingdom in the new creation, He will then restore the Kingdom to the Father.

Why is the “Case for Christ” important according to the author?

- ▶ In Christ is JOY for the fact of our salvation and redemption, not just for Israel but for all of mankind.
- ▶ In Christ is CONFIDENCE because we have a new identity from being united to Him through our faith.
- ▶ In Christ is HOPE because we share in His resurrection. We have become part of His story, which is God’s big story of redemptive history. We are adopted into the covenantal promises that God made to Israel.
- ▶ How can we be confident in Christ’s identity as our Messiah?
 - ▶ Jesus said that He was (and is) God. His claim to equality with God is evidenced in the fact that Jesus performed works attributable to God (such as forgiveness of sins, healing, casting out of demons) and fulfilled the Messianic prophecies. Jesus revealed the eternal relationship of the Holy Trinity, which began even before creation. He love God and He loved God’s Law.
 - ▶ His death and resurrection are verified by historical records and eyewitnesses who saw the empty tomb and encountered Him after His resurrection. It is evidenced in the transformed lives of His apostles, who gave their lives for the sake of preaching His name (do people die for something they know to be a lie?).

OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS CHRIST

There are hundreds of Messianic Prophecies in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament. Even as historical research and archeological evidence validate the reality of the life of Christ, the Messianic Prophecies are essential proofs of the reality of Christ as the Messiah. However, they serve many additional purposes:

- 1) God can use them to strengthen the faith of doubting believers or unbelievers. These prophecies prove God's ability to foretell (and to even determine and direct) future events.*
- 2) They can be used for evangelism. A fulfilled prophecy gives us more confidence in the unfailing Word of God.*
- 3) Their promises bring peace and joy (particularly at times such as Christmas).*
- 4) They direct us to the Gospel.*

- ▶ Genesis 3:15 “Seed of the Woman” (virgin birth)
- ▶ Isaiah 7:14 “Born of a virgin”
- ▶ Genesis 12:3 “Seed of Abraham”
- ▶ Genesis 17:9 “Descendant of Isaac”
- ▶ Numbers 24:17 “Descendant of Jacob”
- ▶ Genesis 49:10 “From the Tribe of Judah” (*Jacob’s blessing to his son, Judah, gave Judah the rights of the firstborn and the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. The term “Shiloh” means “to whom it belongs”, meaning Christ)
- ▶ Isaiah 9:7 “Heir of King David’s Throne”
- ▶ Micah 5:2 “Born in Bethlehem”

OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS CHRIST

Anointing a person had multiple meanings in the Jewish tradition. It was used to dedicate men to priestly service (Exodus 40:15) or to official offices, including the office of Prophet. It was used to inaugurate both Saul and then David as kings (1 Samuel 9:16 and 1 Kings 34, 39). Hosts would sometimes anoint guests as a gesture of respect. James prescribed anointing with oil for healing the sick (James 5:14). "Anoint the shield" was an expression for the act of rubbing oil into a leather shield so it would be agile for battle (in the case of Christians, we symbolically anoint our shield of faith from Ephesians 6 for spiritual battle).

So, when we say Christ was the Anointed One, we can connect this to Christ as our utmost, unfailing, and final Prophet, Priest, King, Healer, and Shield (while men were anointed kings and prophets, it was distinctly a human office. They were not the Chosen One of God as was Jesus).

- ▶ Isaiah 52:13-53:12 "The Suffering Servant who would bear our sins, suffer in our name, and who would not remain dead."
- ▶ Daniel 7:13-14 "Would be the Son of Man" or "one like the Son of Man" (Jesus called Himself "Son of Man" often).
- ▶ Genesis 22:1-18 "A Willing Sacrifice"
- ▶ Psalm 2:1-12 "Would be called God's Son" or "God's Anointed One"*
- ▶ Zechariah 11:12-13 "Would be betrayed for 30 pieces of gold"
- ▶ Exodus 12:1-51 "Would be a Passover Lamb"
- ▶ Malachi 4:5-6 "Would be Preceded by Elijah" (who returned as John the Baptist)
- ▶ Isaiah 9:6-7 "Would be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace"

OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS CHRIST

Certain events, parables, and themes in the Bible are meant to foreshadow or symbolize future persons or events. This is what is called a biblical “type”. Biblical Typology is in itself an entire field of theological study.

There are certain “types” meant to foreshadow Christ the Messiah. Perhaps most famously is the first Passover as detailed in the Book of Exodus. The sacrifice and blood of the Passover lamb protected the firstborn children of the Hebrews when God’s plagues struck Egypt. This was a type for the blood and sacrificial death of Jesus bringing ultimate forgiveness of sin for all mankind. Other types that foreshadow the Messiah include: God sparing Abraham from sacrificing his only son, Isaac, by providing a substitute sacrifice, Jonah being swallowed by the fish for three days and then released, and the story of Boaz as “kinsman-redeemer” for Ruth (which also connects to the Abrahamic Covenant, as we’ll see in the next lesson).

- ▶ Jeremiah 31:15 “The Slaughter of Bethlehem’s children”
- ▶ Hosea 11:1 “Flight to Egypt/called out of Egypt”
- ▶ Psalm 16:8-11 “Will be resurrected”
- ▶ Jeremiah 31:31 “Will bring a new covenant”
- ▶ Psalm 22:1-31 “Will be forsaken and pierced, but vindicated”
- ▶ Zechariah 12:10 “Will be pierced”
- ▶ Zechariah 8:9 “Will arrive riding on a donkey”
- ▶ Isaiah 61:1-2 “Would do life-affirming redemptive deeds”
- ▶ Psalm 2:1-12 “Would be called God’s Son”

GOD'S SPECIAL REVELATION

WORD REVELATION

- ▶ The Bible reveals more about God than we can learn from simply observing nature (creation). The two main forms of His Word in the Bible are the Law and the Gospel. The Law decrees what is right or wrong and promises blessings or curses depending on our obedience. The Gospel reveals His love for us, particularly in sending the Son to save us.
- ▶ The Bible is Christ-centered. All Word revelation is meant to direct us towards Jesus.
- ▶ God is not capable of deceit or error, therefore we can be certain that every Word is truthful and divinely-inspired.
- ▶ God's Word is one of His two primary forms of revealing Himself and His plans for human kind. Sometimes His Word precedes His acts or actions (for example when He promises blessings or punishments); sometimes His Word explains His actions after the fact.
- ▶ At all times, His Word is meant to give us illumination that we can come to know His will, His love for us, His law, His plans, and His absolute authority over creation and history.

ACT REVELATION

- ▶ God also reveals His attributes and His will throughout history by His divine actions. Biblical history is divided and studied as theological "epochs". God moves (frequently through His acts) in such a way during these epochs that it fundamentally alters or adds to our understanding of Him and His plans for man kind.
- ▶ The first major epoch is the period from creation to the great flood ("the world that was"). The second major epoch is the period from the flood to present day ("the present evil world"). Within this epoch are minor epochs that include the Patriarchal and Jewish ages and the Gospel Age. Theology of the Patriarchal age centers on God's dealings with individual like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Worship was individual-centered. Theology changes in the Jewish Age when God's acts (and later His Word) rescues and creates the nation of Israel and the Law. God's great act in the Gospel age was the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus, which saved mankind, with the profound theological shift from Judaism to Christianity and from the Law to Christ.
- ▶ The third major epoch is the world to come—the kingdom of God, which will be without end.

What are some attributes of God revealed by general and by special revelations?

GENERAL REVELATION:

The magnitude of creation on earth and in the heavens reveals God's infinite GLORY.

God's POWER is revealed by the fact that He spoke the whole of creation into existence.

God's MAJESTY and AUTHORITY are revealed by the fact that He orders and sustains creation.

God's CREATIVITY is demonstrated by the diversity of life on earth and by all we have discovered about the heavens.

None of this would be possible if not for God's WISDOM.

SPECIAL REVEALATION:

God is self-existing (Colossians 1:17)

God is immutable (Malachi 3:6)

God is self-sufficient (John 5:26)

God is omnipotent (Job 11:7-11), omniscient (Isaiah 46:9-10), and omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10).

God has immeasurable wisdom (Romans 11:33)

God is infinitely faithful (2 Tim 2:13)

God is good (Psalm 34:8), perfect, and just (Deut 32:4).

God is compassionate and merciful (Romans 9:15-16)

Key differences between the four Gospels of the Bible.

Gospel of Matthew

- ▶ Written to appeal to a primarily Jewish audience/reader.
- ▶ Written to convince Palestinian Jewish population that Jesus Christ was the Messiah as prophesized in Scripture.
- ▶ Emphasis on Christ as Messiah, King of the Jewish nation

Gospel of Mark

- ▶ Written in Rome to appeal to a primarily Roman audience/reader.
- ▶ Conveys the story of Jesus Christ with the purpose of motivating the reader to respond to what they learn (a call to action)
- ▶ Emphasis on Jesus as a suffering servant.

Why is the Holy Trinity important to Christian faith?

Jesus had to be fully God to save us, for only as a deity could He stand in the gap and die to save us. Because He is God, we should worship and confess Him to the world.

The Holy Trinity illustrates God's true nature and His relational nature. The Trinity exists in a constant exchange of life, love, support, and mutual submission, perfect plurality, and perfect unity—a relationship and fellowship and family into which God is inviting us by adoption.

It is important that Christians hold to truth of our One God in Three Persons. *Core Christianity* mentions several heresies and misinterpretations about the Trinity that have become church doctrine. There are some aspects of the Trinity that will remain a mystery to humankind due to the limits of our wisdom and understanding. However, all that the Godhead has done for us more than demonstrates that the Trinity is worthy of our praise, our faith, our trust, and our love.

Key differences between the four Gospels of the Bible (cont.)

Gospel of Luke

- ▶ Luke was a historian, so his Gospel was based on careful research into the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He is not one of the twelve Apostles but may have been among Jesus' 70 followers (it is not known for certain). His writings contain very accurate descriptions of cities, towns, islands, official titles, and other details.
- ▶ Written in Greece to convince the next generation of Greek citizens (not to mention all generations of Gentiles) to the authenticity and accuracy of the historical accounts of Jesus Christ as Messiah.
- ▶ Emphasis on Jesus as "Son of Man" and Savior.

Gospel of John

- ▶ Was written specifically for the Christians of the church which John had founded.
- ▶ It was not intended so much to convert people to Christianity but rather to encourage the faith of those who had already received Christ as hostilities towards the Christian church were intensifying.
- ▶ Focuses on the "I am" statements of Christ, Jesus as the Son of God.

Key differences between the four Gospels of the Bible (continued)

- ▶ Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels are known as the "Synoptic Gospels". Why?
 - ▶ They share a similar viewpoint (Matthew and Luke drew on Mark's writings when they wrote their own Gospels).
 - ▶ They record many of the same events in life of Jesus.
 - ▶ The Gospel of John details events and dialogues that were not found in the Synoptic Gospels.
- ▶ Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are considered the canonical Gospels because they were recognized by the early church as being accurate, authoritative, and divinely inspired.

False Gospels: Gnostics & Apocrypha

Gnostic “Gospels”

- ▶ The Gnostic writings are those not found in the Orthodox Christian Bible today. The Gnostics held such radically different perspectives on God, the Bible, Christ, and salvation and most other Christian doctrines.
- ▶ These Gospels falsely attached the names of some Apostles but were not written by or connected to the apostles in any manner and promoted false doctrines. They are primarily used today as examples of heresies taught in the early church.
- ▶ They included the “gospels” of Thomas, Judas, Peter, Mary, Philip, the Gospel of Truth, and the Gospel of the Egyptians.

Apocrypha “Gospels”

- ▶ These were non-canonical early writings that referred to Jesus’ life and ministry but are not considered authoritative or divinely-inspired.
- ▶ Includes the “gospels” of Andrew, Bartholomew, Barnabas, and the Memoirs of the Apostles. More heretical groups wrote the Gospels of Marcion, Thomas, Mary, Philip, Peter, and the Gospel of Truth.
- ▶ There is no evidence for the accuracy of anything in these “gospels” and serve as an illustration of the dangers of false theologies and false doctrines which can lead faithful Christians away from true salvation.

For Personal Reflection...

Studying the history of the Christian church underscores how man's best intentions to understand God and His Word have strayed into areas of false theology, heresy, abuses of ecclesiastical authority, divisiveness, and ethical corruption. With these failures, the church disenfranchises its membership and presents the image of corruption and hypocrisy to the unchurched and the unbelievers.

It is important that our theologies (as individuals and corporately as members of the Body of Christ) is firmly grounded in the Bible and its teachings.

For an exercise, answer the following questions:

Who do you say Jesus is? What is the foundation for your answer? Are your beliefs rooted in general revelation (creation, intuition) or in special revelation (God's Word, the Bible)? How does the answer affect your sense of identity? How does it affect your feelings and actions towards others? How does it affect the ins and outs of your daily life?

Additional resources for this lesson:

- ▶ Reverend Dave Rogers, January 26, 2019, *"The Difference Between the Four Gospels"*, www.currentargus.com
- ▶ "Philip H.", Religious studies teacher, mytutor.co.uk
- ▶ Retha Groenewald, Eureka Life Ministries
- ▶ Dr. Michael Rydelnik, October 12, 2019, *"Why is Messianic Prophecy Important?"*
- ▶ Dawn Wilson, Crosswalk.com, Dec. 21, 2020, *"6 Things to Know About Messianic Prophecy"*
- ▶ Christianity.com, June 25, 2019, *"How and Why are People Anointed?"*
- ▶ Lehman Strauss, Bible.org, May 24, 2004, *"Why God Became Man"*.
- ▶ Bible Students Daily, August 16, 2017, *"Epoch Periods in God's Plan"*
- ▶ Biblestudytools.com, *"15 Amazing Attributes of God"*, August 17, 2019
- ▶ Tim Barnett, Stand to Reason, *"What Creation Reveals About God"*, Dec 14, 2017
- ▶ Melanie Redd, Christian Living, *"Why is the Trinity So Important to Christians?"*